

***The Mystery of Me-Gwun's Village and the Tragedy of the Last of the Potawatomi in
Lake County, Indiana***

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The Mystery Begins: Early histories of Lake County discuss the existence of a well-known, long-established, and somewhat mysterious Potawatomi village at present day Merrillville, Indiana. Not much is remembered or written about the village, only that the village was named by early settlers after the former Potawatomi head chief at the time of settlement, and is written as “McGwinn’s Village,” in most early histories and by early county historians. Though in an examination of the treaties between the Potawatomi, the state of Indiana, and federal government, nowhere is there listed a chief named “McGwinn.” In an attempt to figure out the mystery of “McGwinn,” and the Potawatomi village at Merrillville, a long-forgotten and dark chapter of local and state history began to reveal itself in the form of historical tragedy that was glossed over in written histories, by county historians, and by local historical societies.¹

“The Calumet Region of northwestern Indiana was a great hunting ground for the Indians... Important trails passed through this marshy, sandy land just as today railroads go in all directions. There was once an important Indian village at what is now Merrillville.”² This Potawatomi village, lost to history now, was just off the great Sauk Trail, was well-known and long-established in its time, and was one of several village settlements and important ceremonial grounds in Lake County, Indiana’s last frontier. The village at what became Merrillville was named by white settlers after its chief around the time of treaties and settlement in the 1830s, written in early histories of Lake County as “McGwinn’s Village.” However, through research of early histories of the county, primary documents from settlement period and early settlers themselves, and by re-examining treaties with the Potawatomis of northern Indiana, the full story and true name of the important Potawatomi village in the Calumet Region comes into focus.

¹ Credit and gratitude for the idea of the introduction needs to go to Dr. Jim Lane of Indiana University Northwest who suggested it during the proofreading stages of crafting the essay.

² Winger, Otho. *The Potawatomi Indians*. Elgin, IL: The Elgin Press, 1939. P. 57.

This village, like many Indigenous villages of the Old Northwest, was the site of a series of unfortunate tragedies that played out between white settlers and the last remaining Indigenous peoples as land was taken. Worst of all white settlers, the earliest written histories, and historians of Lake County misread and misremembered the chief's name from the important 1832 treaty, missed it in other treaties, and wrongly recorded it in books, then monuments, later articles, and ultimately in public memory for almost two hundred years. The point of this essay is to tell the full and known history of Me-Gwun's Village in what is now Merrillville, Indiana and to give some background to other important Potawatomi sites in Lake County. Hopefully the community, its historians, and historical societies will help to rectify the record and correctly remember the Potawatomi people, and other Indigenous peoples, who once hunted, grew crops, lived in, and were buried in the Calumet Region and Lake County, Indiana.

Potawatomi History and Background: By the close of the seventeenth century, the Potawatomi were coming to the end of a long migration process that saw them starting in the area of the Sault Ste. Marie, being forced to migrate west due to warfare and pressure from the powerful Iroquois. The Potawatomi were first encountered by Europeans on the western shores of Lake Michigan, near Green Bay, WI. Later, the Potawatomi were pushed east from pressure from the Souix, forced to migrate back into northern Michigan. Eventually, after the threat of Iroquois had been removed, Potawatomi peoples spread out and expanded throughout Michigan, around the southern tip of Lake Michigan, into modern day northern Indiana and Illinois.³ Throughout the eighteenth century, the Potawatomi settled even further south into Indiana, Illinois, and around Lake Michigan. Quickly becoming one of the more numerous of the Old Northwest Indigenous nations, the Potawatomi participated in both Fox Wars in the first part of

³ Edmunds, R. David. *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978. P. 3-15. Also see: Winger, Otho. *The Potawatomi Indians*. Elgin, IL: The Elgin Press, 1939. P. 11-13.

the eighteenth century, allying with the French who laid claim to the region since 1534.⁴ The Potawatomi fought on the side of the French during the French and Indian War. Following the French defeat, the British gained control of the Old Northwest and colonists began to move west into Indigenous lands, the Potawatomi and many other nations joined the Odawa Chief Pontiac and the Delaware prophet Neolin in their resistance against the British and colonization in what is known as Pontiac's War from 1763 to 1766. The Potawatomi were integral to multiple attacks and ambushes, among notable mentions included helping to attack and siege Fort Detroit, sacking Fort St. Joseph, attacking the British at Point Pelee, and attempting an amphibious assault on the sloop, the *Michigan*.⁵

The beginning of the American Revolution saw the Potawatomi settled securely in the Kankakee river valley. At the outbreak of the revolution, some Potawatomi were quick to join the British side, while Potawatomi peoples closer to the Americans were slower to get involved, but eventually most of the Potawatomi had joined the British. This was done with the mindset that joining the British and opposing the Americans would stop the waves of settlers making their ways across the Appalachians and up across the Ohio river.⁶ At the end of the Revolution, with many assists and victories in their own right, Indigenous peoples of the Old Northwest saw the war as a success. From the point of view of the Potawatomi and other Indigenous peoples, they and their British allies had won more victories over the Americans, had defended their lands, taken more forts and territory from the Americans, and had inflicted more losses; from their point of view the Indigenous peoples had won.⁷

⁴ Edmunds, *The Potawatomis*, 24-38.

⁵ Ibid. P. 75-96.

⁶ Edmunds, *The Potawatomis*, 100-101.

⁷ Ibid. P. 115.

At the Treaty of Paris in 1783, Potawatomi and other Indigenous peoples were not represented, nor were their claims heard. Despite a spectacular military showing during the revolution in the west, often besting their American counterparts, Indigenous peoples had no input on the treaty. The lands of the Old Northwest had again traded hands from the British to the newly sovereign Americans.⁸ Settlers had already been moving into the lower Ohio area and were moving further into southern Indiana and Illinois. The Potawatomi and other Indigenous nations, encouraged by the British, began to form a unified resistance and opposition to American expansion. This eventually developed into the Northwestern Indian Wars, or Little Turtle's War. This conflict lasted almost a decade from the mid 1780s to the mid 1790s and saw the Indigenous confederacy, including the Potawatomi, defeat the Americans in several incredible and noteworthy battles, including Harmar's Defeat and St. Claire's Defeat, which was the greatest Indigenous victory over Americans in American military history.⁹

Throughout the latter part of the 1790s and into the early part of the nineteenth century, the Potawatomi, like many other Indigenous nations, were faced with an exponentially worsening situation. White settlers were moving over the Appalachians, up across the Ohio, into the newly acquired Ohio territory and further into lands that were technically still Indigenous lands in the modern Indiana and Illinois. Indigenous peoples from the east were pushed west onto Potawatomi lands, compounding living and hunting spaces. American traders from Kentucky were bringing increasing amounts of hard whisky and generic alcohol into Indigenous communities. Older village chiefs who had once opposed American expansion with warfare, were now more inclined to meet with Americans and sign treaties, giving over more and more land when many younger Indigenous peoples in the nation opposed further land cessions.

⁸ Ibid. P. 116

⁹ Ibid. P. 116-136.

Within this all encompassing crisis in 1805, Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee Prophet, and his brother Tecumseh came to head the last great Indigenous resistance movement east of the Mississippi. The Potawatomis, along with many other Indigenous peoples, came to join the two Shawnee brothers first at their village near Greenville, OH, then later at their village on the Tippecanoe in Indiana, known as Prophetstown.¹⁰ Potawatomi from the northern parts of Indiana and Illinois continued to oppose American expansion and attempt to push back at white settlements, they also ignored American Indian Agent's warnings against going to war with other Indigenous peoples. Potawatomi chiefs like Main Poc and Turkey Foot continued to harass white settlements, steal horses, take shipments of supplies and goods, and participated in the war with other Indigenous peoples against the Osages.¹¹ As this evolved into part of the War of 1812, many Potawatomi sided with the British, Tenskwatawa, and Tecumseh and fought against the Americans, again realizing that British victory might mean less white settlers coming from the east coast. The Potawatomis were present at the Battle of Tippecanoe and were led by Shabbona, Waubensee, and Winamac.¹² Despite in many cases offering stiff resistance to the American military and militias, making a few important victories, and being the driving force of the war in the west, the Indigenous allies were again left out of the treaty making process following the war's end during the Treaty of Ghent. This signified an end of an era, as the British pulled out of the Old Northwest and the Americans took over administration white

¹⁰ Ibid. P. 163-166.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 153-161 - For information on both Main Poc and Turkey Foot. Also, for information on Turkey Foot, the Potawatomi Chief who lived in current day Newton County, opposed white settlement, and was an ally of Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh see: Ade, John. *Newton County... A Collection of Historical Facts and Personal Recollections Concerning Newton County, Indiana, From 1853-1911*. The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, Indianapolis, 1911.

