The History of the Miami Indians in Grant County Indiana

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

By

Karen E. Blinn

Dr. William Eidson

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
May, 1982
The Miami Indians played a large role, which the white men have almost totally overlooked, in the history and settlement of Grant County, Indiana. The Indians came to the county many years before the white men and settled on the banks of the Mississinewa River, using the rest of the county as their hunting grounds. They lived peacefully, following the traditions of their ancestors. Because of the increasing flow of white settlers into the county, the Indians were eventually forced to emigrate, first to Kansas, then to Oklahoma. Only one small band was allowed to remain in Grant County, and they lived on the last Indian reservation in the state of Indiana.

The history of the Miami Indians in Grant County may be divided into five distinct periods: (1) pre-1812 history, (2) events stemming from the War of 1812, (3) the treaty era (1814-1847), (4) the Meshingomesia years (1845-1898), and (5) recent developments. During the first three periods of time these Indians had extensive dealings with the national and state governments. Throughout the Meshingomesia years, they were almost totally forgotten by the government officials. The role of the Indians in the history of the area has never been totally accepted by county residents. When the Miamis still lived in the county, residents viewed them as a negative quantity not to be taken seriously. Something of a sideshow atmosphere existed when they came into Marion, the county seat, to trade. People failed to realize that Indian silver, received at annuity time, was an important stimulant to the local economy, and furthermore, that these Indians had made and were making noteworthy history in the county. Only today have people started to understand the nature of the Miamis' contributions to Grant County and to try to preserve what is left of the Miamis' history.
PRE-1812 HISTORY

Before the War of 1812, the Miamis lived peacefully in Grant County, having migrated there from the Big Miami River near Piqua, Ohio around 1795. The tribe had lost the glory associated with its empire of the seventeenth century and was in a state of decline when the first white man came to Grant County. Probably no more than 250 Indians ever lived in the County. They had no hope of regaining their lost power but merely wanted a peaceful existence. As happened with many other tribes, once they lost their hold on their empire, the Miamis began a decline which lasted until the tribe almost ceased to function as a tribe.

Origin of the Miamis

The Miami Indians once maintained an empire in the seventeenth century which covered most of the midwest. They were quite powerful and rivaled the Iroquois of New York. The explorer LaSalle described them in these words: "The Miamis are the most civilized of all Indians—neat of dress, splendid of bearing, haughty of manner, holding all other tribes as inferiors."\(^1\) The Miamis held such resources that they were a powerful foe with which to contend. It has been said that they could easily place 5,000 men on the battlefield at any given time.\(^2\) After the Miamis gained the use of firearms their superior numbers enabled them to make inroads into Iroquois territory and to expand their hunting grounds into Ohio.

---


\(^2\) Ibid.
With the implements of civilized warfare in their hands, they maintained their tribal integrity and independence; and they traded with and fought against the Americans by turns, as their interests or passions inclined; and made peace or declared war against other nations of their own race as policy or caprice moved them.³

The capital of the Miami nation was Kekionga, located where Fort Wayne now stands. The town was, in reality, a grouping of several Indian villages with a combined population of around 10,000. The village was in a strategic location near the center of the empire, and from it the Miamis controlled all trails and waterways. These pathways connected the capital with other Miami towns such as Chicago, Detroit, and the villages on the rivers of southern Ohio. Miami claims of land included all of Indiana, the western part of Ohio, and the eastern part of Illinois.⁴

Four main bands made up the Miami confederacy. These bands were the Miamis, the Eel-Rivers, the Weas, and the Piankeshaws. The other tribes considered those Miamis who lived at Kekionga to be the most illustrious members of the nation. This ranking came because of their superior numbers and intelligence. All other members of the tribe deferred to them in matters of war and peace and in matters which affected the interests of the tribe as a whole. Perhaps Little Turtle, the greatest of the Miami Chiefs, best described their former prestige when in a conversation with General Wayne he said,

The prints of my ancestors' houses are everywhere to be seen in this region. It is well known to all my brothers present that my forefathers kindled the first fire at Detroit; from thence he extended his line to the headwaters


⁴Winger, Last of Miamis, p. 3.
of the Scioto; from thence to its mouth; from thence down the Ohio to the mouth of the Wabash and from thence to Lake Michigan--I have now informed you of the boundary of the Miami Nation where the Great Spirit placed my forefathers a long time ago and charged him not to sell or part with his land but to preserve it to his posterity.\(^5\)

Thus it was from this once great empire that the Miamis of Grant County descended--a fact little known by the majority of citizens of the Grant County area.

**Weakening of Position**

The Golden Age of the Miamis began in the sixteenth century and lasted through the seventeenth. During the eighteenth century they were a declining and rapidly weakening nation. Conflicts with other Indian tribes were the major cause of this decline. The Iroquois apparently gained strength, and when they fought the Miamis, they made great inroads into Miami lands. By making an alliance with the Illinois Indians, the Miamis were able to combine forces with them and to drive the Iroquois back. However, these battles had greatly weakened the proud Miamis. Even under the leadership of Aquenackque, the father of Little Turtle, they were unable to regain many of their lands.

The decline came more rapidly as time passed. The Miamiswarred against tribes from the west. Two stories exist which explain the rapid decline in the number of Miamis. One says that the Sioux made a surprise attack and massacred thousands of the Miamis. Another more reliable tradition states that the Miami decided to exterminate the Illinois Indians so they made an alliance with the Potawatomies and other tribes in order to carry out the project. The allies had a

\(^5\)Ibid.
disagreement of some sort, and the Miamis were disastrously defeated by the Potawatomes and Kickapooos. As a result of this defeat the Miamis lost their lands in Illinois. Also, the Potawatomes and Kickapooos took possession of all northern Indiana as far east and south as the Wabash River and her tributaries. 6

The displacement of other tribes also caused the Miamis to lose more of their lands. The Shawnees, who had been driven out of the south, made settlements in southern Ohio. Some of them migrated as far north as Wapakoneta and Kekionga. Some Ottawas came south into northern Ohio around the Defiance area, driving the Miamis out of that region. The Ancient Delawares were driven westward by the whites, and they settled in central Ohio. Their claims were eventually extended into central and southern Indiana. The Hurons, or Wyandottes, also driven westward by pressure from the white men, helped themselves to Miami lands in northern Ohio. Other Indian tribes followed the same suite. In 1795 when Little Turtle made his statement to General Wayne, the Miamis had lost their claim to the territory over which they were once masters.

Other forces caused reductions in the number of Miamis. Disease, especially small pox, killed them off by the thousands. Whiskey became a major problem for the Indians because they drank without restraint. It is quite possible that more died from the effects of drink than died in battle. Their days of power and glory had ended forever.

