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THE INDIANA JUNIOR HISTORIAN

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Focus: Past Meets Present for Native Americans

The Kee-wau-nay Council, 1837, at which Abel C. Pepper, United States Indian Agent, met with Potawatomi chiefs to persuade them to move immediately to their new lands west of the Mississippi River received under the 1836 treaty. Sketched by George Winter. Winter lived in Logansport, Indiana, during the late 1830s and witnessed the Potawatomi removals. His paintings and journals provide interesting commentary on the period.



Courtesy: Tippecanoe County Historical Association. Gift of Mrs. Cable G. Ball

Focus

Dateline

Indian Removal from Indiana



After Indiana became a state in 1816, land ownership continued to be at the center of conflict between the Indian tribes, settlers, and the United States government.

From 1795 to 1840, chiefs of various Indiana tribes signed sixteen treaties with the United States. The government wanted land to sell to settlers. The settlers were able to buy government lands very cheaply.

The situation concerning the Indians was very complicated. United States Indian policy changed over time. Under President Thomas Jefferson, United States policy tried to teach Indians to farm and be more like the white settlers. If Native Americans began to farm, Jefferson thought they would gradually give up their vast hunting lands to the government. When Andrew Jackson became President in 1829, he wanted to obtain the rest of the Indian land quickly. Pages 4 and 5 provide some points of view.

In 1830 the United States Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. This law allowed the United States through treaties to trade Indian lands in existing states for land west of the Mississippi River and remove the Indians to those lands.

Some Indians had already moved west. After 1830 some tribes gave in and

went to new homes in the West. Other tribes were forced to go. The Yellow River Potawatomi near Logansport were forced to leave Indiana; the resulting Trail of Death¹ to Kansas is a sad event in Indiana history. The journal entries of participants on pages 6 and 7 tell part of the story.

Some Indians were not removed from the state; others, ignoring the treaties, returned from the West. It is hard to determine exact numbers at times, but pages 8 and 9 provide some information about Indian population.

Finally, this issue turns to current events. In recent years, the rights of individual Indians and tribes have become important in the United States. State and national governments have passed laws to begin to make up for the broken treaties and promises of the past.

The issues are not simple. There are still many points of view. There will be compromise. The story of Native Americans living in Indiana continues.