¹² Ibid. P. 177. It should be noted here that there were two chiefs named Winamac that lived during the same time period. One was an American ally and the other was very hostile to the U.S. It should go without saying that the Winamac who participated in the Battle of Tippecanoe was the hostile Winamac.

settlers were already making their ways further and further into Indigenous lands and now there was no other world power to help balance the scales and stop American settlers' expansion.¹³

With British defeat in 1815 and the end of the war, Indigenous peoples of the Old Northwest were faced with an increasingly unfortunate and dire situation. Made to sign a slew of treaties and faced with ever increasing settlement, the Potawatomi were facing exile from their homelands. Beginning with the second Treaty of Greenville in 1814 and subsequent treaties throughout the first quarter of the 19th century many Indigenous nations that called land in Ohio and Indiana home were made to sign away their land. Many of these treaties were quickly drawn up, signed with Indigenous nations and chiefs who might not have actually inhabited the land being ceded, many times alcohol was a major factor in persuading signatories, and many times the chiefs that signed away land were not duly appointed by their nation to do so. Many friendly, older village chiefs and mixed white/indigenous translators made out well while common people in the tribal communities got nothing.¹⁴ The treaties were a sad, unfair, disadvantaged, forceful, drunken, and forced process in which no matter how many times the Indigenous peoples declined, agents, states, and federal government kept coming back until the deed was done.

On May 28, 1830, Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which authorized the federal government to sell lands west of the Mississippi to Indigenous nations in exchange for their land within existing state borders east of the Mississippi. At this time much of northern Indiana was still inhabited by the Potawatomi. Through various meetings and treaties, the state acquired the lands of the Potawatomi in Northwest and Northern Indiana by 1832/1833, and though it is reported that some lingered in that area until as late as the 1860s, many were forced

¹³ Ibid. P. 205-207. For more information on Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh see: R. David Edmunds. *The Shawnee Prophet*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983. And R. David Edmunds. *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership*. London: Longman Publication Group, 1984.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 218-225.

out of their lands by the late 1830 and early 1840s as a result of those treaties.¹⁵ Land in Porter County, to the east of Lake County, wasn't legally sold on the market until 1835. While land in Lake County wasn't legally sold on the market until 1839. Before that, early pioneer settlers were laying claim to and squatting on government owned land, on which the Potawatomi had rights to continue to live, farm, hunt, and fish. There was much confusion surrounding the three October 1832 treaties with the Potawatomi that ceded the lands of Northwestern Indiana, which included Me-Gwun's village. Quite a few prominent Potawatomi chiefs had opposed selling land in northwestern Indiana, complained of being taken advantage of and divided in treaty negotiations, and continued to live in Northwestern Indiana for some time afterwards, until later forced removal.¹⁶

The situation that developed due to the white settlement of Indigenous lands, bogus treaty signing, and the general tribal confusion/dissolution that was occurring as people migrated and Indigenous nations broke apart all eventually led to Blackhawk's War in 1832. Following Blackhawk's rebellion against white encroachment throughout the 1830s several high-profile

¹⁵ Madison, James H. *The Indiana Way: A State History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986. Pg. 122-126. McDonald, Daniel. *Removal of the Pottawattomie Indians from Northern Indiana*. Plymouth, IN: D. McDonald & Co., Printers and Binders, 1899. Pg. 13-19. Barce, Elmore. *The Land of the Potawatomi*. Fowler, IN: Indiana Historical Society, 1919. Pg. 33-41.

¹⁶ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Northwestern Indiana from 1800 to 1900: or A View of our Region Through the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago, IL: Donohue & Henneberry, 1900. Pg. 59-60. The history and background of the Lake County Squatters' Union is deserving of its own historical essay. It's fascinating if only for the radicalism it was willing to go to in order to defend their claims. Also see: Edmunds, Russel David. *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978. Pg. 241-243. There were three treaties with the Potawatomi of Northern IL, IN, and Southern MI in October 1832, one gave the right to continue to live on their land until land sales to settlers, one gave years to live before being removed, another left unspecified exactly what should happen. All renegotiated treaties later, and most reservations from these treaties were sold to the federal or state government in subsequent treaties.

instances of forced removal from northern and central Indiana were recorded. Catholic missionaries, sent to convert the Potawatomi to Christianity and to assimilate them to white-settler ways, recorded the most well-known instance of this: Indiana's infamous Trail of Death. The Trail of Death was the forced removal of Chief Menominee's band of Potawatomi settled near the Twin Lakes region of Marshall County, Indiana. On September 4, 1838, more than 850 Potawomi and other Indigenous peoples were forcibly rounded up, their chiefs, including Menominee, were shackled and thrown in a barred cage wagon, and they were forced to leave their lands by militia volunteers led by Indian Dept. Agents Abel Pepper and state Senator John Tipton, who were given the orders by then Governor of Indiana David Wallace.¹⁷

The Potawtomi and Chief Menominee had been promised to be able to stay on their land, and Chief Menominee had vocally spoken out against the bogus treaties that the government had used to push the Potawatomi off their land previously. As others had before him, Menominee had continually asserted that he had never agreed to sell their land and would not sign any treaty doing so. Menominee gave an emotional speech in which he said, "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..."¹⁸ Menominee and his people were forced by gunpoint off of their long-held claim and made to leave Indiana, marched through central Indiana, central Illinois, across the Mississippi River, through Missouri, and into Kansas. The journey was approximately 660 miles over 61 days, arriving in early November, just before the start of winter with very few supplies, little food, and no chance of planting crops before the freezing weather of the plains set in. Along the way more than 40 people died, many of the women, children, and elderly peoples, and the Potawatomis were forced to leave many in makeshift graves along the route with no marker

¹⁷ Edmunds, *The Potawatomis*, P. 267.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* P. 267.

and no ceremony. To quote R. David Edmunds, “The trip was a disaster... nearly 300 suffered from typhoid... so many became ill and fell behind that a separate and smaller removal followed in the wake of the original... and before they reached Kansas they left forty-two of their kinsman buried along the trail.”¹⁹ The Trail of Death was the single largest forced removal in Indiana state history and sadly it remains unknown what happened to their Chief Menominee as he was reported to have never reached the Kansas reservation.²⁰

But unfortunately by this time most of the Potawatomi in Indiana had been made to fraudulently sign away their land, many had already been made to move despite protest, and only a select few remained in the northern and northwestern part of the state. In northwest Indiana, especially Lake County, there existed longer than anywhere else Potawatomi villages, dance floors, ceremonial grounds, cemeteries, and sacred spots. In fact, in what is now Merrillville there once was one of the more well-established Potawatomi villages. This village was almost forgotten and completely misremembered, known due to errors in the early histories as “McGwinn’s Village.” The real name of the Potawatomi chief who led and inhabited this village at what is now Merrillville was Me-Gwun.²¹ This is the story of Me-Gwun, his village, and how his village and name were misremembered and almost forgotten.

Bibliography and History Forgotten: Piecing together the story of Me-Gwun’s village and other Potawatomi sites in Lake County, Indiana was a difficult and laborious task which has taken years to uncover. There are unfortunately few primary sources from the 1830s that still exist, either white settler or Indigenous. And while there are a few important and well-written

¹⁹ Ibid. P. 267-271.

²⁰ McDonald, *The Removal of the Pottawattomie Indians from Northern Indiana*, P. 42. For more information about the background to the Trail of Death and information about Chief Menominee, also see P. 32-42. And also see Madison, *The Indiana Way*, P. 122-126. This also covers removal and the Trail of Death.

²¹ Treaty with the Potawatomi, October 20, 1832. Accessed through Oklahoma State University. URL: <https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-potawatomi-1832-0353>.

secondary sources, one from early settler T. H. Ball, they were written over 40 years after the initial settlement of Lake County. Further, almost all subsequent secondary sources actually draw on this first original history of Lake County by Ball, which was mistaken in reading and remembering the Potawatomi village in Lake County. However, through re-examining the early histories of the county, existing primary documents from settlement period and from early settlers themselves, and by re-examining treaties with the Potawatomi peoples of northern Indiana, the full story and true name of the important Potawatomi village in the Calumet Region comes into focus.

