



Keewaunay
Potawatomi Chief
1837



Commemorative Cancellation
Chippeway Village 1832 Post Office
Trail of Courage Living History Festival 1997
Fulton County Historical Society
Rochester, Indiana

Chief Keewaunay left Indiana 160 years ago in 1837.

Keewaunay was a Potawatomi war chief. He fought on the side of Tecumseh's brother, The Prophet, at the Battle of Tippecanoe in Nov. 1811. He fought on the side of Tecumseh and the British in the War of 1812. But 25 years later he was an old man living peacefully at Lake Keewaunay, now known as Lake Bruce, in Fulton County.

At the Tippecanoe River north of Rochester, Keewaunay signed the Treaty of 1836 in which the Potawatomi sold their lands for \$1 an acre and agreed to move west in two years. The treaties were not signed by Menominee and several other chiefs. A riot broke out at the treaty payment in 1836 and the quarrel was taken to court in Logansport. Keewaunay was sketched in the group picture made by the artist George Winter at the Treaty Council at Keewaunay's village in July 1837. Winter wrote of seeing Keewaunay in the court held by Judge John W. Edmonds in 1837. Later at the Indian camp at Crooked Creek near Logansport, Winter sketched Keewaunay to make a portrait. Keewaunay had signed the treaty and sold his land, but he was very sad and really did not want to leave Indiana. Keewaunay drowned his sorrows in the taverns at Logansport and the night their departure, he was so drunk he couldn't light his pipe, and Winter helped him stumble to his wigwam. The next day Chief Keewaunay and 46 other Potawatomi Indians left on the emigration to Kansas, in the charge of George W. Proffit, leaving Crooked Creek Aug. 23, 1837 and arriving at the Osage River in Kansas Oct. 23 with no deaths enroute. The first thing the Indians did was to call for a priest, so Father Christian Hoecken came and established a mission at Sugar Creek, now known as the Shrine of St. Philippine Duchesne. There they awaited the arrival of the larger group of Potawatomi which trekked west in 1838, the forced removal now known as the Trail of Death.

Probably Keewaunay met the old nun who became known as "She Who Prays Always," who taught the Indians to sew and pray, and was canonized as St. Philippine Duchesne, the first female saint west of the Mississippi River in 1988. Probably Keewaunay died at Sugar Creek but his name is not listed among the over 600 who died there over the next 10 years. In 1849 the Potawatomi from Indiana moved further west to St. Marys, Kansas. In 1861 they signed a new treaty that gave them citizenship and so became known as the Citizen Band Potawatomi of Oklahoma.

Keewaunay's name is not found on any other treaties or records, so it is assumed he died in Kansas. His name is carried on by the town of Kewanna, Indiana.

"I remember well the day of the departure of that little band," George Winter wrote. "I went to the old chief's wigwam and asked him to let me sketch him. The old chief and myself were on very friendly terms, but it was not until the 'eleventh hour' that I could get him to sit for me. ... The old chief's heart was pressed down with sadness, and he would often sit in his wigwam in profound silence and thought, brooding over the prospective change that he must eventually realize in his new home beyond the Mississippi."

"He was an old man of consideration among his people... He was familiar with the citizens of Logansport who respected, for he had many qualities of an attractive character. His deportment was dignified and characteristic of an Indian who felt the sting of outrageous fortune, but who philosophically submitted to the ills from which he could not escape."
--George Winter.