Migration to Indiana

Due to rivalries with other Indians and because of family problems,

___

6 ibid.
Chief Metocinyah led his band west from Ohio and settled on the Mississinewa River in Grant County. No written history exists concerning these events so the only information available comes from the Indian oral traditions. Legend has it that Metocinyah's father, Oshandiah, originally lived in Kekionga. At some time during the eighteenth century, for an unknown reason, Oshandiah emigrated to the Big Miami River near Picqua, Ohio. Oshandiah advanced to the position of chief and held a prominent position among the Miamis. According to Miami tradition he visited George Washington, and the famous general gave him a sword. This was considered a great honor, but it nurtured jealousy among the Miamis. Soon afterward, someone poisoned Oshandiah and Awtawawtaw succeeded him as chief. Awtawawtaw died soon afterward, and Metocinyah, his son, ascended to the chieftancy. Thus it was that Metocinyah's band first settled in Grant County. They were the original pioneers and lived on the banks of the river molesting neither the white people nor the land itself. The band was much more important than is generally acknowledged because in the years preceding 1812, this group provided a haven of refuge for those Indians who objected to the white presence. For this reason, Metocinyah's village was destined to become involved in the upcoming war.7

---

7 Ibid., p. 30.
THE WAR OF 1812

The 200 Miamis of the Mississinewa played a significant role in the war of 1812. For the preceding two years the Miamis had been displeased with their relationship with the U. S. government. To show their displeasure, they had refused to accept their annuity payments in 1810. Their displeasure stemmed from the 1809 Treaty of Greenville. They believed too many cessions of land had been made, bringing the white man too close to Indian lands. In 1810 and 1811 the influence of Tecumseh was on the rise. He believed the Indians should drive away the white men and unite in a confederacy, and as 1811 progressed, more and more of the Indians from the Mississinewa left to join forces with Tecumseh.

On November 6, 1811, the Indians fought the Whites in the Battle of Tippecanoe at the junction of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers. Both sides sustained equal losses, but the Whites prevailed when the Indians dispersed from the battlefield the following day. The aggressiveness of the Whites in the battle did much to discredit the Prophet's theory that the Indians would meet with no resistance and could not be harmed as they established their new confederacy. The prestige of chiefs such as Metocinyah and Little Turtle, who advocated a peaceful approach to dealing with the white men, greatly increased because of this battle. Peace returned to the area when the major participants left, going in opposite directions. General William Henry Harrison went to Vincennes, while the Prophet went to a village located on the Mississinewa.

Events Leading Up to the Battle of Mississinewa

The Americans feared the transformation of the Mississinewa Valley
into a haven for the rebel Indian followers of Tecumseh. The war had
gone badly for the Americans in 1812. After the defeat of the Indians
at Tippecanoe, many of the Indians declared their allegiance with the
British. The Miamis had wanted to remain neutral, but attacks by the
Americans caused some to change their allegiance. They disregarded the
treaties and began raiding settlements and attacking forts, with British
encouragement. The Indians had numerous successes with their attacks
and between June and November of 1812, Forts Mackinac, Dearborn
(Chicago), and Detroit all had to be surrendered. The British made the
most of the fear factor which the Indians provided.

The rebel Indians next decided to attack Fort Wayne. The Miamis,
however, had no desire to engage in a conflict involving the American
army which might bring harm to their relatives living in the village
surrounding Fort Wayne. Instead, the Miamis sent a delegation down the
Wabash River to attack Fort Harrison. The actions of the Miamis
alarmed the Americans, and in a conference held at Fort Wayne, they
decided to treat the Miamis as a hostile tribe. This was the first act
of aggression by the tribe as a whole.

The Miamis were hopelessly split in their policies. Some
fled to Canada, but the majority congregated on the Missis­sine­wá. This was a serious military and political er­ror on their part. If they had decided to be noncombatants,
they should have moved east or north from the war zone.
Most of the tribe's chiefs, however, believed they had more
to fear from Tecumseh's followers than from the U.S. forces.
They felt they were safe on the Mississinewá.8

These beliefs and the course of action they had chosen would later
prove to be disastrous for the Mississinewá villages.

William Henry Harrison, now commander of the western army, feared

8 Bert Anson, The Miami Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma,
the threat which these villages represented to his line of operations. He believed they would serve as a rendezvous point for hostile forces from the northwest. Harrison did not wish to expose his forces at Fort Wayne, 50 miles northeast, to this back door threat. The Mississinewa villages were in a strategic location because from there Indian runners could determine the time at which every convoy would set out from Cincinnati, Piqua, and St. Mary's for Fort Wayne, and this raised the possibility for Indian interception.

Harrison was fearful of an unknown but exaggerated number of warriors of uncertain temper on the flanks of Fort Wayne.... But it seems certain the Mississinewa villages had become the shelter for noncombatants, including the pro-American Delawares. The Miami chief Metocinyah had kept his band out of conflicts for years, and the list of other pro-American chiefs was a long one.9

And, as Harrison was to later learn, the Miamis did not have enough food stored in their villages to be of substantial aid to anyone.

The Battle of Mississinewa

General William Henry Harrison thought the Mississinewa Indian villages posed a significant threat to the American war effort so he planned a surprise attack on them. Lieutenant Colonel John B. Campbell, an inexperienced Virginian, was to lead the attack on the Indian villages, which were located eight miles northwest of present-day Marion. Campbell had never before led an army into battle, but Harrison was convinced that he had the necessary qualities to be a successful commander.

Harrison gave Campbell a list of instructions to be followed when fighting a battle, and the latter left Greenville, Ohio on December 14,
1812 with a force of 600 men. The weather was frigid and the snow very deep, ideal marching conditions for crossing swamps and tracking the enemy. William Conner, a trader and frequent visitor to the Mississinewa Indians, was employed as the main guide for the army. The army took only light provisions and reached the first village before dawn on the morning of December 17. Numerous authorities state that Campbell could have taken the village without firing a shot. Instead, he decided to attack and confusion resulted. The troops broke rank and rushed into the village in a jumbled mass. The town was captured with eight Indians killed and forty-two taken as prisoners. The village was burned except for a hut to house the prisoners, and all of the livestock and provisions destroyed. 10

Campbell selected a few troops to guard the prisoners and build a camp for the night on the site of the first village which they had burned. Meanwhile, he and the rest of the troops proceeded on down the river. Later in the afternoon they found three more villages, all of which had been evacuated, except for one sick woman, and they burned these villages also. Campbell returned to the first village for the night. The camp which the troops had built in his absence was larger than Campbell would have liked, but he did nothing about reducing its size. "The only fortification was a redoubt off the northwest corner of the camp. Thirteen squadrons, camped in a rectangular shape, made up the remainder of the camp." 11

Campbell ordered reveille beaten at 4:00 a.m. the next morning,

10.Ibid., p. 170.

December 18, and shortly thereafter held a meeting with his officers to determine whether to proceed on down the river or to head back to Ohio. While this meeting was in progress the assembly was attacked by Indian forces about one-half hour before daybreak. The redoubt was quickly overrun by Indians and within minutes the Indians had surrounded the north and west sides of the army camp. From their new position behind the fortified redoubt the Indians poured heavy fire at the troops inside the camp. At this point Campbell issued an order which, if obeyed, would have left a three hundred-foot gap on the south side of the camp. Fortunately it was disregarded.12

Campbell did not have the situation under control, but one of his officers, Captain Butler, took command and issued orders concerning reinforcements.