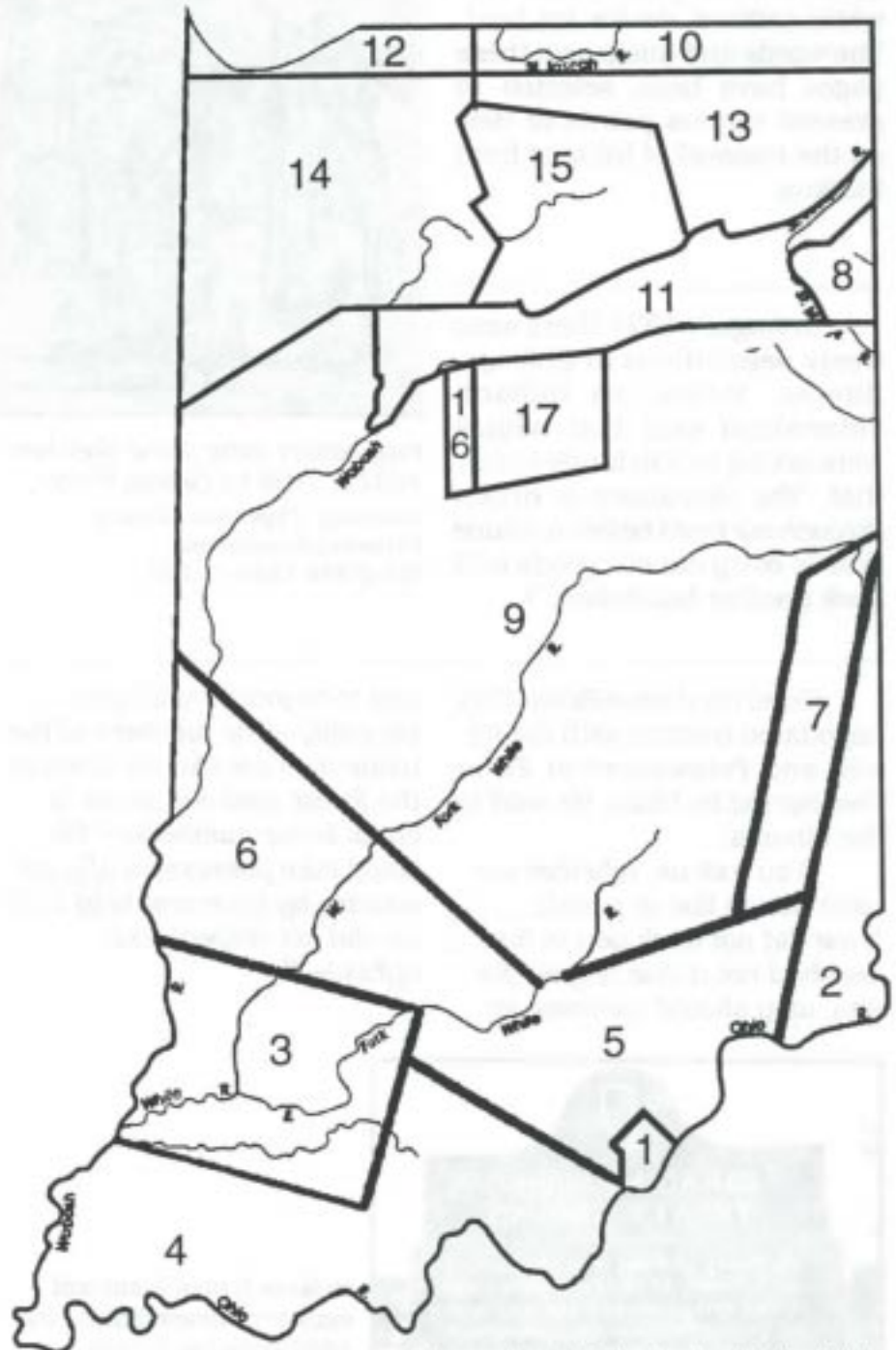
This is the third issue in a series of three dealing with Native Americans in Indiana.

¹The "Trail of Death" refers to the removal of the Potawatomi Indians from Indiana. The "Trail of Tears" refers to the removal of the Cherokee Indians from the southern portion of the United States. The Indiana event is often mistakenly called the "Trail of Tears."

Indiana: Land of Indians

Grants and Treaties in Indiana, 1783-1840

- 1 Clark's Grant, 1783 given by Virginia to the soldiers who fought in the Illinois campaign with George Rogers Clark
- 2 Treaty with the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomi, Miami, Eel River, Wea, Kickapoo, Piankashaw, and Kaskaskia Indians signed August 3, 1795 at Greenville, Ohio
- 3 Treaty with the Delaware, Shawnee, Potawatomi, Miami, Eel River, Wea, Kickapoo, Piankashaw, and Kaskaskia Indians signed June 7, 1803 at Fort Wayne
- 4 Treaties with the Delaware and the Piankashaw Indians signed August 18 and 27, 1804 at Vincennes
- 5 Treaty with the Delaware, Potawatomi, Miami, Eel River, and Wea Indians signed August 21, 1805 at Vincennes
- 6 Treaty with the Delaware, Potawatomi, Miami, and Eel River Indians signed September 30, 1809 at Fort Wayne
- 7 Supplementary treaty with the Miami, Eel River, Delaware, and Potawatomi Indians signed September 30, 1809 at Fort Wayne
- 8 Treaty with the Wyandot, Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa Indians signed September 29, 1817 at the Rapids of the Maumee River in Ohio
- 9 Treaties with the Potawatomi, Wea, Delaware, and Miami Indians signed October 2-6, 1818 at St. Mary's, Ohio
- 10 Treaty with the Ottawa, Chippewa, and Potawatomi Indians signed August 29, 1821 at Chicago
- 11 Treaties with the Potawatomi and Miami Indians signed October 16 and 23, 1826 on the Wabash River near the Mouth of the Mississinewa River
- 12 Treaty with the Potawatomi Indians signed October 16, 1826 on the Wabash River near the Mouth of the Mississinewa River
- 13 Treaty with the Potawatomi Indians signed September 20, 1828 at Carey's Mission, Michigan
- 14 Treaty with the Potawatomi Indians signed October 26, 1832 on the Tippecanoe River
- 15 Treaty with the Potawatomi Indians signed October 27, 1832 on the Tippecanoe River
- 16 Treaty with the Miami Indians signed October 23, 1834 at the Forks of the Wabash
- 17 Treaty with the Miami Indians signed November 28, 1840 at the Forks of the Wabash