This first history written about Lake County, Indiana was T. H. Ball's *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*, published in 1872. Ball's family were early settlers of Lake County, Ball himself grew up in the county. His 1872 history of the county was published almost a little over 40 years after the first settlement of the Calumet Region. This source is among the most important histories of the early period of the county. It includes chapters on the early environmental history and scenery, lists of early settlers and information on where they settled, the development of the county in the early 1830s, and of course information about the Potawatomi who lived on the land as the early settlers came into the region. Based on early official records and written sources, some of which no longer exist or can be found, as well as diaries, personal recollections, and conversations of still-living early settlers, Ball's work can also be seen as a primary source document. It's supremely important to note that almost every other source after this basically repeats much of the information in Ball's work about early settlement, settlers, certain anecdotal stories, and especially the last Potawatomi settlements in the Calumet Region and Lake County. This includes repeating the mistakes he made in writing about and remembering Potawatomi villages in the region. Ball goes into more detail about Potawatomi

history in this initial work than any other source after this, including his own other works. Ball himself would go on to write several other books and papers about Lake County, including two of the other main histories of the county and northwestern Indiana, all of which repeat this early history and the mistakes therein, but all in significantly less detail.

Following Ball's first book there was Wenston A. Goodspeed and Charles Blanchard's *History of Porter and Lake Counties, Indiana, 1882* (1882). Then T.H. Ball's second historical account of Lake County, titled *Lake County, Indiana, 1884: An Account of the Semi-centennial Celebration of Lake County, September 3 and 4, with Historical Papers and Other Interesting Records...* (1884). Fourth was Ball's third book on Northwest Indiana history *Northwestern Indiana from 1800 to 1900: or A View of our Region Through the Nineteenth Century* (1900). William Frederick Howat's (supervising editor) *A Standard History of Lake County, Indiana and the Calumet Region, Volume 1* (1915) is a fifth history of the region. James Lester's *Historical Records of the Lake County Old Settler and Historical Association of Lake County, Indiana* (1924) followed Howat's work. Herbert Kellar's collection of Solon Robinson's writings, *Solon Robinson: Pioneer and Agriculturist; Vol. 1, 1825-1845* (1936) is both a primary document with writings from Solon Robinson, an early settler, and also a secondary document that includes information by that author. Sam Woods' *The First Hundred Years of Lake County, Indiana* (1938) is the next source, though this has a focus on settler history. The Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration, State of Indiana *The Calumet Region Historical Guide* (1939) is an important conglomeration of sources up to that point in time. Powell Moore's *The Calumet Region: Indiana's Last Frontier* (1959) is a final in the line of the great histories of Lake County. And most recently Kenneth Schoon's *Calumet Beginnings: Ancient Shorelines and Settlements at the South End of Lake Michigan* (2003) acts as another important overall view of early regional

history. The better written of these cite Ball directly, but all of them invariably repeat the same information and mistake about Potawatomi settlement and “McGwinn’s Village.”

To seek more information about the Potawatomi in northwest Indiana and Lake County, one must look at the few secondary sources written about the Potawatomi themselves. Though there is a lack of secondary sources written by or about the Potawatomi in the region, there are a few good histories of them in general in the northern part of the state that help to shed some light on their settlements. The first to mention is Daniel McDonald’s *Removal of the Pottawattomie Indians From Northern Indiana* (1899). McDonald was a scholar and politician who would go on to do advocacy work in the name of Indigenous nations and leaders in Indiana, he was sympathetic to their claims and their forced removals. McDonald did a great job documenting their history and advocating for them in the state legislature. Early settler of Newton County John Ade, wrote his recollections of Newton County in 1911, titled simply *Newton County*. Ade hits on some important Indigenous history, especially concerning the Potawatomi Chief Turkey Foot, an important leader who resisted white settlement and was an ally of Tenskwatawa. Judge Elmore Barce of Kentland wrote a history of the Potawatomi in 1919, titled *Land of the Potawatomi*. This source was specific to western Indiana, and further south than Lake County, but does include mentions of Indigenous peoples of the Calumet Region, especially at the time of settlement. The next important source is Manchester University’s former president Otho Winger’s *The Potawatomi Indians* (1939), this is a fairly comprehensive book about the general history of the Potawatomi, with a specific focus on known history in the northern part of Indiana. Winger’s book also has sections discussing “McGwinn’s Village.” Lastly, an immensely important resource was R. David Edmunds’ *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (1978). This was a great source for background and perspective, in addition to touching on the region of Lake

County and the Kankakee river valley Potawatomi. Besides these sources Buley's *The Old Northwest* (1950), Wilson's *Indiana: A History* (1966), Madison's *The Indiana Way* (1986), Clayton's *Frontier Indiana* (1996), Carmony's *Indiana 1816-1850* (1998) were all consulted for background information, details, and specifics.

Primary sources for this project were limited and hard to come by, but there is enough existing evidence to correct the historical record. The most important primary document consulted in order to verify the names of Potawatomi chiefs was the treaties themselves. All treaties between the government and Indigenous peoples are available to view online for free, digitized and made available through the Oklahoma State University Library. The treaties were initially collected by Charles Klapper in his *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (1902), later the collections were photographed, digitized, and even transcribed by experts. The public can view the original document, page by page, or a typed transcription of the sometimes hard to read faded cursive. These treaties, when examined over the period of 1815 to the October 1832 treaties, reveal the actual name of the Potawatomi chief at "McGwinn's Village." Besides the treaties, Ball's early work of Lake County history can be seen as also serving as a primary document, being written by an early settler, with information included from other early settlers, and including early documents that no longer exist (claims, the squatter's constitution, lists of arrivals, etc.).

The essays and letters written by another early settler, Solon Robinson, were also of noted importance. Robinson was the founder of Crown Point, the county seat. Robinson was also called the "Squatter King," as he was the leader and main organizer of the Squatter's Union of early settlers who were squatting on government owned land, which the Potawatomi still had rights to live, hunt, fish, and grow on. A testimonial by early settler Mary V. Wood, daughter of

John Wood owner and operator of the county's first Mill and founder of Woodvale (now Deep River County Park), was also important in piecing together other settlements in the region. Her testimonial was found buried in old editions of the Indiana Magazine of History, digitized online through Indiana University Library in Bloomington. Besides these sources, a few scattered early papers exist at the Calumet Region Archive in collections of a few early settlers, like T. H. Ball himself, but much of this focused on the white settlers and more so after their arrival. Very little of it looks backwards to try and record history of the time before white settlers when the Potawatomi lived on the land. As well, trips to the Indiana Historical Society's library and research center while helpful with general information and maps did not lead to any major breakthroughs or additional information about Potawatomi villages and history. A good history of the Potawatomi in Lake County can only grasp at the fragments of information still in existence and try to piece them together to make a more coherent history.

Me-Gwun's Village: Described by Lake County historian and original early settler T. H. Ball in 1872, the former Potawatomi village at what is now Merrillville was called "McGwinn's village" by early settlers. This mistake probably goes back to Ball's initial investigation of Potawatomi treaties and mis-reading the name of the chief's name. According to the October 20 1832 treaty between the state of Indiana and "*the Chiefs and Headmen of the Potawatamie Tribe of Indians of the Prairie and Kankakee...*" there is no chief named "McGwinn," though in this treaty there is one Potawatomi chief named Me-Gwun.²² Further, in the two previous treaties with the Potawatomis on August 29, 1821 and the September 20, 1828 there is one chief named

²² Treaty with the Potawatomi, October 20, 1832. Accessed through Oklahoma State University. URL: <https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-potawatomi-1832-0353>. Having different spellings in different treaties, to make it easier for the purpose of the essay I will use the spelling of Me-Gwun throughout. Especially since this was probably the treaty early historians viewed and mis-read.

“Mee-Gwun,” and “Mee-Quen,” respectively.²³ Most likely this is the same person as the name has the same phonetic pronunciation, just spelled differently which might be the case depending on the Indian Department agents, Indiana state agents, and translators involved in the treaty process. In no treaty between the government and Potawatomi peoples is there a chief named “McGwinn.” Nothing is written about Me-Gwun, his village, or people in these treaties.

Me-Gwun did not receive any special annuities, land grants, money, or mention. Which does not diminish his importance, many of the special mentions and extra allotments went to village chiefs and mix-blood settlers who were friendlier to the American agents.

The most that is written about Me-Gwun and his village in any sources currently known about is in T. H. Ball’s first history of Lake County, *Lake County, Indiana: From 1834 to 1872*, written in 1872. Ball describes Me-Gwun’s village as “a village, a dance-floor, and a burial-place,” being just south of the great Sauk Trail, Me-Gwun’s village had “sixteen trails diverged, leading off in every direction.”²⁴ The village was given the name by early settlers and travelers of the region after one of the headmen, according to Ball, and one can easily see how early American settlers could mis-read the name in treaties, mis-pronounce his name, and mis-remember it in history.²⁵ According to Ball, the Potawatomi in the village lived in lodges or wigwams, made of poles driven into the ground, tops converging into a circle shape, and “wound by a species of matting made of flags or rushes.”²⁶ Men wore calico shirts, leggings, moccasins,

²³ Ratified Indian Treaty 117: Ottawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi - Chicago, August 29, 1821. Accessed through Oklahoma State University. URL: <https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-ottawa-etc-1821-0198>. And: Ratified Indian Treaty 154: Potawatomi - Mission Upon the St. Joseph, Michigan Territory, September 20, 1828. Accessed through Oklahoma State University. URL: <https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-potawatomi-1828-0294>.

