

INDIANS OF MONTGOMERY

Source: Unknown -- probably Crawfordsville Journal Review ? date

Potawatomies Moved from Wabash to Osage Country by Dr. TG Gronert - the writer is indebted to Dan Layne, former resident of Crawfordsville, now living in Edinburg, Tx for the material that is used as the basis for this article. On Sept 14, 1838, EG Layne, located in Tippecanoe COunty wrote to his parents living in Crawfordsville. The letters have items on business, frontier, life and epidemics of bilious feverk as well as family matters. The most interesting item on frontier life told the story of the removal of the Potawatomi Indians from Indiana to the Osage Country. This tragic incident was reported in detail in Irving McKee's "The Trail of Death," but E.G. Layne's report based on personal observation presents names and incidents not recorded in McKee's book. We quote from the letter: "Yesterday and today I had sight of about 800 Potawatomi Indians. They took up camp about 12 o'clock yesterday within 100 yards of the store, where they continued until about 8 o'clock this morning, when they took up the line of march for their new home west of the Mississippi. The companies that were with them as guards were commanded by Gens. Tipton and Grover of Logansport. Col. IRM Bryant of Crawfordsville was here also commanding a company. He intends to go as far as the state line and go home. As soon as the Indians all came there were lines marked off and sentinels placed with orders to let no man pass the lines without orders from Headquarters ... the Indians were very loath to leave their native woods and remove to a country, which comparatively speaking, they knew nothing about. The only way they could get them together was to call a council of the nation, pretending that they wished to adjust some matters relative to making payment to them for their lands and after they had got them assembled in council they ordered the troops to surround them, which they did as if by magic, being concealed in some private place near the council, where they could readily execute the orders. Those who resisted were tied and taken as prisoners. The chief's of the nation were under separate guard as they passed here." Layne reported the death of a squaw and the ceremonies connected with her burial. He continues. I was all over the encampment from dark until about 10 o'clock at night, observing their manners in regard to cooking and their religious devotions over the corpse above named. They continued to sing and pray as long as I stayed and I was informed by one of the captains with whom I formed a short acquaintance that they would continue their worship all night. Many of the Potawatomies were converts to Christianity and observed certain rituals of the faith while still adhering to some pagan forms. Their worship of nature and their love of river and forest led some of them - especially old men and women - to ask to be allowed to spend their few remaining years in their beloved Wabash Country. The authorities, however, could not or would not make any concessions and the Potawatomies took the long trail to the Osage Country.

Thanks so much to Bob Stonecipher

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