At this point in the battle, which had so far been fought in darkness, dawn broke, and, as the fire of the dragoons and infantry became more effective, it became obvious to the Indians that the detachment was too much for them, and they dispersed.13

The battle did not end on a good note for either the Indians or the Whites.

Campbell estimated the Indian force to be between two and three hundred, of which fifteen were left dead on the battlefield and as many or more were carried away by the retreating warriors. Eight white soldiers were killed and forty-eight wounded in the encounter.14

The soldiers pursued the Indians for a time, but all of the Indians eluded them.

12 Ibid., p. 20.

13 Ibid., p. 22.

14 A Century of Development (Marion: Grant County Junior Historical Society, 1937), p. 7.
Campbell now faced a dilemma of whether to proceed on his mission or to retreat back to Greenville. He was convinced he could not reach his major objective, Usage Town, at the junction of the Mississinewa and Wabash Rivers.

Burdened with prisoners and wounded, hampered by bad weather and believing Tecumseh and a large force of warriors to be close at hand, he retreated as rapidly as his troops could travel. Actually, his retreat was harassed by fewer than 200 Miami warriors, but his decision to withdraw was the correct one to make for 303 of his men, unfit for duty because of frostbite and wounds, were later carried into Greenville by a rescue party.15

Thus the historic Battle of Mississinewa came to a rather disastrous end for both sides. The Miamis from the three destroyed villages were left homeless, and the army was wrecked.

End Results

Although both sides claimed victory in the Battle of Mississinewa, the American government came out ahead in the long run. The Indians could celebrate because they forced the retreat of the larger American army while the larger and more important Miami villages downriver were kept safe from the intruders. The American forces claimed the battle as their first major victory in the war. They had subdued the Indians and supposedly opened the entire Northwest Territory for settlement because of the outcome of this battle.

Several explanations have been offered as to why the small villages along the Mississinewa were chosen for the attack. One theory says that the villages did not pose nearly the danger that Harrison maintained, but that he merely needed a victory to report. The standard

15 Anson, Miami Indians, p. 170.
explanation for the battle concerns the dangers posed by the Miamis to Harrison's future operations.

A real purpose behind Harrison's orders to attack may have been related to his former role as governor. He wanted the Indians to cede their lands south of the Wabash so that Indiana would have the necessary territory to become a state. Military campaigns such as this one worked great wonders at softening Indian opposition to further land cessions.16

The latter explanation may well have been the true reason for the attack because the Indians did make large cessions at the next treaty making meeting.

The Battle of Mississinewa has never been emphasized in Grant County history. It was supposedly a major battle, but yet the area schools never mention it to their classes, or if they do, it is only in passing, never in any detail.

This engagement and its importance has been largely overlooked by state historians. Had Harrison himself been present, it would have received much more notice. Almost as many men were engaged as in the Battle of Tippecanoe. Perhaps the result was even greater for it did keep the Mississinewa Indians from joining the allies against General Harrison at Fort Wayne. In later years these Mississinewa Indians seemed to hold little resentment against the Americans because of this conflict. Meshingomesia, the son and successor of Metocinyah, would say very little about it.17

This silence could also have meant that the Miamis never accepted the necessity for the battle. They believed they had withdrawn from the war and saw it as an unprovoked attack on neutral villages.

16 Elizabeth J. Glenn, J. K. Swartz, Jr., and Russell E. Lewis, Archaeological Reports, Number 14, Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Descriptive Accounts of the War of 1812 Mississinewa Campaign and Aftermath: Project Report (Muncie: Ball State University, 1977), p. 4.

17 Winger, Last of Miamis, p. 32.
The silence of Meshingomia on the subject has had unfortunate effects for modern historians. "The site of the battle cannot be pointed out with absolute certainty. An archaeological investigation turned up no conclusive evidence." It appears likely, however, that the battle did occur on the land which the federal government purchased as a battlefield memorial. The citizens of Grant County are so pathetically lacking in knowledge about the battle and battleground, that at present, the sign pointing the way to the site directs people down a road which has since been closed. It is a sad commentary on an important historical event.

18 Glenn, Swartz, and Lewis, Archaeological Reports, p. 287.
THE TREATY ERA (1814-1847)

The Miamis lived in relative peace during the treaty years of 1814-1847. The government made treaties with the Miamis both before 1814 and after 1847, but the ones which drastically affected the Miamis were made within this time frame. Each treaty which was made was supposed to last forever. However, in less than ten years the government would want to negotiate a new treaty. Because of this sequence of events, the government eventually made the Indians cede all of the land, except for one small reserve, which had been theirs for immeasurable years in the past.

During these years, Indian agents and traders took care of the needs of the Miamis. In reality, they made a great contribution to their debauchery because of the whiskey which flowed so freely at the annuity and trading sessions. Isaac McCoy, a Baptist missionary, tried to meet the spiritual needs of the Indians but found little success. Finally, in 1840, the government obtained the Indians' consent to migrate to Kansas, and the final chapter of their history in Indiana had been written for most of the Miami Indians.

Treaties

Treaty of Greenville.

The government made numerous treaties with the Miamis, each of which deprived them of more of their lands. After the war, the treaty making began anew at Greenville, Ohio. At an assembly of 115 chiefs, which included every tribe—Miamis, Delawares, Potawatomies, etc.—in the area (a total of 4,000 Indians present) the Indians had to sign an admission of guilt for their part in the war.19

19 Anson, Miami Indians, p. 174.
Even though they accepted Harrison's accusation at Green­
ville—that they had been guilty of sending war messages to the Delawares in 1812 when he had destroyed their vil­
lages near Fort Wayne—they believed Campbell's raid on their towns after they had rejected Tecumseh's overtures and had assumed a noncombatant position were unjustified. 20

All of the chiefs, except two, signed the treaty. Harrison wished to make the Miamis pay for their involvement in the war. The main func-
tion of this assembly was to weaken the Miamis further by forcing them to admit they were wrong in involving themselves in the late war. Any loss of warrior function led to inevitable disintegration of Indian society. 21

Treaty of 1818.

By 1818 the government had decided to negotiate a new treaty with the Miamis. The treaty was concluded on October 6, 1818 at St. Mary's, Ohio. The Indians as a whole ceded 7,036,000 acres of land to the gov-
ernment by the terms of this treaty, although they kept most of it in their possession until the fall of 1840. The Miamis themselves gave up all of Tract 99 on Royce's map of Indiana, except for six reservations, and twenty-one tracts totalling 31,460 acres which were granted to individuals. In return for this land, the government promised the tribe a perpetual annuity of $15,000, 160 bushels of salt, two water mills, and the services of a blacksmith and a gunsmith. 22

The forces operating upon the Miamis after the Treaty of St. Mary's can be summarized briefly. As the penalty for their real or imagined part in the late war, the Miamis ceded a large area of land to the federal government. They retained one large reserve and many smaller ones

20 Ibid., p. 175.

21 Ibid.

22 "Xeroxed Treaty," Delaware County Archives, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, In.
which might have been sufficient for individuals to con-
tinue some semblance of their former way of life were it
not that each band was separated from all others. By
collecting in groups, the villagers were also unable to
disperse among the white settlers and achieve assimila-
tion.23

This one treaty substantially altered the Miami's way of life and made it virtually impossible for them either to continue their own culture or to assimilate into the white culture.