²⁴ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*. No Place of Publication Given: No Publication Company Given, 1872. P. 68.

²⁵ Ibid. P. 80.

²⁶ Ibid. P. 81.

and a blanket; women wore broadcloth skirts and blankets. The Potawatomi toted and packed their supplies and burdens, they did keep ponies, and used canoes to navigate the Kankakee, Deep River, and Calumet River.²⁷ Being a natural swamp and marshy area, the Calumet region was prime hunting and fur trapping grounds, the Potawatomi of the area economically hunted, trapped, and participated in the profitable fur trade. As well as hunting the Potawatomi, farmed small plots of various plants and vegetables, and traded for other necessities using profits from the fur trade.

This village, sitting just off major east-west travel route of the Sauk Trail, and having many tributary trails leading to and from it, had a large ceremonial dance-floor. In fact, calling it a dance floor is more accurate than anything, as the earthen ground was described by Ball as being “very smooth and well worn.”²⁸ Later, the aged early settler remembered it as “a floor, but not a floor of wood,” again repeating the claim of its considerable size, levelness, and well-worn quality.²⁹ In fact, many years later as development had taken place and the early land claims switched hands between early settlers as they built their houses, Ball goes on to say that one could still make out the area of Ebenezer Saxton’s door-yard as being the spot of the “old Indian dance-floor.”³⁰

Me-Gwun’s village had a large ceremonial graveyard, sitting a short distance from the village and dance-floor, “this contained about one hundred graves.”³¹

²⁷ Ibid. P. 81.

²⁸ Ibid. P.68.

²⁹ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Northwestern Indiana from 1800 to 1900: or A View of our Region Through the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago, IL: Donohue & Henneberry, 1900. P.65-66.

³⁰ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*. No Place of Publication Given: No Publication Company Given, 1872. P. 320.

³¹ Ibid. P. 82.

“Not many yards distant [from the dance-floor], the situation well chosen and beautiful, was the village burying ground. In the center of this was a pole, perhaps twenty feet in height, surmounted constantly by a white flag. Here the Indian dead of this neighborhood were decently buried, according to the custom of the tribe. Sometimes they were buried in a sitting attitude, in their more retired cemeteries, leaving the head uncovered; and at other times in a supine position. From the French they had received some religious ideas, and seem to have had some belief in a future resurrection of the body. It is related that one of these French-taught men, who was about to die near Miller’s Mill, that he gave instructions not to have his body buried, as he expected it to be restored to life at some day, when the Indians would be the head race of the world. The bodies of those who expressed such a wish were placed in solitude upon the boughs of living trees.”³²

This funeral method of placing the bodies in blankets or wrappings, on platforms or on branches, ceremonially decorated and adorned with necessary tools, food, and garments for the afterlife was fairly common. Early settlers would report coming upon Potawatomi funeral arrangements in or propped up against trees in the middle of the prairies and in woods throughout northern Indiana. At this particular site at Me-Gwun’s village a body was exhumed in 1835 and Ball notes that it was the body of the recently deceased chief. With the body of the exhumed headman there was “a blanket, a deer skin, a belt of wampum, a fur hat, a rifle and a black kettle full of hickory nuts.”³³

³² Ibid. P. 68-69.

³³ Ibid. 69.

Ball does not record the name of this chief, but it seems clear that the person who died was the head Chief Me-Gwun. Following the exhumation of the body, records of Me-Gwun stopped after the 1832 treaty and in other sources it is reported that the chief of the Potawatomi village at Merrillville had died about 1834/1835.³⁴ Having been signing treaties as a chief representing a settlement or group of Potawatomi in treaties starting as far back 1821, there is a good chance that this recently deceased exhumed body was the known chief of that village, Me-Gwun. Especially given that there is no mention of any other chiefs or headmen of that village afterwards or before. And also considering the manner in which the body was ceremonially placed in a tree, wrapped in a blanket, with traditional items, including a very important ceremonial wampum belt. This person was an important figure to the community and their funeral followed traditional Potawatomi customs of the time.

Worse than having the body moved and exhumed, Ball reveals an act of unfortunate horror, the body of the former chief was removed by a local doctor for medical experiments. Ball states, “Dr. Burleigh, supposed to be from Michigan City, has the credit of removing this body, acting on the principle attributed to the students of a certain medical institution, who are said to have adopted as their motto, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, thus translated: There is nothing good about the dead except their bones.”³⁵ Ball does not give specifics about why the body was taken, where it was taken to, or any more information about the doctor who took it. All efforts to obtain more information about the whereabouts of the body have not been fruitful, this is all the information given or known. And nowhere else is this story repeated in this revealing detail. After this, historians omit the theft of the body from histories written about the Calumet Region

³⁴ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Northwestern Indiana from 1800 to 1900: or A View of our Region Through the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago, IL: Donohue & Henneberry, 1900. P. 65-66.

³⁵ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*. No Place of Publication Given: No Publication Company Given, 1872. P. 69.

and Lake County. Even worse, the early squatter-settler who lived on and claimed part of this village, Jeremiah Wiggins, intentionally plowed through the graveyard and began to desecrate the burial grounds of Indigenous peoples who were both buried and interred above ground.³⁶ Incensed and grieving, several Potawatomi came to the site of exhumation and the plowing of the cemetery, inspected the site, openly wept, became angry, and even confronted Wiggins though to Wiggins surprise, and luckily so, the Potawatomis did not harm Wiggins.³⁷

Later, another Potawatomi man came and confronted the Saxton family later, who also inhabited the same land with Wiggins and took Wiggins' claim after he died in 1838. The young warrior came to the Saxton house when only Mrs. Saxton and her children were at home. The young warrior, obviously intoxicated from white man's whiskey, came to the ceremonial spot upset and angry during a harsh storm. He wanted food and Mrs Saxton made cornbread for him. Dissatisfied with the meal he is claimed to have gone to the back door of the house and exclaimed "Potawatomis lived all around here; white man drove them away, ugh!" The upset young man then passed out and in the night Mrs. Saxton disposed of his whiskey. Awakened the next morning and mad that his whiskey was gone, the man was made to leave by neighbor Dr. Palmer. Later it was said that the young warrior's father came to the Saxton residence and apologized to the family for his behavior.³⁸

Me-Gwun's village and the cemetery was such a well-known site and its desecration was so reviled that Indigenous peoples forced west under military supervision of Gen. Brady from Michigan as late as 1840 were noted to have passed the former village and "groaned and wept as they saw the fate of their ancient cemetery."³⁹ This story is related in other histories by Ball,

³⁶ Ibid. P. 70.

³⁷ Ibid. P. 68-69; 75-77.

³⁸ Ibid. P. 76-77

³⁹ Ibid. P. 70.

Goodspeed and Blanchard, Howart, and others as well. But again, Ball's first history of the county is the most detailed in its account and nowhere else is the story as flushed out. Even Ball's later work only hit on a few basic points about Indigenous history before rushing into the history and development of the region after white settlement.

The location of Me-Gwun's village is important to note. The village was just south of the main east-west path Indigenous peoples used for generations to go back and forth between trading posts and forts in the east, like that of Detroit to get gifts, supplies, and trade furs, then returning west into their lands. This route, the Sauk Trail, passed through Merrillville generally on the same route as 73rd Ave. Me-Gwun's Village was claimed by Jeremiah Wiggins, who was not the most capable early settler, and after a time Wiggins was joined by the Saton family from Vermont who stayed with Wiggins on the claim in the wilderness of Lake County.⁴⁰ Technically squatting on government land that had not gone up for auction yet, land that was still inhabited by Potawatomi, and rightfully so until time of sale. The Saxtons and Jeremiah Wiggins lived on the claim that was the old Potawatomi village, Wiggins died in 1838 during an unknown epidemic, possibly cholera. The area was known as Wiggin's Point for some time, then later Centerville, and then finally Merrillville after the Merrill brothers.

It was said by T.H. Ball that in Ebenezer Saxton's "door yard is the old Indian dancing-ground, and in whose garden is the Pottawatomie burial place of McGwinn's Village," and that "the old Indian [sic] burial ground and dancing ground still remain on the place now owned by E. Saxton."⁴¹ According to Hardesty's Sectional Map of Lake County, Indiana, made in 1874, the Saxton property was located at the southwest corner of Section 15, Township 35,

⁴⁰ Ibid. P. 320-323.

