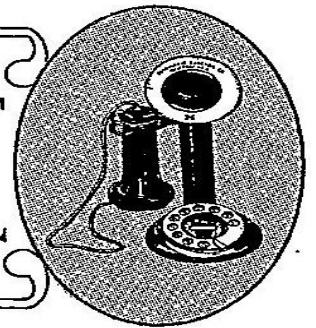


**MONTROSE**  
**HISTORICAL & TELEPHONE**  
**PIONEER MUSEUM**



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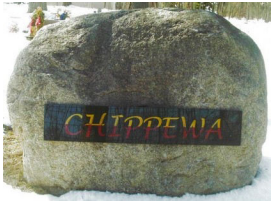
Sunday 1 to 5 Monday & Tuesday 9:30 to 3:30 Closed Holidays

Board Members President Joe Follett, V. President Chuck Persons, Treas. Karen Galindo, Sec. Carol Walker  
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Spring 2024

**Researched from multiple collections in the Museum**

**by Margaret O'Sullivan**



**Broken Promises – Stolen Land – But still a proud People**

In the early 1800s, members of the Chippewa Indians lived on 5,760 acres of pine, birch and oak along the Flint River in Taymouth and Montrose Townships – the Pe-won-o-go-wink Indian Reservation. But through a series of treaties with the U.S. Government, the land was lost.

In 1819 the first treaty was signed by **Chief Neome** and gave 6 million acres of Michigan Territory to white settlers. **Chief Neome** insisted that several tracts of land, including 5000 acres along the Flint River, known as **Pe-won-o-go-wink**, was to remain with the Indians. But in 1837 another treaty took this land away. This was prime land right near the river. The government intended to move every Indian who was there to west of the Mississippi River. The few remaining Indians in the area were weak from fighting on-coming settlers and deadly diseases such as smallpox and malaria. This resulted in the Indians wandering around between 1837 and 1855. Then the government offered a homeland in Mount Pleasant if the Indians gave up all their land and treaties of the Pe-won-o-go-wink area.



**Rev. Daniel Wheaton of Burt**, a full-blooded **Chippewa**, was ordained in 1852 at the **Albion Methodist Episcopal Church**. His Indian name was **Che-Me-Gas**. With the help of the **Methodist Church**, he helped the few remaining Indians move to about 200 acres along the Flint River. By 1865 many of the Indians who had gone to Mount Pleasant returned to the **Pe-won-o-go-wink** area. **Reverend Wheaton** helped build a church and donated land for the **Taymouth Township Indian Cemetery**. He preached at this church which is just north of where the cemetery is. He donated land as a resting place for Indians and their spouses. He rests in that cemetery along with 130 other Indians and only two white people. Today the burial ground is located in the front yard of a descendant of **Rev. Wheaton**, and is maintained by the family.



There are still a few remnants from the first Indian settlers such as arrowheads, grinding stones and other artifacts. **Gerald “Scotty” Flynn** of Montrose Township remembered an old Chippewa woman. She traveled along the river with handmade baskets to sell to collect enough money for flour, sugar and other store-bought necessities. The museum has several of these baskets in our collections.

After sunset, the tribal elders would gather around a crackling campfire. The tribe's children were

mesmerized as the elders recounted great **Chippewa** victories, traced the origins of tribal customs or spoke of bravery, romance and moral strength. These legends would stretch back to the very beginning of the world, when animals still could talk. These gatherings still exist today to celebrate and pass on their heritage to the children.

One such legend tells that the Sauk tribe were the first to inhabit the Saginaw area. The neighboring **Chippewas**, jealous of the **Sauk's** rich land, wiped out the Sauk tribe, leaving only very few squaws alive. The legend states that whenever a Chippewa did not return home from a hunting expedition, he had been killed by the ghosts of the Sauks.

Indian arrowheads can still be found in this area, down by the river and in freshly plowed fields after a rain storm. A display of arrowheads, drill point, scrapers and a pipe bowl are on display in the loom room at the museum.

## **The Flint River Indians**

**English 417 American Folk Literature**

**By Bessie A. Shannon**

**(Our best guess is that this was a class she took on the way to becoming a school teacher in Montrose.) She got a B+/A**

**(Bessie Ann Smith)**

Young readers find it hard to realize that real full-blooded Indians live today where their ancestors left them. It is also hard for the young reader to realize that Indian battles were fought here in our own Genesee and neighboring Saginaw counties. This is true; furthermore, where our village of **Montrose** now stands was the home of **Chief Neome**, head of the **Ottawas** until 1837.

When the first white explorers came to Saginaw valley, in which Montrose is located, they found it inhabited by tribes of both **Chippewa** and **Ottawa** nations of Indians. These tribes had always been recognized in Government treaties as the original owners of this land.