Treaty of 1826.

The next treaty negotiations occurred at the mouth of the Missis-
sinewa River at a place called Paradise Springs on October 23, 1826. In return for $30,040.53 in goods and $31,040.53 in cash that year; $61,259.47 the following year, after which an annual annuity of $25,000 was to be paid during the existence of the tribe, the Miamis ceded all land to the U.S. west and north of the Wabash River. The Miamis also expressed their satisfaction with the cessions made at St. Mary's in 1818. This treaty of 1826 was made basically as a guarantee that the white settlers would be free to move onto former Indian lands. In an interesting sidelight of this treaty, Chief Metocinyah was to be fur-
nished with one wagon and one yoke of oxen, according to Article III.24

Treaty of 1834.

The federal government officially sealed the Indians' fate with the passage of the Federal Removal Act, the Dawes Act, which made Indian emigration a federal policy. The first treaty made after the passage of the removal bills was concluded at the Forks of the Wabash on Octo-
ber 23, 1834. Under its terms the Miamis ceded all or part of seven Indian reserves, which had been granted to them by the treaties of 1818

23 Anson, Miami Indians, p. 190.

24 "Xeroxed Treaty," Delaware County Archives.
INDIAN LAND CESSIONS

(CLENN, p. 5)
and 1826. In return the Indians received $208,000, part of which was to be used to pay the tribe's debts. Another part was in the form of annuity payments to the tribe. A number of individual grants made in previous treaties were continued by the 1834 treaty. This treaty was widely criticized because it did not evict the Indians, but the government realized it would be only a few years until another treaty would be negotiated.  

Treaty of 1838.

Four years later, in 1838, the government secured a new treaty at the Forks of the Wabash. The Miamis did not agree to emigrate, but they did consent to send a party of six chiefs to view lands west of the Mississippi at federal expense. The Miamis ceded away all of their lands except for their winter hunting grounds on the Big Miami Reserve. They also kept one band reserve and many individual holdings by Indian patent or fee simple. The Metocinyah band, now led by Meshingomesia, was granted a new reservation out of the cessions the tribe made, and it consisted of ten square miles of ground in Grant County. The government agreed to pay the Indians $335,680, of which $60,000 was to be paid immediately after the ratification of the treaty. After the tribe's debts had been paid, the remainder was to be paid in yearly installments of $12,568.00.  

Treaty of 1840.

The Benchmark Treaty with the Miamis emerged out of negotiations which concluded on November 28, 1840 at the Forks of the Wabash.

---

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.
Samuel Milroy, the Miami agent at Logansport, with the assistance of his sub-agent, Allen Hamilton, drew up this unofficial treaty which was signed by only four Indian chiefs. The agents basically assured that the provisions of the treaty would be met by the government because the chiefs gave their promise that the entire tribe would emigrate. The government assured the chiefs that they and their families would not have to emigrate. Each of the four chiefs, Richardville, Godfroy, Lafontaine, and Meshingomesia, were granted either land or money from the government. The chiefs gave up all of their remaining tribal lands in Indiana, including the Big Miami Reserve. In return the government granted the Indians $550,000, of which $300,000 was to be applied immediately after the treaty ratification to the payment of debts of the tribe. The remaining amount was to be paid in twenty equal yearly installments. Most important of all, the chiefs promised to emigrate west of the Mississippi within five years of the ratification date of the treaty. The government agreed to pay for the removal and to furnish them rations on the way.27

The period of treaty-making concluded with the Indians' agreement to emigrate. According to John B. Dillon in a lecture delivered in 1848,

The helpless Miamis were morally debauched at the annual payments, degraded socially by their intolerant exclusion from the civilization which supplanted them, and rendered politically unstable by treaty agreements with the federal government which were to be effective "in perpetuity" but which usually lasted less than ten years. Finally, they were driven west after every possible recourse had been extorted from them.28

27 Anson, Miami Indians, pp. 205, 206.

28 Ibid., p. 179.
People such as Dillon believed the government had been very unethical in its dealings with the "ignorant" Indians. In reality, those Indian chiefs who did the negotiating were wily and clever. They all managed to stay in Indiana, while their poorer brothers were sent west where the chiefs no longer had to deal with them.

**Indian Agents**

Although profiting personally from the job, most Indian agents performed adequately in the handling of the affairs of the 850 Miami Indians. The Indian agent had numerous duties: licensing of traders and the settlement of their claims and disputes with the tribes, enforcement of the intercourse regulations, disbursement of annuities and gifts, the expenditure of funds for improvements, and the punishment of unruly Indians. The agents also controlled trade, arranged Indian debt payments, dispensed annuities, settled grievances, and participated directly and indirectly in land speculation. Indiana had four early Indian agents: Benjamin Stickney before the War and after until 1819, Dr. William Turner 1819-1820, John Hays 1820-1823, and John Tipton 1823-1831. Usually the office of Indian agent was awarded to political leaders, relatives of high government officials, or to friends of the administration for partisan support. The agents were usually unqualified, the one exception being John Tipton.

Benjamin Stickney was first appointed agent at Fort Wayne in 1811. He was a satirical type of man and is best remembered for his tongue-in-cheek advice to Secretary of War William H. Crawford.

"It is much cheaper reducing them by meat and bread than by the force of the army. And from observations I have had the opportunity of making, that 3 or 4 months full feeding on meat and bread, even without ardent spirits, will bring on disease and in 6 or 8 months great mortality. And could
it be considered a proper mode of warfare I believe more
Indians might be killed with the expense of $100,000 in
this way than one million expended in the support of
armies to go against them. . . .

Stickney was succeeded by Dr. William Turner, who was eventually re-
moved for unsatisfactory conduct. Turner was succeeded by Hays, who
had to resign because the strains of the job were too much for his
health.

John A. Tipton ranks as the best-qualified Indian agent ever to
serve in Indiana. Tipton's relatively long term of office provided
some needed stability to the post. Tipton had a great deal of compas-
sion for the Indians, and not only knew what was happening in the lives
of the chiefs, but also what happened to the lowest members of the
tribe. He also understood the problems faced by the traders and set-
tlers, and thus was able to exert a great deal of influence on both
sides. Under Tipton's authority the Indian agency was moved from Fort
Wayne to Logansport in order to remove some of the harmful influences
from the Indians. Tipton tried to the best of his ability to protect
the Indians.

Tipton's concern for the Indians is illustrated by the time and
effort he put into one relatively simple transaction. Metocinyah, in
1824, wished to have a rail fence built around his tribal lands. It
took at least three letters to get the matter settled to the satisfac-
tion of the chief. That Tipton sometimes became frustrated with his
job is illustrated by a letter he wrote to John Eaton in Washington,
D.C. on February 15, 1830.