⁴¹ Ibid. P. 320. Andalso see: P. 152.

Range 8.⁴² In 1877 the Saxton family sold their property to a man from Furnessville named Morgan who built a two story red-brick Italianate-style house. Topped by a cupola on the roof, the house was one of the most ornately built houses in the newly settled frontier. In 1879 Eli Boyd bought the house and property and built a side addition. Later Alex Boyd, son of Eli, inherited the house. When Alex Boyd died with no children his wife, Lee (Flora) Boyd, inherited the house and property and then remarried Olind Skinner in 1924. Hence the name of the house and property is known today as the Morgan-Boyd-Skinner House.⁴³ Wiggin's original cabin was said to have been on the land somewhere behind the present day house.⁴⁴ This would make the burial site and dance floor just south of 73rd Ave. and east of Broadway, and most likely the village was scattered along the creek and in the woods around, up to where Madison Ave. is today. The Morgan-Boyd-Skinner house and property, currently a historical site owned by the Ross Township Historical Society, along with the Forest Hills subdivision is the area of the former village.

It was noted in a pamphlet and article published by the Merrillville/ Ross Township Historical Society & Museum taken from The Sunday Post from August 21, 2921 that "the Indian [sic] dancing ground was located at the current site of a playground at the east end of Indian Trail [Road] in Forest Hills subdivision."⁴⁵ This makes the actual location of Me-Gwun's village, dancing ground, and cemetery at sections 15 (southeast) & 16 (southwest), Township

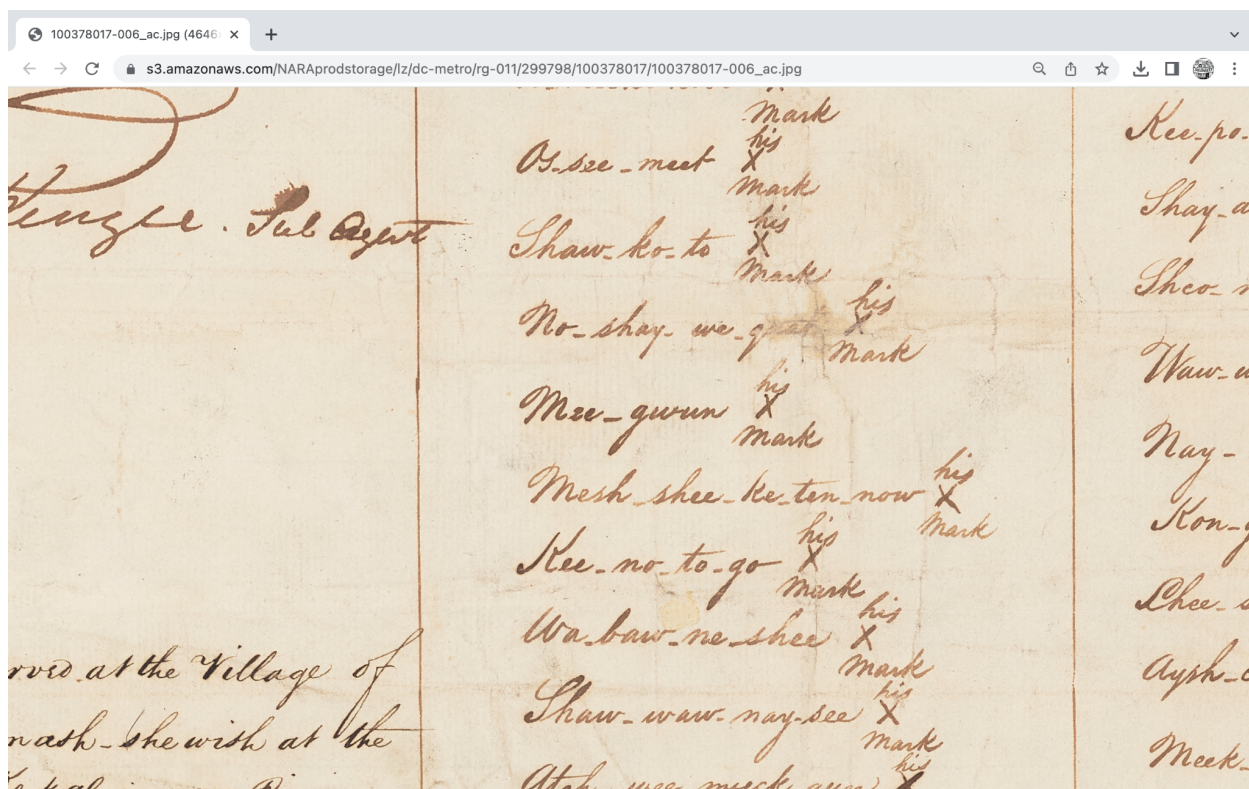
⁴² Blanchard, Rufus. "Hardesty's Sectional Map of Lake County, Indiana." Published by Rufus Blanchard, Chicago, 1874. See Ross Township section. URL to map: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g40931.la002368/?r=0.186,0.417,0.693,0.515,0>.

⁴³ Clemens, Jan. *A Pictorial History of Merrillville*. Merrillville-Ross Township Historical Society. Originally published 1976. Edited by Elaine Denta 1991. P. 1-4.

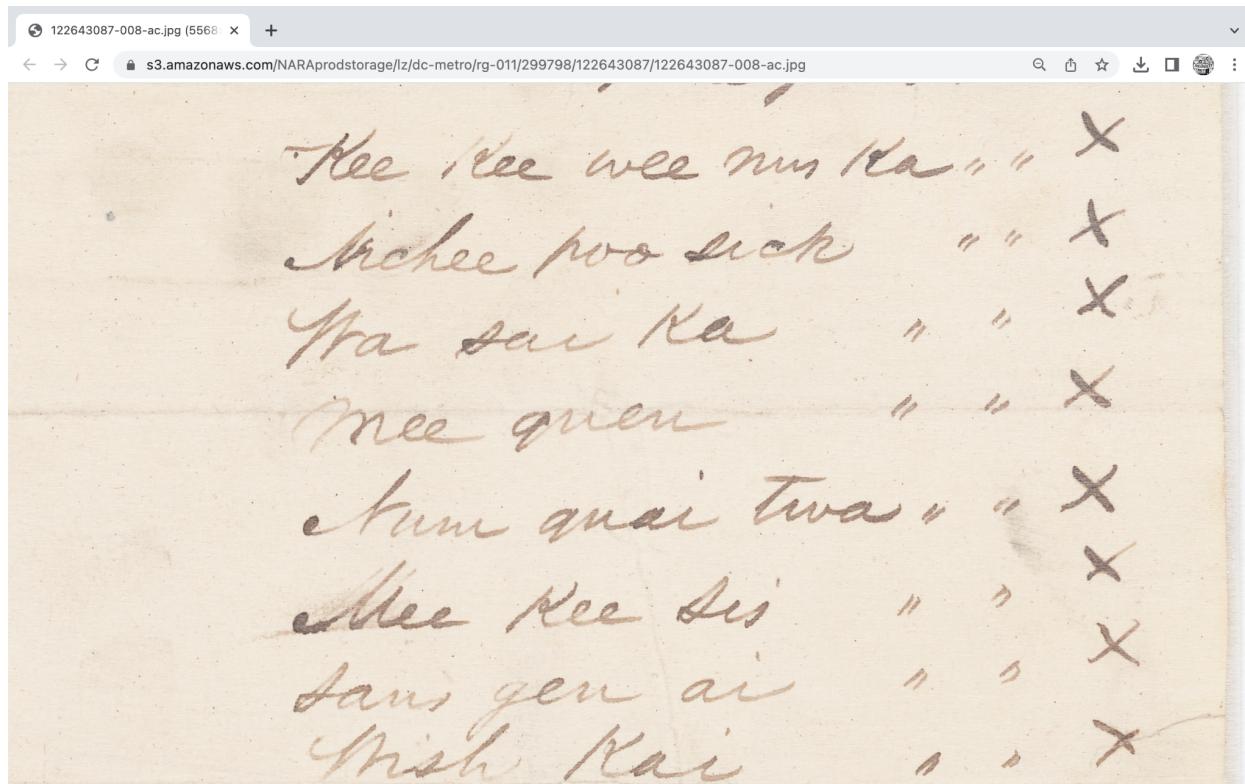
⁴⁴ Ibid. P. 1.