Sources: Kappler, Charles J., ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1903) Vol. II.; and Frucha, *Atlas of American Indian Affairs*.

Points of View

Native Americans in Indiana and other states lost out to white settlers' desire for land. The words and images on these pages have been selected to present various points of view on the removal of Indians from Indiana.

In August 1821 there were treaty negotiations in Chicago, Illinois. Metea, an Indiana Potawatomi said that whites were taking Indian lands so fast that *"the plowshare is driven through our tents before we have time to carry out our goods and seek another habitation."*¹



Potawatomi camp scene sketched 1837 or 1838 by George Winter.

Courtesy: Tippecanoe County Historical Association.
Gift of Mrs. Cable G. Ball.

Governor James Brown Ray negotiated treaties with the Miami and Potawatomi at Paradise Spring in 1826. He said to the Miamis:

"You ask us, whether we wish you to live or perish: . . . If we did not wish you to live, and had not a due respect for you, why should we come to

*you to negotiate with you peaceably—The numbers of the white men are like the trees in the forest, and our power is equal to our numbers.—We could take possession of your country by force and hold it, if we did not respect your rights.—"*²



Indiana format historical marker commemorating the 1826 Paradise Spring negotiations. Installed 1992.

Courtesy: Indiana Historical Bureau.

President Andrew Jackson in his 1835 message to Congress said that the removal of Indians beyond the Mississippi River was nearly finished. The plan should be carried out, *" . . . as fast as their consent can be obtained. All preceding experiments for the improvement of the Indians have failed. It seems now to be an established fact that they can not live in contact with a civilized community and prosper."*³

Activities

- Discuss these points of view. What does each quotation mean? Write these points of view in your own words. What is your point of view after reading these quotations?

The class could break into six groups. Each group could discuss one quotation and then present it to the whole class. A seventh group could discuss how the pictures affect the viewer's point of view.

- Select one quotation and write a brief essay expanding its point of view.

You can find some background material to help in this and the two prior issues of *The Indiana Junior Historian*. Each quotation is only a small part of a larger document; use the appropriate note on page 5 to help you locate the original source.

- Refer to the map on page 3. Where are you located in Indiana? What Indian tribes lived in your area based on the treaty description?

- Investigate your local history to see what your part has been in the history of Native Americans in Indiana. See also the map on page 9, which has 1990 Native American population figures for each county.

- There are many Native American sites in Indiana marked with monuments, plaques, and markers. Locate those in your area and create a tour map.

In 1836 the United States made a treaty with various chiefs of the Indiana Yellow River Potawatomi. Most of them moved west in 1837.

Chief Menominee remained in his village on his reservation. In August 1838, he said, in part, the words below to Able Pepper, the Indian agent. Menominee was removed as part of the Trail of Death.

"The president does not know the truth . . . He does not know that you made my young chiefs drunk and got

*their consent and pretended to get mine. . . . He would not drive me from my home and the graves of my tribe, and my children, who have gone to the Great Spirit, nor allow you to tell me that your graves will take me, tied like a dog . . . when he knows the truth, he will leave me to my own. I have not sold my lands. I will not sell them. I have not signed any treaty, and will not sign any. I am not going to leave my lands"*⁴



Courtesy: Tippecanoe County Historical Association. Gift of Mrs. Cible G. Baul.