Sir,

In reply to the letter and memorial of the Miami chiefs

29 Ibid., p. 185.
complaining of the place appointed to pay their annuity for 1829, I have to say that the place was both central and convenient... In 1828 I paid these people at a place selected by their chiefs where there was no good water, in a river bottom covered with nettles. I told the chiefs I would not pay at that place again. In 1829 I proposed to pay on their reservation near the treaty ground 20 miles higher to the residence of the principal chief, but this was ten miles from a point where two chiefs have stores. I then appointed a place 8 miles below on the Wabash to which the chiefs would not come. The chiefs of this tribe will control the operations of the government unless the Department sustains the ground I have taken. I have done my duty and more than was in equity required... I believed it my duty to protect the ignorant from the grasp of their oppressors.

Your most obedient Servant,

John Tipton, Indian Agent

Tipton became very rich as a result of his moving the agency to Logansport because he was able to cash in on land during the canal boom. He maintained his integrity throughout his tenure as agent and eventually moved on to serve in the federal government in Washington. Later Indian agents included Samuel Milroy, John Johnston, and William Conner, but they did not leave such interesting legacies as Tipton.

Indian Traders

White traders helped to bring about the Indian's demise because of their willingness to dispense whiskey to them. Numerous traders were located in Fort Wayne, and some would sell the Indians anything. After the Indians received their annuity payments the whiskey flowed freely. The traders also sold guns to the Indians, and this resulted in much bloodshed while the Indians were in a drunken state. Traders who

---

30 Glen A. Blackburn, Nellie Armstrong Robertson, and Dorothy Riker (eds.), John A. Tipton Papers (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1942), II, 250.
engaged in such activities were unlicensed and had to perform their activities behind the back of law enforcement officials who were unable to eradicate them.

Licensed Indian traders, however, generally operated in a commendable manner. The Indians trusted these men and would request a certain trader for their village. Frequently these traders would marry into the tribe, send their children to the best schools available, and later emigrated west with the tribe. An early Indian trader in Grant County was Goldsmith Gilbert who had a trading post, until 1825, on the Mississinewa near the line between the present Pleasant and Washington Township lines. This post was burned by the Indians. William Conner was also a name famous in trading circles in the County. Conner enjoyed the respect of the Indians, but it is difficult to speculate about Gilbert since his post was burned.

Isaac McCoy

Isaac McCoy demonstrated a true concern for the Miamis by his mission work among them. McCoy, a Baptist missionary, lived at Raccoon Creek in southwestern Indiana in 1820 where he operated an Indian mission. He decided to move the mission to a site more nearly in the center of Indian activities. He sent his son-in-law, Johnston Lykins, to look for a place. They decided to locate their mission at the Miami villages on the Mississinewa River in Grant County. Dr. Turner, the Indian agent, discouraged them from settling in that spot because he feared not only the destruction of their property but that their lives would also be endangered because of intoxicated Indians.

McCoy made a journey through the Mississinewa villages to look over the situation before he agreed to move his mission to Fort Wayne.
A Delaware Indian guide, Hembus, accompanied him. When they approached the spot where they would cross the Mississinewa, they discovered their way blocked by a company of drunken Indians sitting on the ground. Hembus was rather frightened, saying he did not like drunken Indians, and he went to look for another place to cross the river. No other ford was nearby so they were forced to pass within sight of the Indians. As soon as the Indians saw them, they came rudely towards them. Fortunately, a sober young Indian recognized Hembus as one of his friends and told the others that they must leave McCoy and his guide alone.\(^{31}\)

In every village which McCoy visited along the Mississinewa, he found the Indians in a similar state. McCoy wished to see Joseph Richardville, son of the chief, but found it necessary to wait two hours until he awakened from his drunken slumber. The waiting was made miserable because of a group of drunken Indians who pestered McCoy the whole time. Once Richardville finally awakened, he was very accommodating to McCoy and accompanied him to Fort Wayne since no horse could be found for Hembus. After his trip through the Mississinewa towns, McCoy realized how great were the spiritual needs of these Indians. Indian agent, Joseph Stickney had described their spiritual state in 1817 in a letter to the Kentucky Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen.

They all believe in a God, as creator and governor, but have no idea of his will being communicated to man, except as it appears, occasionally, from his providential government. Some of them had been told of other communications having been made to the white people a long time since, and that it was written and printed; but they neither had conception nor belief in relation to it. Their belief in a future existence is a kind of transubstantiation—a removal from this existence

to one more happy, with similar appetites and enjoyment. They talk of a bad spirit, but never express any apprehensions of his troubling them in their future existence.  

McCoy stated, "The Indians would readily have consented to our wishes to settle at Mississinewa; but the agent, who resided at Fort Wayne, employed his influence to get us to the latter place."  

McCoy encountered more difficulties when he moved his belongings and once again had to pass through the Mississinewa villages. No Indian guide could be found, and all of the Indians were in a drunken uproar. At one place an intoxicated Indian threatened to throw a dead dog at McCoy, but he was stopped by an Indian of McCoy's acquaintance. Later, a drunken Indian seized McCoy's horse by the bridle and cursed him bitterly with English oaths. McCoy had no weapon but kept his hand on the Indian while the Indian held his horse with his left hand, and with his right felt around his belt for his knife. McCoy decided to throw himself off his horse on the opposite side and then to shift as the circumstances might dictate. By doing this, he was able to save his life.  

Even by 1820 the Indians had degenerated into a drunken society. Most people today have no conception of the devastating effect which alcohol had on the Indians. It completely changed their personalities and made people like McCoy comment, "Oh! What a wretched people!" Had it not been for alcohol, the Indians might have dealt with the pressures brought on by the white man's appearance in a much more mutually satisfactory way. As it was, they made no effort to cope but just tried to

---

33 McCoy, *Baptist Indian Missions*, p. 65.  
34 Ibid., pp. 72, 73.
drink their troubles away.

Emigration

Except for the Meshingomesia band, the Treaty of 1840 forced the Indiana Miamis to emigrate from the state. The last group of Miamis to go westward was the Mississinewa band. About 350 people left their homes in the fall of 1846, going to Cincinnati. There they were placed on a steamboat, taken down the Ohio, up the Mississippi, up the Missouri, and landed at Westport, Kansas late in the season. From Westport the Miamis were conducted to a place near the present town of Lewisburg, Kansas, where they settled, in the county since named Miami. They suffered greatly and nearly one-third of their number died the first year.35

The Miamis remaining in Grant County fared much better. They were the only group allowed to stay behind, and they lived on a ten square mile reservation in northwestern Grant County. Two explanations have been offered which attempt to explain why this band was allowed to remain. The first gives the credit to Indian agents Samuel Milroy and Allen Hamilton who both knew Meshingomesia's band did not want to leave. The village had turned into a haven for those who did not want to emigrate and for those who could not adjust to life on their individual reserves. The agents realized these people had the potential to stir up great trouble during the journey, and so they decided it would be easier to let them remain.