⁴⁵ *When the Indians Danced at Wiggins Point*. 2007 introduction by Alice Flora Smedstad. Annotated and reprinted by the Merrillville/ Ross Township Historical Society Museum. Original article printed on August 21, 2921 by The Sunday Post, Gary, IN, original author of article not given. Reprinted in June 2007 as a pamphlet.

35, Range 8. It is important to note that the present day Forest Hills subdivision's main road is named Indian Trail Road. And there is a walk path that stretches from the area of 73rd Ave, through the backyard of the Morgan-Boyd-Skinner house and property, all the way under I-65, to where present day Mississippi St. and Silverstone Parkway meet, behind where the Lowes sits across the street from where the Hilton Garden Inn is in Merrillville.



Screenshot of the Ratified Indian Treaty 117: Ottawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi - Chicago, August 29, 1821. See Me-Gwun's name in the center, spelled a bit differently as Mee-gwun but phonetically still the same sounding name, with his mark in the center.



Screenshot of the Ratified Indian Treaty 154: Potawatomi - Mission Upon the St. Joseph, Michigan Territory, September 20, 1828. Notice Me-Gwun's name in the center, seemingly possibly spelled differently as Mee-quen, but still phonetically the same pronunciation, with his mark in the center.

and Headmen of the Potawatamic Tribe of Indians

Me. gwin.	his + mark
Ma. Sha. ware	his + mark
Ch. co	his + mark
So. wat. so.	his + mark
Wah. be. min.	his + mark

After the signing of this Treaty and at the request of the Indians
 three thousand dollars, was applied to the purchasing of
 Hoes, which were purchased and delivered to the
 Indians by our direction leaving the ballance
 to be paid in Merchandise to be paid at this
 time forty two thousand dollars

Jonathan Deming }
 J. W. Leans }
 Mark's Crum }
 } County

Pictured above is a downloaded image of the original copy of Ratified Indian Treaty 172: Potawatomi of the Prairie and Kankakee - Camp Tippecanoe, Indiana, October 20, 1832. Notice Me-Gwun's name and mark at the top right of the treaty.

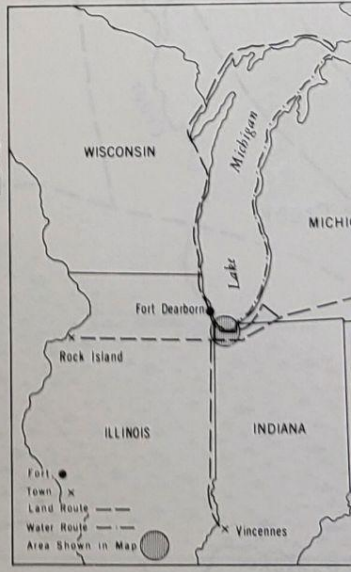
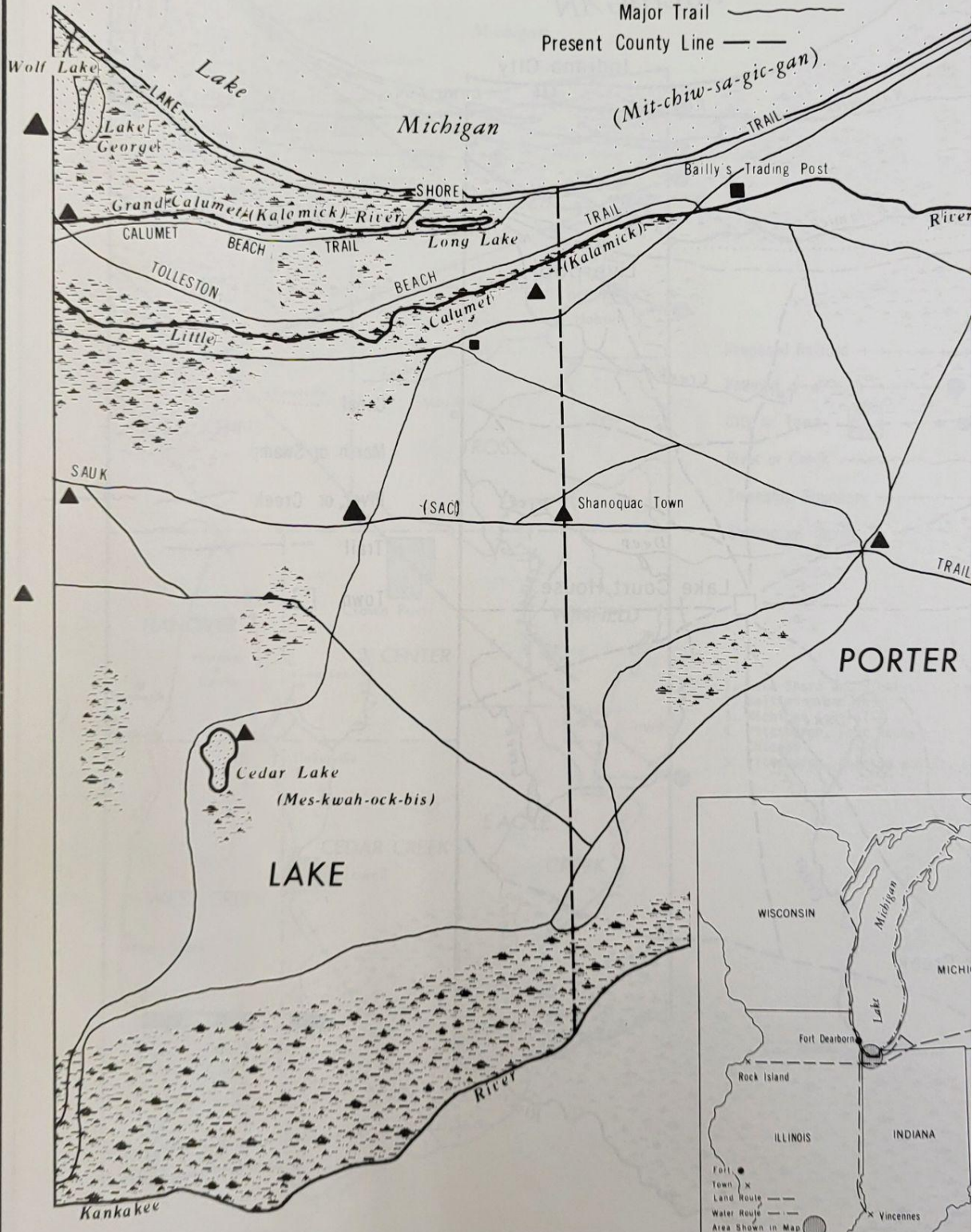


Pictured above is a picture of a map hand-drawn by Otho Winger in his 1939 book *The Potawatomi Indians*. P. 56. The map clearly marks the spot of “McGwinns Village.”