Known as Mary Ann— daughter of Ben-ache and wife of Pe-ash-wah. Sketched by George Winter at Peru, Indiana, April 10, 1842.

Newspapers of the time commented on treatment of the Indians.



INDIAN PAYMENT.

The Fort Wayne Sentinel states that a large quantity of Goods, designed for the payment of the annuity of the Miami Indians, have arrived at that place under the charge of an agent of the Government. It is further stated that the Indians will be compelled to take the goods, or nothing. This course on the part of the Government, directly violates Treaty stipulations and the laws of Congress. But there is no available relief.

Hugh McCulloch of Fort Wayne in 1888 wrote about the earlier period of history. He said that the Indians were badly treated. Some Indian traders,

" . . . men who had the reputation of dealing fairly with white men did not hesitate to practise the most shameful impositions in their dealings with the Indians."

He concluded that *" . . . as a race they [the Indians] will soon disappear, leaving no record of their origin and no reliable record even of their own existence. While this is to be their fate, there is cause for national humiliation"*⁵

Notes

- ¹Quoted in Edmunds, *The Potawatomi*, p. 220.
- ²Quoted in Dorothy Riker and Gayle Thornbrough, eds., *Messages and Papers relating to the Administration of James Brown Ray, Governor of Indiana, 1825-1831* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1954), p. 146.
- ³Quoted in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), p. 171.
- ⁴Quoted in Edmunds, *The Potawatomi*, p. 267.
- ⁵Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half a Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), pp. 102, 103.

Trail of Death

September 4 through November 4,

In 1836 many bands of Potawatomi signed treaties with the government. The Indians traded their lands in Indiana for land west of the Mississippi River. They were given two years to move. In 1838, a group of Potawatomi refused to leave. Government troops rounded up Potawatomi men, women, and children. They were forced to march for 62 days to the Osage River in southeastern Kansas.

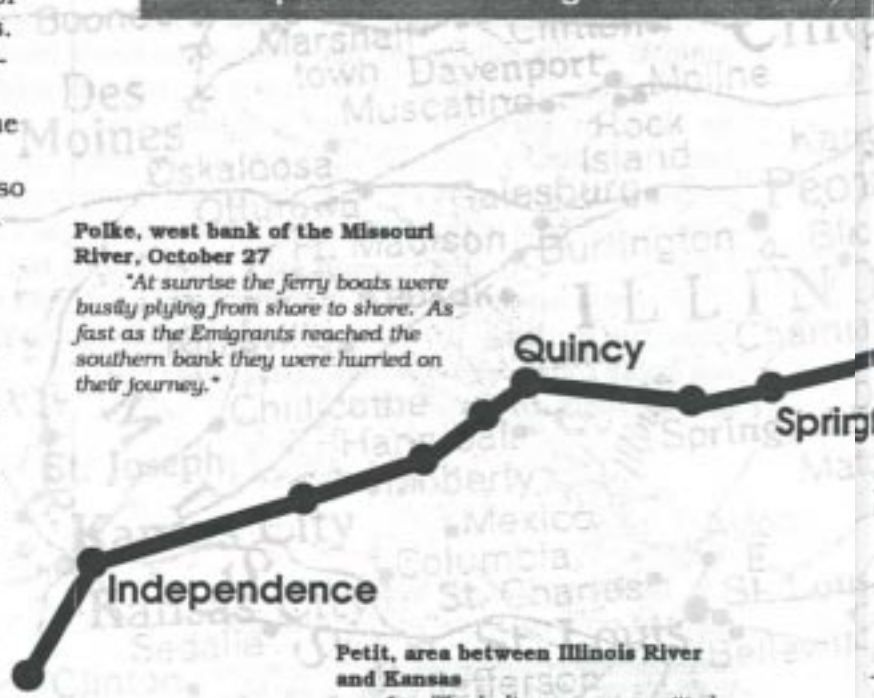
Judge William Polke, "the Emigration Conductor," was in charge, making sure the terms of the treaty were carried out. His quotations are from the official daily journal that was kept.

Father Benjamin Petit, a missionary priest, also went, giving the Potawatomi spiritual support. His quotations are from the many letters he wrote to Bishop Bruté of Vincennes.