The other explanation offered also has merit. Meshingomesia's village was remote and was not needed as a settlement area for the white settlers. Since it was remote, the Indians presented no threat

35Beckwith, Illinois and Indiana Indians, p. 113.
to the white settlers. Normally, the Whites only worried about the Indian presence in areas essential for white settlement; otherwise, they were content to let them go on with their own way of life. This explanation is certainly plausible because even today the site of the Indian village is in a remote, sparsely inhabited area of Grant County. It is likely, however, that Milroy and Hamilton took both factors into consideration when they decided to let the Meshingomesia band stay behind, according to the terms of the Treaty of 1840. A new chapter was dawning for the Grant County Miamis, for they were the lone remnant of the former masters of the land. The next forty years would prove critical for them.
The treaties of the preceding years created the last Indian reservation in Indiana in Grant County. Although they were ignored by their relatives in Kansas and Oklahoma, the Grant County Indians were culturally significant. Because they basically kept to themselves, they were able to perpetuate the Miami culture much longer than any other group. The band did not intermarry with the Whites to any great extent. Their reservation was surrounded by Whites, but Meshingomesia lived in peace and was held in esteem by them.

**Life on the Meshingomesia Reserve**

The Meshingomesia reserve represented a cultural haven because of the Indians' segregation from the Whites. The reserve's economic base consisted of agriculture and annuities. The Indians also did a little hunting and trapping in order to supplement their income and to keep up some of their old ways. The Indians possessed the same basic material goods as the Whites, and so shared in their culture in that way. The total population of the reserve never was above sixty-three. They were never, however, assimilated into the mainstream of white culture but kept to themselves as much as possible.

Marriage presented itself as a major problem for those young Indians of marriageable age who remained in Indiana. Tribal regulations made incest strictly forbidden so the Indians had to look elsewhere for a mate. Many made trips to visit their relatives out west with the real motive of finding a mate. The situation was eased somewhat when a part-Delaware Indian, John Newman, from Maryland or Virginia, arrived on the reserve and married widow Jane Bundy. For some reason the children of this union were considered more distant relatives, and they
freely intermarried with members of the reserve band.\textsuperscript{36}

None of the Miamis of Grant County served in the Civil War. Their names appear on none of the service records. This fact is unusual since almost every able-bodied man in the area saw some type of active duty. The Miamis were a fair-sized group, but no one served. The most logical explanation for this omission is that they were trying to show that they were not citizens of the United States. Army service, an obligation of citizens, could be rejected by them. This rejection was a radical departure from their war-like past when war parties went out frequently.\textsuperscript{37}

Knowledge of the white man's ways came to the reservation by the erection of an Indian Baptist Church in the 1850's and of a school a few years later. Chief Meshingomesia assisted in the erection of the church and became a member the second Sunday in June, 1861. A white man named Babcock founded the church. The Indians believed the Great Spirit had come out of the water so the adoption of the Christian ritual of baptism was no great departure from their original beliefs. A Potawatomi Indian named Waucoon, whom Meshingomesia had adopted into the tribe, made some attempts to preach after he accepted Christianity. He built his own church near the "hog back" bend in the river, but it is also possible that he preached some at the church on the reservation. Waucoon refused to swear since he was a Christian. The story is told that one time his chickens were stolen, and he followed the thieves by the feathers on the trail and forgot he was a Christian when he found them. He also liked to go to the race track but justified this activity

\textsuperscript{36}Anson, Miami Indians, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 268
by saying that Jesus went among the sinners. Since he received no payment for his preaching services, he also farmed. Although he was uneducated, he was remembered as a good preacher by all who knew him. 38

The schoolhouse was built near the church, and Meshingomesia encouraged learning. The story is told that his sons hated school and would run away from it. Meshingomesia would take them to school and stay to listen to the children recite. In this way his sons attended school for three years and received a fairly good education for Indians at that time. Meshingomesia also assisted his grandson, William Peconga, in attending an Indian academy at Ladoga. The final term in the schoolhouse was held in 1896-1897. Utho Winger, a former president of Manchester College, was the teacher from 1895 to 1898. Meshingomesia also contributed to higher education by selling a tract of land he owned outside the reservation to a Quaker, Joseph White. White founded White's Manual Labor Institute in 1852. Many of the Indian children attended the school and received vocational training. 39

Meshingomesia ruled in Grant County as the last chief with any sort of organized tribal power. He ruled for forty years, beginning at the death of his father, Metocinyah, in 1839 and continuing until his own death in 1879. There is a controversy over the date of Meshingomesia's birth because it is questionable if he participated in the Battle of Mississinewa. Tradition and the inscription on his tombstone hold that he was born in 1782. That birthdate would have made him thirty at the time of the battle. In order to be a successful chief he would

38 Rolland Lewis Whitson, Centennial History of Grant County, Indiana (Chicago: Lewis, 1913), p. 53.
39 Anson, Miami Indians, p. 268.
have had to prove his bravery and battle skills. Meshingomesia, however, never mentioned his personal participation in the battle to anyone. If, on the other hand, the year of his birth, as given, was incorrect, he might have been a child when the battle was fought. That explanation would validate another old story which said he went with the women and children to a spot near Peru while the battle was fought. 40

Meshingomesia married a squaw named Takequah. They had two sons, Peconga and Awtawawtaw. Since he had no daughter of his own, Meshingomesia adopted a half-Indian girl, Louise, and raised her as his own. A false rumor circulated for years that Meshingomesia had two wives. The other squaw's name was Kegetonaquah, and apparently, she was the widow of one of Meshingomesia's brothers. The chief let her make her home with him after his brother's death, but she was never Meshingomesia's wife. 41

White men and Indians alike respected Meshingomesia. He was fairly intelligent and displayed common sense in the management of his affairs. At the time of his death he owned 160 acres of land. He did not discuss his personal affairs with the white men so it is difficult to ascertain specific details of his life. He adopted the white man's dress and lived his life as a temperate man. He displayed a kindness and confidence which commanded the respect of all who came in contact with him. The inscription on his burial monument reads, "He united with the Baptist Church and was baptized the second Sunday in June, 1861, and lived a consistent Christian until he was taken from the church militant to

40 Winger, Last of Miamis, p. 32.

41 Ibid., p. 33.
the church triumphant in heaven."  

Today in Grant County this man is remembered because of the name he shares with the local Country Club. Also, his picture hangs in the library in the Genealogy Room. Other than possibly recognizing his name, most people have no knowledge about the man. His memory is in danger of fading forever from the county.

Partitioning of the Reserve

The partitioning of the reservation sealed the demise of the Miamis as an entity in Grant County. As long as they lived on the reservation, the Indians had a secure existence. They were wards of the government and could not make contracts or incur debts. They could neither sue nor be sued. The Miamis were not considered citizens of the United States, and therefore, did not pay any taxes. Each had his home on the reservation and received fairly liberal payments each year in money and goods.

Discontent and the desire for citizenship grew among the Miamis. Although Meshingomesia did not favor the division of the reservation, the opposing forces finally prevailed upon him to seek such action. At the same time Congress decided it was best to break up tribal units and to encourage the assimilation of Indians throughout the nation. With those goals in mind, the Dawes Act was passed in 1871. This act abolished the treaty system and substituted executive authority which was granted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This agency's authority was used to order the division of the reservation.

