



historically speaking

THE WAY IT WAS

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The Cass City Historical Society held its open meeting on Monday afternoon, February 18th, in the Library's meeting room. We enjoyed a presentation by Pat Perkins telling about her family's raising, training and showing their prize Clydesdale horses. It was a most interesting and enjoyable program. If you were not there you missed a very interesting, good time.

A note of correction in our last history letter about Tom Keenoy. Somehow in the printing the pictures got reversed with Tom's name on Captain McLachlan's picture and the captain's name on Tom's picture.

"2019" a 200 Anniversary Year

This year, **2019** marks the 200th Anniversary Year of the signing of the **Treaty of Saginaw** in **1819**, which allowed the



Treaty Territory

settlement of the land on which we live today. It also marks the time when the land was made an official part of the United States as a part of the Northwest Territory. The Northwest Territory included the area which is now the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. Michigan became a state in 1835. The territorial governor at the



Lewis Cass

time and also the negotiator and signer of the treaty was Cass City's namesake, General Lewis Cass. One hundred and fourteen Indian chiefs also signed the treaty including "Saybo" who legend claims represented our area. The Indians did not have a written language so their names were spelled out phonetically, and each chief signed by his name with an 'X'. A copy of this treaty is in the Saginaw Library.

The Indian chiefs came from all over the territory—some walked in their moccasins along worn trails, some came by river in birch bark canoes, and some may have ridden horses. It was an exciting event to come powwow and feast with all the other chiefs. Each came dressed in their finest buckskins and other items of native dress.

Although areas of land were set aside for the Indians some of the older chiefs were against signing the treaty fearing the end results. It was a time of turmoil



An Indian Chief

for them in the meeting of two very different cultures with more settlers coming. The Indian women wanted the things the pioneer women had – homes with wooden floors, cooking utensils, colorful woven clothing materials, and other modern things of the time. Some of the fairest Indian maidens were marrying the single settlers.

The payment the Indians received for forfeiting the rights to the land was in silver dollars, milking cows, blankets, tools, medicine, and the services of blacksmiths for teaching the trade. Traders were present with all their wares to sell to the Indians, and sadly this included whisky. The Indians were not used to trading in monetary terms, but trading item for item. They often bargained for more money than they had, and many traders were left holding the bag. They also could not handle their “fire water”. Many conflicts arose before it was all over.

The story of the Chippewa Chief Saybo is adapted from the rare book, “Chippewa Trails and Indian Tales”, by Mary Cobb Langley of Caseville, MI, published in 1968. She states that the book is fiction but is based on true facts.

The story takes place in what is now Sanilac and Tuscola Counties along the Huron River, which was later renamed the Cass River after General Cass. The tribal camp would move from time to time according to the availability of food and other resources in the form of animals of prey and vegetation. Their camp was usually not too far from the river their main means of transportation.

Saybo’s father, Chief Osbese, was growing older and had already lost three wives that had not given him a son to succeed him as chief. Chief Osbese married a daughter of a white trader and a Wyandotte maiden. Her name was Andescara and she bore him the much awaited son. Andescara had strange, green eyes while the other wives in the tribe all had dark eyes. When Saybo was born he had one leg that was shorter than the other which made him somewhat crippled as a boy.

However as he grew older, he became quite tall and his leg grew out so that it only left him with a limp. The other squaws of the tribe were very superstitious of Andescara’s green eyes believing she had an evil spirit which caused the problems that occurred within the tribe and with her son’s leg. After many complaints and a council meeting she was forced to leave the tribe and her son. It is not known what happened to her.

When Saybo had reached the age of 12 years it was time for him to meet his Manitou, his rite of passage from boyhood to becoming an adult brave. This involved his enduring an ordeal which would reveal his mission in life. It required him to go out from the tribe alone to a remote place with only the clothes on his back and a blanket. During this time he was to fast - meaning that he take nothing to eat or drink until he had his spiritual experience, which would come in a dream. As the story goes the tribe was somewhere near what is now the town of Caro. He was to find a higher place to sit alone with his thoughts and sleep at night until his Manitou dream would come. For two days and nights nothing unusual happened, but on the third night when he was weak from hunger and thirst he dreamed that he was on a rock ledge and a giant turtle came up from the river and was advancing toward him. The turtle’s eyes bored into him as if he was aiming to eat him alive. Saybo panicked and tried to escape but his leg wouldn’t let him move. He was helpless. Finally his own screaming woke him up, and he lay there exhausted. He knew he had met his Manitou. He finally fell back to sleep, and this time dreamed he was in a peaceful valley filled with flowers and singing birds. When he awoke, his ordeal being over he gathered up his blanket, went to the river to bathe and quench his thirst, and return to the tribe.

When Saybo got back to camp he went to see his uncle (who was likely the shaman or medicine man) to learn

what his dream meant. After he had eaten he told his story about his dream encounter with the giant turtle, and the second dream of the peaceful valley. His uncle revealed to him the meaning. The turtle would have eaten you alive with your bad leg. You have not been fruitful. You have let the women of the tribe pamper you. You have not taken your part in the wrestling games and sports, nor have you done your share in hunting and fishing to help feed the tribe. Your father hangs his head in shame. The young braves think of you with scorn. Your second dream of waking in the peaceful valley reveals that you can overcome all of this. You must take your place in the competitive events and win them all. Also you also must become skillful in hunting and fishing and other work within the camp. Only then can you take your father's position as Chief of the tribe.

The fact that Saybo was one of the chiefs that signed the treaty reveals that he must of followed his spiritual mission, his Manitou.

The turtle totem is a Chippewa spiritual symbol of Strength, Patience and Steadfastness of Purpose. The Shaman is an important position in the Indian culture as he is trained in the medical arts with natural remedies, and because they had no written language he kept in his memory the stories and legends of the past as well as being the wise spiritual guide of the tribe.



A Chippewa Shaman

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