Father Petit left the march on November 3, 1838, when a new priest joined them. Although he was only 29, he was exhausted by the march and sickness. He died in St. Louis, Missouri, February 10, 1839.

The map in the background is a modern map used only to place the historical trail and to give a better sense of the distance covered on the march.

Begin at the top right (in Indiana) and follow the march west by the dates.



Polke, west bank of the Missouri River, October 27

"At sunrise the ferry boats were busily plying from shore to shore. As fast as the Emigrants reached the southern bank they were hurried on their journey."

Independence

Petit, area between Illinois River and Kansas

"... The Indians were permitted to hunt on the way, and from the Illinois River almost to the limits of the Indian Territory they destroyed many deer, turkey cocks, and pheasants in a magnificent hunting ground. But we had the misfortune of finding that in the outskirts of the country assigned to them game became scarcer and scarcer, and no woods were seen other than little clusters on the banks of brooks which flowed far from each other in these vast prairies."

Osawatomie

Polke, Kansas, November 4

"... At 2 we crossed the Osage, where the Indians were met and welcomed by many of their friends, and at half after 3 reached Pottawatomie creek, the end of our destination."

The Trail Ends

Judge Polke letter to Carey A. Harris, Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, November 10, 1838, from camp near Independence, Missouri

"... It affords me pleasure to say that the emigration has been conducted and finally concluded with the greatest promptitude. Not an unpleasant circumstance occurred during the whole of the journey, to affect the character or retard at all the progress of the party. ..."



Figures sketched by George Winter

Courtesy: Tippecanoe County Historical Association. Gift of Mrs. Cable G. Ball.

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The Trail Begins



Polke, Long Point, Illinois, September 27

“... During the march, and indeed for the last three days, a considerable number of the Indian men were scouring the prairies in search of game. . . . The camp is now full of venison.”

Polke, a few miles east of Springfield, Illinois, September 28

“... Judge Polke, the Conductor, on the occasion of passing through a village of the character of Springfield, visited I-O-Weh, one of the principal chiefs, so to arrange and direct the Indians as to insure a favorable appearance. The chief was delighted with the proposition”

Polke, Springfield, Illinois, September 29

“The Indians amongst whom I was of pride was excited, and they formed themselves into line, and with an unusual display of finery and pompary marched through the streets of Springfield. The wayfarers were lined with anxious spectators, and indeed as to threaten for a moment the progress of the

Polke, Twin Lakes Encampment, August 30

“Commenced collecting the Indians at Twin Lakes Encampment, Marshall County, Indiana, and succeeded in gathering by night time, about one hundred and seventy.”
Over the next several days, Judge Polke gathered together a total of 850 Potawatomi. They left for Kansas on September 4, 1838.

Polke, Williamsport, Indiana, Campground, September 14

“... Occasionally however, and indeed not unfrequently, persons thro’ weariness and fatigue take sick along the route. This occupies much of our time. We place them in the wagons which are every day becoming more crowded and proceed.”

Polke, between Williamsport, Indiana, and Danville, Illinois, September 15

“Early on this morning we were on our way, and travelled without interruption until 12 o’clk. M. when we arrived at an unhealthy and filthy looking stream, at which . . . we were forced to encamp.”

Polke, Danville, Illinois, September 16

“... The heat along with the dust is daily rendering our marches more distressing. The horses are jaded the Indians sickly and many of the persons engaged in the emigration more or less sick.”

Petit, Logansport, August 4

Father Petit says mass for the last time in his little church before leaving on the march.

“One morning . . . I said Mass. Then my dear church was stripped of all its ornaments, and at the moment of my departure I called all my children together. I spoke to them one more time; I wept; my listeners sobbed. It was heartrending.”

Petit describes the order of march, which was said to be nearly 3 miles long.

“... After this cavalry came a file of forty baggage wagons filled with luggage and Indians. The sick were lying in them, rudely jolted, under a canvas which, far from protecting them from the dust and heat, only deprived them of air, for they were as if buried under the burning canopy—several died thus.”