---

Three commissioners were appointed in order to achieve a fair division of the land. The upcoming division of land was advertised in area newspapers along with the date of the hearing. The hearing was held on May 14, 1873 in the schoolhouse on the reservation. Meshingomesia spoke first and presented a list of those whom he believed were eligible. The commissioners spent weeks deliberating before arriving at a decision.

The Meshingomesia family in 1840 had fifty-six members, of whom fourteen were still living in 1873. In 1873, forty-three persons were direct descendants of the original fifty-six. There were also six women from other tribes or families who had married into the tribe and were equally entitled to full allotments. The commissioners compiled lists of persons in each group and decided that only sixty-three people were eligible for allotments.43

Each of the sixty-three people received allotments ranging from 75 to 110 acres, according to the size of his family and his importance within the tribe. The government stipulated that the Indians would not become citizens and could not dispose of their land until 1880.44

After they received their grants, many of the Miamis began to make improvements on their land. They built better residences and tried to acquire more of the white man's luxuries. In order to do this they had to borrow money. Unfortunately, the Indians, for the most part, had no understanding of the concept of borrowing and did not realize that the money would have to be paid back later. Many of the Indians had their homes taken away because of nonpayment of debts. As they lost their homes, most moved to Marion, Peru, Wabash, and other surrounding towns in search of a means of livelihood. They intermarried with the Whites.

43Anson, Miami Indians, p. 277.
and eventually lost their identity as a race.

Nelson Tawataw, the grandson of Meshingomesia, had a large brick house constructed by the Byrd Lumber Company. The Indians held tribal meetings on the second floor and the family lived on the first floor of the home. The white man's way of living did not agree with the Indians, who were used to living in log cabins with cracks between the logs. Soon after moving into his house in the spring of 1879, Nelson Tawataw became ill with tuberculosis. "One visitor to that home reported that she saw at one time in one room not only Tawataw but also his grandparents, Meshingomesia and his wife; his father, Awtawawtaw; his aunt and uncle, Peconga and his wife; and other Indians." All of the Indians listed above became sick and died before the following Christmas.

The division of the reservation ended the Miami's way of life. It separated the members of the tribe and made it impossible for them to continue their tribal traditions. They were further separated because of their financial problems. Those who remained in close contact contracted the same disease and all died. It is impossible to speculate whether the Miamis could have continued to live on a reservation surrounded by whites, but it is safe to say that they sealed their own doom because of their desire to own their own individual tracts of land.

Recollections of Old-Timers

The memories of persons who observed the Indians in the county indicated they had some amusing but possibly inaccurate memories of their Red neighbors. The 1921 graduating class of Marion High School

---

45 Winger, Last of Miamis, p. 37.
interviewed some of the elderly residents of the county and recorded some of their experiences with the Indians. All of the people remembered the Indians as being very friendly towards the white men. Often a white person would be invited to an Indian's house for dinner or to one of their adoption ceremonies.

At an adoption ceremony, the tribe made an outsider a member of the tribe. The Reverend William Rogers, a Methodist Protestant minister, claimed to have witnessed the ceremony many times. The day before the ceremony, logs and brush (combustible substances) were piled into a circle with a circumference of fifty feet. At the time of the ceremony, the adoptee sat in the center of this circle. A beer keg was partially filled with water and a deerskin placed over the top. An Indian would beat this instrument. The braves and squaws would dance until they were utterly exhausted. After this, the adoptee was officially a member of the tribe. A feast followed which consisted of whiskey, dog meat, and hominy.

Meshingomesia adopted a daughter, Louise Winters, by this method. According to Louise, her mother was murdered when she was one month old. An old Indian rescued Louise and cared for her until Meshingomesia asked for her. He had two sons but no daughter, and he promised to treat Louise as his own. She said he followed through on his promise, and he even performed her wedding ceremony.

Louise Winters said Meshingomesia talked to the "Great Spirit," and he could foretell events or call up spirits at will. Louise claimed to have heard spirits rapping and said it made her tremble. Even the dog scratched at the door and tried to get out of the house. Louise

45 The following information came from the book Lest We Forget, compiled by Core Straughan in 1921, located in Marion Public Library.
said she had seen Meshingomesia since he died, and he seemed very happy.

In the early years following the white man's settlement in the county, the Miamis conducted their business with David Conner. Silas Morehead remembered that Conner had a trading post and sold apples to the Indians. They would put them on the graves of the dead for food because they believed the dead arose in the night to eat. Conner, according to the story, would go out at night and take the apples off of the graves. The next day he would sell the same apples to the Indians and in that way he increased his profit.

Mr. Morehead also had an experience with the Indians and their burial procedures. Once Morehead and another man were at the Lower Village below Jalapa where they happened to see the end of a coffin or "dead box" that had been washed up by the rains. The men poked a stick into the coffin and found some whiskey bottles. The Indians buried whiskey, money, dogs, guns, ammunition, or any other article they thought the dead would need right in the coffin. They wrapped the men in blankets, and the squaws were wrapped with cloth from the waist to the feet.

One of the most common memories was that of the Indians coming to town to do their trading. Henry Zellers Blinn remembered that when Meshingomesia was chief, the Indians would come to town on their ponies in a single-file line. The chief was at the head of the line followed by the warriors. The squaws came next with their papooses on their backs, and finally the little boys and girls. Sometimes when they arrived in Marion they would give a war whoop. They interested the children greatly because they wore such funny looking clothes. Another resident, Mrs. Laura Stout, recalled that the men and women both rode astride. The women used blankets and shawls for skirts and tied very large, bright handkerchiefs around their heads. It is said that they
often came to town to buy or trade for calico materials, but they always purchased just eight yards at a time.

The residents believed the Indians spent their money rather foolishly. When the government bought the land near Marion from the Indians, all of them bought whiskey with their money. The squaws all got high black silk hats which they wore with pride. The Indians from the reservation would come long distances to hear a Mr. Hamilton play his flute. They would stack quarters on the table until the piles fell. Then they would start other stacks until their money was gone, at which time they would leave in a single-file line as they had come.

The citizens of Marion remembered the Indians as objects of curiosity who had strange habits. They recognized neither their cultural nor their economic value to the area. They were a factor to be laughed at rather than to be taken seriously. It is a great loss to historians that no one ever sat down to talk with the Indians to record their history and the reasons behind their customs. That part of history has been lost forever.
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In the years since the division of the reservation interest has increased by the Miami descendants in their tribe and by residents of the county in tribal history. This renewed interest was first exhibited by area residents in 1883 when it was decided, in a meeting held at the battlefield, that an attempt should be made to purchase the area and to preserve it. Senator John T. Strange of Grant County introduced a bill in the Indiana General Assembly for the purchase of the battleground by the state. The bill passed, and the battleground was saved from development. Some of the older residents did realize the significance of at least a portion of the Miami history in Grant County and took an interest in preserving it.