MAJOR POTTAWATOMIE

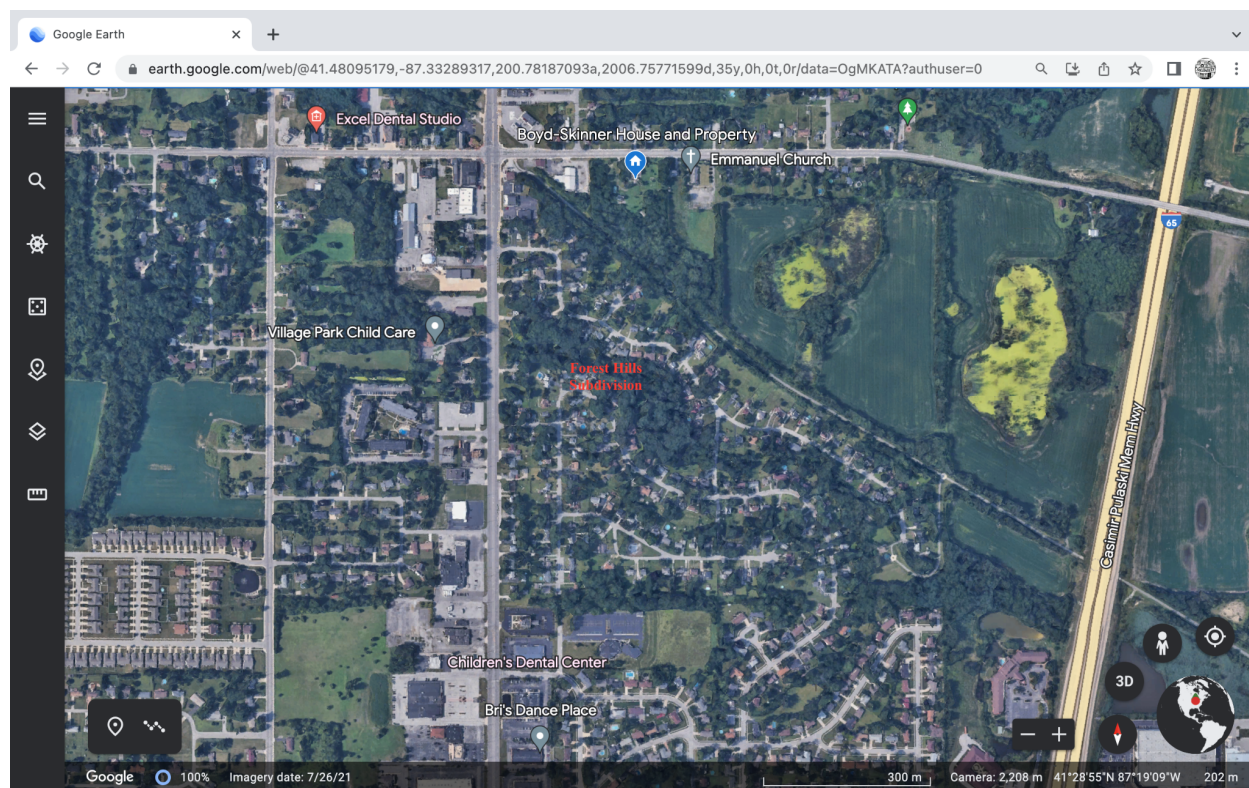
FOOT TRAILS UNTIL 1833*

- Indian Village or Summer Camp ▲
- Chief Indiana Village ▲
- Swamp and Marsh [stippled area]
- Trading Post ■
- Major Trail [thick line]
- Present County Line [dashed line]



* In 1832 the federal government abolished all Pottawatomie claims to the land

A picture of this 1833 map of Lake County clearly shows Me-Gwun's Village on the Sauk Trail (unmarked). As well as other known villages and trails, including "Shanoquac Village" right where John Wood made his settlement.



Screenshot of Google Earth image of present day area of Merrillville, IN. See the Morgan-Boyd-Skinner House and Property marked with a pin and the Forest Hills subdivision marked in red, with Broadway being just to the west of the subdivision. This area is the former site of Me-Gwun's village, dancefloor, and burial ground.

Other Potawatomi Sites: These tragic series of events all occurred in the early 1830s, by 1834/35 there was a dwindling population of Potawatomi left in the region, though some still persisted. However, it should be noted that the entire county and northwest region has a rich history of Potawatomi inhabitants. Villages existed near what is now Deep River Park, formerly John's Woods settlement of Woodvale. Near the village there were reported steaming spots that had healing effects. Cedar Lake, or Lake of the Red Cedars, once was the site of another smaller cemetery and village. There were known encampments near the Kankakee River at the southern edge of the county.⁴⁶ And there were a host of known Potawatomi chiefs who had "floats," or smaller reservations or property given to Indigenous peoples in treaties, in the region. This included Sho-bon-ier who lived and resided at spots on what is now the Crown Point Square (Solon Robinson's early claim), and also at the Lake of the Red Cedars. Sho-bon-ier was an important figure to early settlers and Solon Robinson, founder of Crown Point. In fact, Robinson donated a commons dedicated in the name of Sho-bon-ier "where the indians had formerly played ball and engaged in other sports -a promise he kept when the town of Crown Point was governmentally established in 1840" at what is now assumed to be the actual site of the square and court house in the center of Crown Point.⁴⁷

Another well-known Potawatomi who had a float in Lake County was Quash-mau, who is mentioned in various treaties of the time and had a float on which John Wood squatted made his claim. Wood apparently made his claim appear more legal by purchasing the treaty deed given to Quash-mau, it cost Wood one-thousand dollars.⁴⁸ Quash-mau's quarter-float was located at

⁴⁶ Ball, 1834-1872, See Chapter 3: The Pottawatomies. P. 67-84. For a full list and run down of Potawatomi and pre-Potawatomi sites including Earth Mounds in Lake County.

⁴⁷ Kellar, Herbert Anthony (Edited By). *Solon Robinson: Pioneer and Agriculturist; Vol. 1, 1825-1845*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1936. P. 14-15.

⁴⁸ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*. No Place of Publication Given: No Publication Company Given, 1872. P. 74.

the northeast portion of Section 21 Township 35 North, Range 7 West. It was also said that not too far from Wood's settlement there once existed a smaller Potawatomi village, which Mary Wood, John Wood's daughter, mentions in a 1922 article. This village could have been called "Shanoquac village," which is cited on 1830s maps of the local Indigenous trails in the Calumet Region.⁴⁹ Not much else is known about this settlement, its exact location in the area, or its history.⁵⁰ There was also another well-known village at the site of present day Hebron, in Porter County, that deserves mention. This village was known as Hauakiki by the Potawatomi, but called Indian Town by early white settlers; it was the area of the southwest corner of Porter County.⁵¹

With the signing of the 1832 treaty many other floats were secured in what is now Lake County. Sau-gana was given one section at what is now downtown Gary at Section 05 Township 36 North, Range 8 West. Ashkum was given a float right next to Sau-Gana at Section 04 Township 36 North, Range 8 West. At what is now Marquette Park Po-ka-kause was given a float at Section 31 Township 37 North, Range 7 West. Catty-corner to Po-ka-kause's float, just south of the Calumet Lagoon, Miss-no-qui was given his float. Just north of present day New Chicago, through which Central Ave runs, three floats were given to Shaw-bo-wah-tuck, Re-re-mo-sau, Aub-e-naub-bee at Section 13 Township 36 North Range 8 West, Section 18 Township 36 North, Range 7 West, and Section 17 Township 36 North Range 7 West, respectively. Catty-corner to Shaw-bo-wah-tuck's float was Old Weesaw's float at Section 23

⁴⁹ Meyer, Alfred H. "Circulation and Settlement Patterns of the Calumet Region of Northwest Indiana and Northeast Illinois (The First Stage of Occupance--the Pottawatomie and the Fur Trader,--1830)." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 44, No. 3 (Sept. 1954): 245-74 (30 pages). URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2561456>.

⁵⁰ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*. No Place of Publication Given: No Publication Company Given, 1872. Pg 73.

⁵¹ Ball, *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*. P. 79-80. And see also: Ball, Timothy Horton. *Northwestern Indiana from 1800 to 1900: or A View of our Region Through the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago, IL: Donohue & Henneberry, 1900. P. 323-324.

Township 36 North Range 8 West. Wee-saw the younger had a float not far from the Old Wee-saw at Section 20 Township 36 North Range 7 West. South of the Wee-saw the younger Poch-a-gon had a float in Lake County at Section 29 Township 36 North Range 7 West. At what is now Hobart where Lake George is, Wee-saw the younger also had a float, Section 31 Township 36 North Range 7 West. Next to his, Ben-ack had his float at Section 32 Township 36 North Range 7 West. And just south of downtown Crown Point was Mis-sink-qu-quah's float at Section 17 Township 34 North Range 8 West. These properties were hundreds of acres each, given to Potawatomi chiefs and headmen as either personal property or to be used for their kin network, were theirs legally, and were supposed to free from squatting white settlers.⁵²

Besides these sites, all of which deserve their own equal recognition, there was more ancient earthworks and man-made mounds in Lake County. These sites pre-dated Potawatomi inhabitation of the area, and were probably earthworks made by mound building societies. Earthwork mounds were found by early settlers at sites on John Wood's property (now Deep River County Park), two close to the cemetery that was located at Cedar Lake, one on what is now the north side of the old settlement area of Lowell, and some possible sites scattered along

⁵²Pochedley, Elan. 2021. "Restorative Cartography of the Theakiki Region: Mapping Potawatomi Presences in Indiana." *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, no. 18. <https://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/article/mapping-potawatomi-presences>. URL to PDF version: https://openrivers.lib.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/openrivers_issue_18_a.pdf. This source actually examines the idea of de-colonizing and de-developing back to the formerly natural waterways and watersheds of Northern Indiana, which were drained, rerouted, and developed upon when white settlers came into Northern Indiana. This development has led to flooding, mismanagement of ecological systems, and destruction of habitats. The source cited Potawatomi floats they claimed in relation to the ways the water systems originally ran, arguing that the Potawatomi had a better handle on how to manage land than we do today. Awesome source to look at for the ecological history of Northern Indiana and the Calumet Region. URL to map of floats: <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=fc9e223d43804b3f8ddcf3427cea8114&extent=-88.1684,40.6441,-84.2463,41.8909>. See also: McDonald, Daniel. *Removal of the Pottawattomie Indians from Northern Indiana*. Plymouth, IN: D. McDonald & Co., Printers and Binders, 1899. P. 14.