The **Sauks**, another Indian tribe, occupied the land along what is now the northern boundaries of Shiawassee and Genesee counties. These tribes both possessed war-like traits and not only defended their own territory but sometimes made aggressive expeditions into the territory of adjoining tribes which made them feared and hated by their neighbors.

Battles were fought near Saginaw, where the Chippewas reportedly killed all the Sauks there except twelve females. Later another group of Sauks was defeated upon a bluff bank of the Flint river about one half mile below the present city of Flint. They retreated down the Flint river to a point about one mile where Flushing now stands where another desperate battle ensued in which they were again defeated. Still continuing their retreat down the river another battle was fought in what is now Taymouth Township, Saginaw County.

The Chippewas and Ottawas now held undisputed possession of this territory until the treaty of 1819. In this treaty five thousand seven hundred sixty acres of land was set aside by the Government for a tribal reservation, which included the village of the Indian Chief Neome and a place called Kishkabawee afterward known as the Pewanagowink reservation.

Some of the descendants of these Indians still dwell there along the banks of the Flint river. It is this settlement and its people I want to tell you about both as I have been told and as I remember them. It was here that my grandmother, with whom I lived, bought an eighty acre farm and we took up residence.

High on the banks of the Flint River only a short distance northeast of **Burt** in Taymouth Township, Saginaw County, is the site of an old Indian village, **Pewanagowink**, "**The Place of Stones.**"

The Chippewas found this area a veritable paradise with its navigable river well stocked with fish. Game, nuts and wild fruits were plentiful in the woods. There was an abundance of material for living. Including wild rice, soil ideally suited for corn and the right wood for making bows, canoes and baskets.

Historians say that many of the early Indians abandoned the fertile Taymouth lands some years prior to 1832. According to tradition, the Chippewas left the land because grub worms had destroyed their maize and it was the Indian belief that the Great Spirit had sent the worms as a curse on the land.

The banks of the river here tower some thirty feet above the water. About two thirds of the way down this bank is a spring from which the natives carried water. Steps from both the north and south leading to it were deeply etched into the bank as a result of moccasin feet which trod the banks over a period of many years. Although wild grapevines and other weeds have grown over the paths which run diagonally up the bank. I find this old trail to the spring still easily discernible.

This little village as it is today, is held in reverence by the few remaining Indians because here is the remains of the only Indian church in Saginaw County and the Indian cemetery: where the last of the forest warriors are buried. There are only two white people buried in this cemetery, one the white wife of the last chief of the tribe **Joe Hart**, **Chief Luke** is also buried here, he was the last of the warrior chieftains of the Chippewa tribe. **Chief Luke**, whose English name was **America Dutton** was born in 1777 and died in 1865. Nearby is the unmarked grave of **Rev. Danieal Wheaton**, Indian preacher, who was born about 1826 and died in 1916. He spent seventy years teaching Christianity to the savages. It was he who donated the land for this cemetery. The sites of the original church and burial ground of the **Chippewas** was located only a few hundred feet north of the present cemetery. For many years this old burial ground was not disturbed but after the ground was once turned for farming and several years after, Indian artifacts which accompanied a Chippewa brave to his "Happy Hunting Ground" came to the surface.

The original church was torn down or removed in about 1882 and the existing church built about seventy-five years ago by the Indians with some financial help from a Methodist missionary. **Rev. Wheaton** was active in its constructing the church on land owned by **Dan Hart**, father of **Chief Joe Hart**. After **Rev. Wheaton's** death, **Chief Hart** directed the church activities. It was during these times that the ordained ministers, laymen and missionaries preached there----none were paid.

I used to be allowed to accompany my aunt, **Miss Kate Phelps** now **Mrs. Dougald McCormick**, to the church each Saturday night where she read installments of such books as "Huckleberry Finn" to young Indian men and woman. The church would be full and she reaped the only pay she was seeking, namely, a goodly number of sober Indians to attend the Sunday services on the Sabbath.

**Aunt Kate** was always sure to cease her reading at a place in the story of high interest, assured the return of the Indians the following week. She intermitted her reading with group singing or a relay game until it was too late for the young men to follow the old trail, for three miles through the woods to Burt in order to obtain their beloved "**Fire water.**"

The seats in this humble edifice were narrow benches arranged in two rows, one on each side of a center aisle. The squaws and girls always sat on the north side and the men on the south. When the minister didn't show up the whole time would be given over to singing and prayer. They loved to sing. one person would begin to sing, unaccompanied, and one by one all would join in. Immediate upon completion of a song, it seemed like a race to see who could get the next one started first. The Indians sang in their native Chippewa language and any visiting white joined in English as soon as he could recognize the tune.

I am sorry to have to tell you that the elements, time and vandals have left the little church and its contents in near ruin but a recent movement is being advanced to reconstruct this historical old edifice to as near its original state as possible.