Reorganization of the Tribe in Indiana

Members of the Indiana Miami tribe eventually realized that their Oklahoma relatives were receiving all of the benefits given by the government to the Miami tribe. This occurred because the federal government did not recognize the existence of the Indiana tribe. The Indiana Miamis began filing petitions for recognition as early as 1937. Their efforts met with total failure until 1954. At that time the Indian Claims Commission recognized the existence of a Miami tribe in Indiana separate from the one in Oklahoma. Significant influencing factors in this decision were two separate census roles of the Miamis taken in 1881 and 1895. The names on the lists were used to determine the number of descendants still in the area. "The authenticity of the lists was vouched for by five Miami signatures--Gabriel and Peter Godfroy, Judson and Peter Bundy, and Anthony Walker."47

47 Anson, Miami Indians, p. 279.
In 1956 the Commission ruled that the prices paid the Miamis for their land had been unrealistically low. "The tribe was ordered to receive $5,177,000 to bring the original price from 6.4¢ per acre to 75¢ per acre." The Miamis of Indiana were formally recognized by the Commission in 1958. After being recognized, a tribal meeting was held in Peru, and the members of the newly reorganized tribe decided to appeal the 75¢ per acre price. As a result, the amount was raised to $1.15 per acre. The old census roles were used to help distribute the money after claim forms were filed by Indian descendants. "Each Indian received $1,237.69 in 1969." The legal battles and investigations helped to maintain the common historical heritage of the scattered Miamis.

After being recognized as an official Indian tribe the Miamis of Indiana chose their first chief since Meshingomesia. The new chief was William F. Hale, great-grandson of Metocinyah.

The meeting at which this was done designated itself as a tribal council. Eleven other men were elected councilmen—and also clan chiefs to recognize a cultural memory. The Richardville, Godfrey, Meshingomesia, and smaller family groups were represented at the meeting and a measure of the Indiana Miami unity was finally achieved. Regular tribal meetings have been held since that time, the last one occurring in the summer of 1981 near Huntington. Chief Hale is now elderly and ill, and it appears that a new chief will soon have to be chosen.

Revised County Interest

Within the last five years people in the county have started to

---

48 Ibid., p. 284.

49 Ibid., p. 287.
realize the importance of Miami history to the county. This recognition has come in the form of historic preservation efforts. In 1976 the RCA's Marion Plant undertook the restoration of the Indian Cemetery as its bicentennial project. The cemetery had been almost totally destroyed by vandals who upset most of the tombstones. About thirty employees of RCA worked on successive Saturday mornings in May of 1976. They cleared overgrown brush, removed the tombstones from their decaying bases, poured new cement bases, and then replaced the stones in the new cement. A map was made of the cemetery, and rubbings were taken from the tombstones. A file folder with photographs was placed in the Marion Public Library. Thanks to the efforts of this group the Indian Cemetery is now a beautiful, secluded spot to visit in the County.

Nearby the Indian Cemetery is the farmhouse of Bob and Evelyn Sirk. This home was the one built by Nelson Tawataw. Across the road from the home is a small building now used for grain storage. A hundred years ago it was the Indian school, and the original slate blackboards are still on the walls. Plans are being made to move the school to an area nearer the cemetery, located one-half mile northwest of the Sirk house. Ideally, the schoolhouse will be restored to its original condition and opened for interested persons to tour. The Sirk's have opened their home upon at least one occasion to a tour group from a local nursing home.
CONCLUSION

The Miami Indians lived in Grant County for at least 175 years. They began their existence in the area as its sole masters. They lived along the Mississinewa River and hunted in the surrounding woods. The Indians' first major contact with the white men came in 1812 when the Battle of Mississinewa was fought. Although the Battle was basically a draw, the Indians were the losers in the long run. Through a series of treaties they were forced to give up all of their land holdings except for a small reservation in Grant County.

The Meshingomesia band was the last Miami group in Indiana to have any sort of tribal structure. Eventually, however, the Indians became discontented with their situation, the federal government adopted a policy to assimilate Indians, and the reservation was divided up into individual tracts of land. After that, the Indians either lost their land through poor financial dealings, or else they died. Their descendants scattered, and no tribal meetings were held until 1958 when the tribe was officially recognized by the Indian Claims Commission. Today it is estimated that there are over 3,500 descendants of the Miamis in the Marion, Huntington, Wabash, and Hartford City areas, who have assimilated into the white man's world.

When the Indians ceased to function in Grant County as a tribe, an important cultural aspect of county life was lost. It is deplorable that people did not appreciate the value of the Indians and their heritage until almost one hundred years later. Now some interest is being shown by local residents in preserving what is left of the Indians' history, but this interest is regrettably small and could be easily extinguished.

Those people who have an interest in the history of the Miami
Indians in Grant County must take a more aggressive role in trying to stimulate local interest. This history should be taught in local schools to increase the knowledge of area residents about the Indians. Perhaps a specific group aimed at the preservation of the historic Miami sites should be formed. The local historical society and the newspaper could be a great help in such an undertaking. Grant County residents are at a crossroads in their knowledge of Miami Indian history. This knowledge will either continue to grow in importance, or the Indians will slide into oblivion with no mourning from anyone. The time has come to make the choice.
1. Kekionga, the Miami Capital
2. Ouiatanon, the Wea Capital
3. Miami on the St. Joseph
4. Ke na pe com a qua
5. The Turtle Village
6. The Mississinewa Village
7. Metocimyah Village
8. Forks of the Wabash
9. The Piqua Miami Village
10. Kokomo Miami Village

(Winger, Last of Miamis, p. 4)
BATTLE OF MISSISSINEWA SITE

MISSISSINEWAY VILLAGE

OSAGE VILLAGE

VILLAGE

METOCINYAH'S VILLAGE

SILVER HEELS' VILLAGE

MISSISSINEWAY AREA
1812

SITE OF BATTLE

(Wabash River)

(Holliday, Battle, I, p. 11.)
LAND CESSIONS

Ceded to the United States by the Poowatemies, by various treaties before 1834. The Miamis gave up all claim to this land at the treaty at Wabash 1826.

Ceded to the United States by the Miami Indians at the treaty of St. Mary's 1818.

Ceded to the United States before the War of 1812 at the treaties of Greenville near Vincennes in 1805, and at Fort Wayne 1809 by the Miami, El River, Wea, Piankeshaw, Potawatomies and Delawares.

(Winger, Last of Miamis, p. 10)
HISTORIC SITES

Designed and Drawn
by
Otho Wingar and
Ada Louise Duckwall

(Glenn, Swartz, and Lewis,
Archaeological Reports, p.
196.)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


*A Century of Development: Grant County, Indiana.* Marion, In: Grant County Junior Historical Society, 1937.


Straughan, Lora M. (comp.) *Lest We Forget.* Marion: Printing Department of Marion High School, 1921.

"Treaties of Greenville, 1818, 1826, 1834, 1838, 1840." Xeroxed material. Delaware County Archives, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, In.


-------. *The Lost Sister Among the Miamis.* Elgin, Ill: The Elgin Press, 1936.