Petit

“Sunday mornings, when the lack of good water (more than once our horses refused to drink water which we had left) or some other motive forced us to continue the march, I was granted a two hours’ delay.”

Petit, Danville, Illinois, September 16

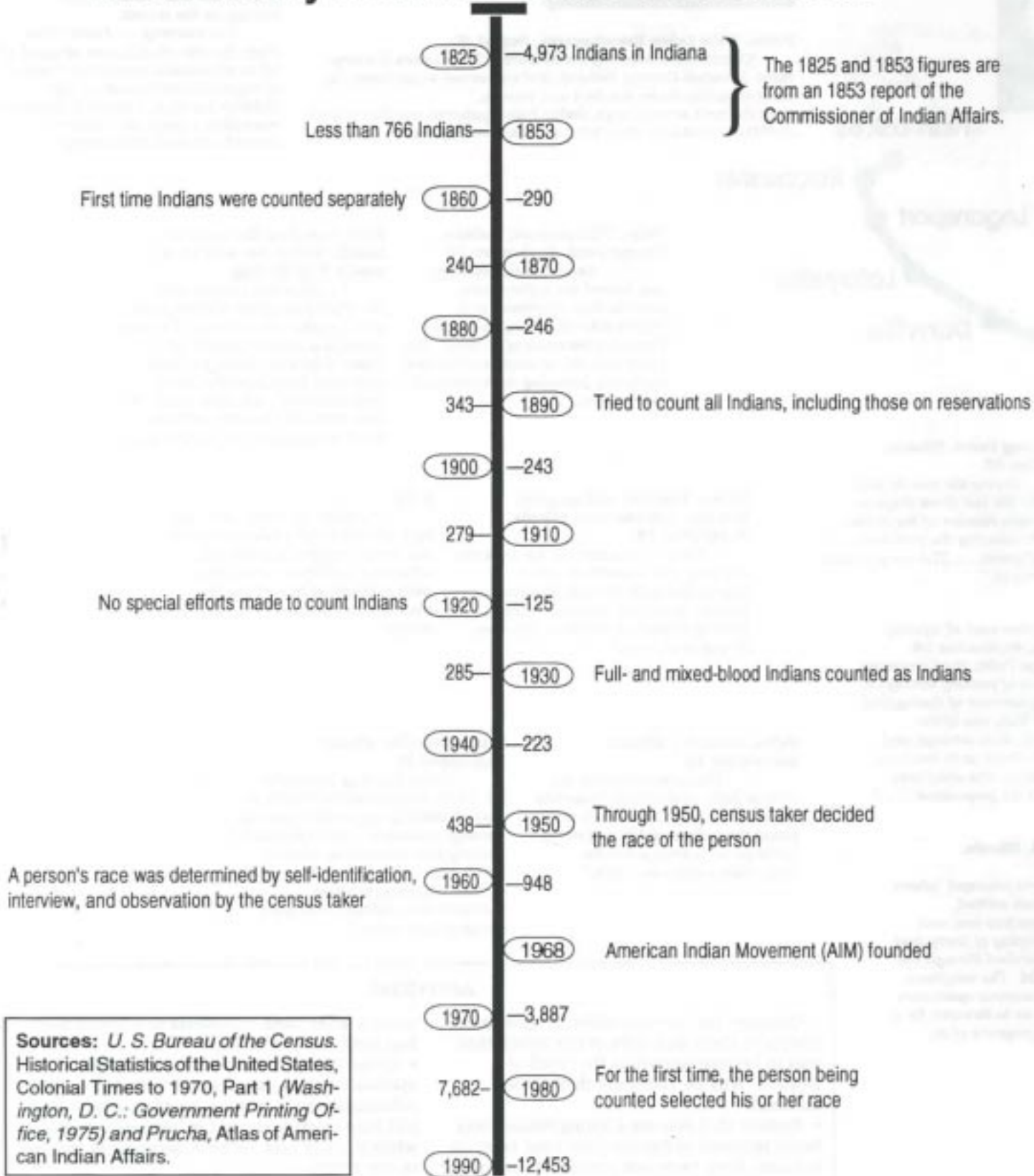
“It was Sunday, September 16. I had only just arrived when a colonel, seeking a favorable place to encamp, appeared. Soon afterward I saw my poor Christians, under a burning noonday sun, amidst clouds of dust, marching in a line, surrounded by soldiers who were hurrying their steps.”