near the Kankakee river marshes on former islands that no longer exist since the marshes were drained and the land leveled for farming.⁵³ At one point there were wigwams up and down the Calumet river, camps throughout the area of Lake County, gardens, farming plots, hunting grounds, ceremonial sites (marked by the presence of big Black Oak trees), and Potawatomi could be seen in great numbers canoeing, traveling, and trading with early settlers. But by 1836 many of the Potawatomi of northwestern Indiana had departed from the area, forced out by white squatters settling on their lands, claiming their villages, and plowing up their cemeteries. As Ball notes, “few of these, if any, remained after 1839,” being forced to resettle west of the Mississippi on reservations first in Missouri, then Kansas, and later Oklahoma.⁵⁴

Misremembering: As was already mentioned, early settlers misremembered Me-Gwun’s name and village. Ball first wrote his history in 1872 while many of the early settlers were still alive. In 1882 the next history of Northwest Indiana was written by Wenston A. Goodspeed and Charles Blanchard, titled *History of Porter and Lake Counties, Indiana, 1882*. This history drew heavily on Ball’s initial book and used much of his written information about the Potawatomi. Ball himself published multiple other books and writings about the early settlement of the region following Goodspeed’s and Blanchard’s history (which Ball actually did not approve of), in which he cited his own previous works, but focused more on white settlement and more contemporary developments in regional history. Every history of the county and region, especially dealing with Potawatomi history, cited and drew from these early histories by Ball and Goodspeed and Blanchard. Having been wrong in his initial reading of the treaties, Ball’s mistake carried on through the ages and all the histories of Lake County and the Calumet Region. Every historian unknowingly carried on this mistake because they did not check their

⁵³ Ball, Timothy Horton. *Lake County, Indiana, from 1834 to 1872*. No Place of Publication Given: No Publication Company Given, 1872. Chapter 3: The Pottawatomies. P 67-84.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 84.

work, reexamine the treaties, or do the legwork to figure out the true history of the village. And very few histories actually went into as much detail as did Ball; none after Ball mention the desecration of the burial grounds and body of the Chief Me-Gwun. It seems that historians of the region were either more focused on white settlement and the time after the Potawatomi or possibly wanted to forget the horrific ordeal that befell the well-known village.

In 1937, after the generations of early settlers and their children had passed on into eternity, the Historical Society of Lake County, formerly the Old Settler's Association, collaborated with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and commenced placing plaques and markers for various historical sites in the county. One of the early markers they placed was at the Sauk Trail and another was placed at the original site of "McGwinn's Village."⁵⁵ A 1964 article in the Munster Times discussed early settlers and late Potawatomi history in the area, displayed the plaque, which is attached to a big rock, and mentioned that at that point the plaque was displayed at the Merrillville High School (which is now Clifford Pierce Middle School).⁵⁶ In 1964 staff writer for The Times, Nancy Banks, wrote an article about early Merrillville history, citing "McGwinn's village," and interestingly enough quotes Merrillville teacher, coach, and namesake of Merrillville's stadium, Coach Richard Demaree. In the article Demaree was giving a talk about Merrillville history to the Ross Township Consolidated meeting, and does go into some detail about the village, but like others prior to him, Demaree misremembered the name of the chief and does not mention the desecration of the burial grounds and village.⁵⁷ The next mention of the village and its path in public memory is in 1967 in another article by Nancy

⁵⁵ The Times, Hammond, Indiana. *Historical Site to be Marked*. Wednesday, Jun 16, 1937. Page 67.

⁵⁶ The Times, Munster, Indiana. *Hub Family Traces Indiana Indians*. Sunday, December 27, 1964. Section C.

⁵⁷ Banks, Nancy. *Merrillville Early History Recalled*. The Times Munster, Indiana. Sun, Jan 24, 1965. Page 15.

Banks when a contemporary historical marker was placed at the former place of the Sauk Trail where 73rd Ave. and Van Buren St. meet, near where current day Homer Iddings Elementary School now sits.⁵⁸ The site of the village is mentioned offhand, but is still named as “McGwinn’s Village,” continuing Ball's historical mistake. In 1985 an article written focusing on the Chief Black Partridge and early settler Solomon “By-Golly” Zuvers, there is a mention of “McGwinn’s Village,” and Zuvers’ connection to Potawatomi traders and chiefs. It is mentioned that Zuvers knew the Potawatomi of the village well, that he traded with them, had learned their language, and adopted some of their customs. Zuvers was known and interviewed by Ball back when the two were still alive, but unfortunately the article does not reveal any new information about the village or its chief, Me-Gwun. Information from Zuvers could lead to major breakthroughs, since he was remembered as an early trader that lived at the village and traded with the Potawatomi. Zuvers did not record any information however, and only through Ball do we know much about Zuvers, and none of that mentions much information about Me-Gwun or his village.⁵⁹

There are few other articles that try to remember or dig into the history of Me-Gwun’s village, but it is important to mention a local historian and contributor to *The Times*, Korry Shepard. Shepard, writing recently in 2023, did catch on that the name “McGwinn” was probably an Anglicized mispronunciation of the actual name and questions what happened to the villagers. Sheppard actually was able to uncover the desecration of the burial grounds and a recently interred body but did not connect that it was probably the former chief, demonstrating his knowledge of early histories, even citing Ball. Sheppard should be credited as the only

⁵⁸ Banks, Nancy. *Historical Unit Installs Marker*. *The Times*, Munster, Indiana. Wednesday, April 26, 1967. B-8.

⁵⁹ *County Can Point with Pride to its Renowned Indians*. *Vidette-Messenger of Porter County Valparaiso*, Indiana. Sat, May 25, 1985. Page 2.

person to have actually done the research and legwork, and was able to begin to connect the dots. Sheppard's narrative is well written and includes a breakdown of how the desecration and confrontation between Wiggins and the Potawatomi occurred. But despite the superb research, work, and writing, Sheppard was not aware of the treaties and was not able to uncover the name of the chief and was only partially able to uncover the fate of the people of the village.

Sheppard's article is one of the best newspaper articles that dives into Potawatomi history of Lake County and his effort should be applauded, cited, and deserves recognition; it is a highly recommended read.⁶⁰ Beyond the articles and plaque, which now resides at the back parking lot of the Ross Township Historical Society, the only other remembrance of Me-Gwun and his village is at the Ross Township Historical Society. There on maps and in some historical timelines "McGwinn's Village" is listed and marked with a spot, and there is a small amount of information written about the village on their wall maps and displays, but again this information is just repeating that which has been stated since Ball's work, so it too repeats the unfortunate inaccuracies and misremembers the name of the former Chief Me-Gwun.

Conclusion and Call to Action: There is no easy solution in attempting to correct the past. Correcting the way people have mis-remembered and mistakenly written about historical events is difficult, especially when it turns out that they have been mis-remembering and forgetting names, events, and tragedies for almost two hundred years; the mistake becomes ingrained in the public memory and history. It makes it all the more difficult to change people's minds when they refuse to acknowledge and examine the evidence presented to them. But what good does it do to forget and misremember the founding of a community? Who benefits from

⁶⁰ Sheppard, Korry. *Unknown Fate of the Villagers of McGwinn*. The Times Munster, Indiana. Sun, Oct 30, 2022. Page B4. Speaking personally, Sheppard should win some kind of award for his article, for this lowly researcher it was like finding a diamond in the rough.

holding onto the wrong information or not thinking critically about the correct information?

These questions are of course rhetorical, but also have an easy answer: no one. No one benefits, no one is the wiser, and no progress can be made in order to correct the mistakes of the past and recognize the tragedy.

The point of the essay was to tell the full and known history of Me-Gwun's village and to begin to set the record straight. The hope is that by reexamining the old treaties, with the new information, and by connecting all the existing yet forgotten history of the region that things can begin to change. That the community, its historians, and historical societies will help to correct the record and remember the Potawatomi people, other Indigenous peoples, and especially Me-Gwun and his village. Initial actions could be taken to correct the historical record by the town of Merrillville and the Ross Township Historical Society by changing the historical plaque and historical society information to remember Me-Gwun and the tragedy correctly. The local schools and historians could work to remember the people and its chief by teaching the history of the Potawatomi and local inhabitants. Newspapers could correct their record and issue short histories of the settlement, the village, and the tragedy that took place. Above all the community, it's historians, teachers, and historical associations could work with the Potawatomi peoples of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi to rectify the mistake of misnaming, misremembering, and forgetting the tragedy that took place in what is now Merrillville, Indiana and at other locations throughout Lake County. There is nothing that can be done to change what happened in the past, but as stewards of history we can remember the events as they happened accurately, honor those affected, and work in earnest to correct the mistakes made by those that came before us; their ignorance is no excuse for our own.

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