Activities

- Compare the two very different eyewitness accounts these men gave of the march that was to become known as the “Trail of Death.” Why do you think they are so different?
- Pretend that you are a young Potawatomi being removed to Kansas from your home in Indiana. Keep your own journal of the trip, or

- write a letter back to Indiana to a friend who has been allowed to stay.
- Using the diary entries on these pages, the quotations from pages 4 and 5, and the other information in this issue, create a drama that will help to explain what is happening between white settlers and Native Americans in Indiana in the 1830s.

How Many Indians Were in Indiana?



The Miami: Their Struggle for Recognition

On September 8, 1992, a small group of Miami Indians began a protest march from Peru to South Bend, Indiana. Their purpose was to file a lawsuit in federal court against the United States government.

The 1795 Treaty of Greenville is the first key to understand their actions. In that treaty the United States government officially recognized the Miamis as a tribe. After most Miamis went west to Oklahoma, Miamis in Indiana still had tribal status.¹

In 1897, Assistant Attorney General Willis Van Devanter declared that the Miami people living in Indiana were no longer a recognized tribe. Losing their tribal status caused the Miamis great distress. Miami lands were then taxed. Many Indians, unable to pay the taxes, lost their land. Their children

could no longer attend federal Indian schools. They lost fishing rights and federal health care benefits.²

Ninety-five years later, the Miamis are still trying to regain their tribal status. Raymond O. White, Jr., the tribal chairman of the Indiana Miami, states, "For the past 95 years we have been struggling to make the government realize that it has dealt the Miami a crushing blow."

In June 1992, the Miamis formally requested official recognition from the the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The request was denied. In September 1992, the Miamis then took the next legal step. White explained: "We feel that it is time for justice to be served. We hope walking to South Bend to file our suit will bring public attention to the terrible wrongs that have been dealt the Miami."

Another Miami, Principal Chief Francis Shoemaker, joined the Miamis in South Bend. He said, ". . . we are certain that the courts will right this wrong."³

White summarized the Miami's long and stormy relationship with the government: "I tell people that the government made only one promise that it kept—and that was they were going to take our land."⁴

Notes

¹Tribal status is an important legal designation because there are benefits from the federal government for members of a tribe. The United States Bureau of Indian Affairs administers federal Indian laws and policies.

²Stewart Rafert, "Ozahshinquaah: A Miami Woman's Life," *Traces*, 4 (Spring 1992): 10-11. See also, *Indianapolis Star*, September 6 and 11, 1992 and *Indianapolis News*, October 5, 1992.

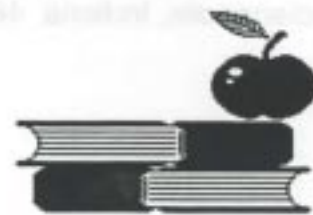
³This, and the two preceding quotations, are from the *Indianapolis Star*, September 6, 1992.

⁴Quoted in the *Indianapolis Star*, September 11, 1992.



Members of the Indiana Miami Nation of Indians and friends waited in front of the St. Joseph County Courthouse while attorneys filed suit against the federal government. Courtesy Peru Daily Tribune, September 12, 1992. Photograph by Marie Smith.

An Apple for Everyone



Selected Sources

• Anson, Bert. *The Miami Indians*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970.

This is a standard source for the history of the Miami Indians. For adult readers.

• Barnhart, John D., and Donald F. Carmony. *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth*. Vol. 1. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1954; Reprint, Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1979.

This book is a standard source and includes excellent information regarding Indian removal from Indiana. For secondary students and adult readers.

• Clifton, James A. *The Potawatomi*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.

An excellent source for advanced readers, secondary students, and adult readers on the history, and current situations of the Potawatomi Indians.

• Edmunds, R. David. *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978.

Edmunds, an Indiana University professor, is an expert on, and writes extensively about Native Americans. For high school and adult readers.

• "Journal of an Emigrating Party of Pottawattomie Indians, 1838." *Indiana Magazine of His-*

tory, 21 (December 1925): 315-36.

Journal entries from August 30 to November 10, 1838 have probably been written by William Polke. For advanced student, high school, and adult readers.

• *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter, 1837-1839*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1948.

This volume is appropriate for high school and adult readers. The prints of Winter's work should be viewed by all audiences for a better understanding of Native Americans in Indiana. The Indiana Historical Society will publish *Indians and A Changing Frontier: The Art of George Winter in the Spring of 1993*.

• Katz, Jane B., ed. *Let Me Be A Free Man: A Documentary History of Indian Resistance*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 1975.

Using the writings of Native Americans, this book traces general Indian resistance from 1607 through 1974. For advanced student, high school and adult readers.

• McKee, Irving. *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit*. Vol. 14, no. 1, *Indiana Historical Society Publications*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1941.

Father Petit's journal en-

tries are recounted here. For advanced student, high school, and adult readers.

• Osinski, Alice. *Andrew Jackson: Seventh President of the United States*. Chicago: Childrens Press, 1987.

This is an excellent biography of Jackson, the president who was in office during the Trail of Death.

• Prucha, Francis Paul. *Atlas of American Indian Affairs*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

This volume contains 109 maps and a wealth of statistical information documenting United States Indian policy.

• Smith, Dwight L., ed. "A Continuation of the Journal of an Emigrating Party of Potawatomi Indians, 1838, and Ten William Polke Manuscripts." *Indiana Magazine of History*, 44 (December 1948): 393-408.

The journal continues through December 4, 1838. Most of the letters are to Carey A. Harris, United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

• Stein, R. Conrad. *The Story of The Trail of Tears*. Chicago: Childrens Press, 1985.

The Trail of Tears deals with the removal of the Cherokee nation not Indiana Indians, but it offers a good explanation of United States policy and the 1838 removal of the Cherokee Indians. For student readers.

Indiana Historical Bureau
140 North Senate Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

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The Indiana Historical Bureau was created in 1915 to celebrate the centennial of statehood. It is the duty of the Historical Bureau to edit and publish documentary and other material relating to the history of the state of Indiana, to promote the study of Indiana history, and to work with others engaged in such pursuits. The Historical Bureau provides books, educational resources, and programs for students and teachers. Several are listed below. The Bureau also directs the Historical Marker Program and the care of the Governors' Portraits Collection.

• **BROADSIDES** produces supplemental educational materials based on primary sources for teaching Indiana history. Student packets encourage active participation and skills development with possible integration in various grades and subjects. An extensive teacher guide provides ready information and teaching resources.

• **Indiana Close Up** is a high school local government program affiliated with the national Close Up Foundation. This participatory annual event encourages study and discussion through the Jefferson Meeting on the Indiana Constitution.

• **Indiana History Day** encourages students grades 4 - 12 to research and prepare papers, exhibits, performances and media presentations on an annual historical theme. An emphasis on original research and interpretation allows students to experience the excitement of discovering or developing skills and interests that enrich their education and their lives. It is part of the National History Day network.

• **REACH**—Resources Educating in the Arts, Culture, and History—is a dynamic program that utilizes art and objects to stimulate dialogue and provide hands-on experiences, exploring not only the arts but also the culture and history of Indiana. Its arts-in-education basis encourages on-going planning for involving community resources in the school.

The Indiana Junior Historical Society is a network of history clubs for students in grades 4 - 12. Locally sponsored clubs initiate and participate in activities which encourage the study of Indiana history, often outside the classroom. The Indiana Junior Historical Society program is administered by the Indiana Historical Society, 315 West Ohio Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202; 317-232-1882.

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Magazine Editor

Virginia L. Terpening

Contributing Editors

**Carole Allen, Janine Beckley, Paula Bongen,
Alan Conant, Dani Pfaff**