About 1912 when grandmother moved back to her farm, the remaining Indians were housed in small one room dwellings. The death rate had been very high among the younger Indians due to this new mode of living. The ventilation was very poor and screens of any sort were unheard of among them, I remember passing the home of **John Hart** whose Indian name was **Wa-ba-wa-swe** and seeing his aged mother, who was then reported to be over one hundred years old, sitting in the door way smoking her pipe and weaving baskets.

The  **Davids** and **Ka ache** families carried their drinking water from our place. Our farm dog Schly, would escort them from the road to the pump and if they ventured off the path he had them securely in his grip.

During this time the Indians were causing much trouble for two farmers who owned land along the river. These farmers would fence their fields and the Indians each time out would demolish any barricade so placed that it crossed their trail. The Indians maintain the land was theirs and took the law in their own hands.

Each week-end we knew our rest would be broken by the constant war whooping of the drunk Indians following the trail through our woods and across the fields, as they were returning from Burt where they had spent their small earnings for whiskey instead of their meager necessities. These whoops and their echoes were very blood curdling and weird to a small child but the old Schly's presence at our bedside was reassuring.

One early winter morning when I was about ten years old I took the kerosene lantern and went to the barn which was some distance from the house, to put hay in the manger for the horse. Being a typical child I had forgotten to pitch the hay from the mow to floor the night before so had to climb up into the mow, place my dim light on a beam and perform my task. It was then I came within a very few inches of plunging my pitchfork into the body of drunken **Frank David** who was asleep. The remembrance of this incident still makes me shiver.

One Saturday in early spring, after the ice had broken up and gone down the river **Julia Hart**, daughter of **Chief Joe**, and I stood on the west bank watching the water which was at flood stage covering all the acres and acres of low land. We were very much fascinated by it when Julia spied two small boats pulled on shore a short distance from us. Her father and uncle had used them that morning to retrieve objects coming down stream. **Julia** suggested we go only a short way out in her father's boat, which we did and found that what seemed like still water had a swift current, too swift for us. Our yells brought **Chief Joe** and his brother **John** to our rescue. Of course, grandmother never knew about this, at least from me telling it. **Julia**, now **Mrs. Fred Carpenter** laughingly recalls the incident to me each time we chance to meet. She was frightened, too.

The **Chippewa Indians**, of my early childhood, were very friendly and kind and in later years have taken their well earned places in society. Many of them now live in modern attractive houses and many of them are High School, Trade School and College graduates. **Mrs. Carpenter's** daughter is a trained nurse, her brother has a small welding business.

The 1918 **influenza** epidemic took a heavy toll of Indian lives. Whole families would be seriously ill. The county doctor, overworked and fatigued could not answer the calls for help sent in by the neighbors for the Indians. Again it was my kind, schoolteacher, **Aunt Kate** who for weeks, donned a mask, took food and administered medicine, courage and comfort to the stricken Indians. The whole **Dauids** family died during this siege and there was scarcely a family that didn't lose at least one of its members.

The stately old Flint River still winds its winding course in much of the grandeur and beauty of the past; while its remaining sons, the Chippewas, ponder upon and retell the glorious part his tribe and beautiful old Flint has played in the making of a strong nation, under God.

#### References

Mrs. <b>Frank (Julia Hart) Carpenter</b>	Burt Michigan	History of Montrose Township	1899
Mrs <b>Mable Schmidt</b>	Taymouth Township	History of Saginaw County	1881
Mrs. <b>Douglas (Aunt Kate /Phelps) McCormick</b>	Fosters Michigan		
Miss <b>Catherine Schillinger</b>	Montrose Michigan		

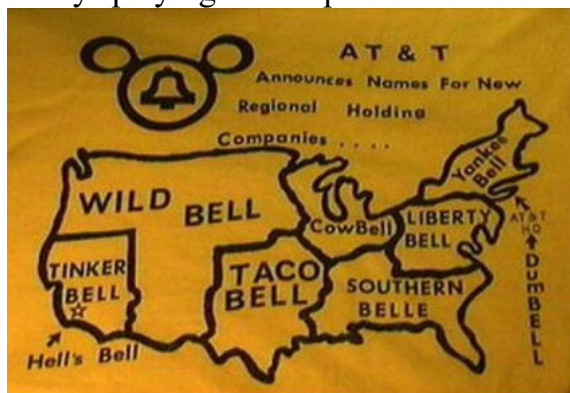
**Stay tuned. Beginnig in May,**  
**Celebrating Montrose's October Birthday**  
**- 125 years old.**

**Plans are in the works from the [Montrose](#)**  
**[Business Association](#)**



## On The Line with Joe

This winter has been kind to us and with some luck it will continue. We have been busy and as always playing catch up with the work that never ends.



**ACORN & Co.** in Montrose was hired to redo the website and it is now up and running. **Paula Carlisle** and **Nancy Stewart** have put many hours into it. **Paula** works on the layout of articles and **Nancy** makes sure of the accuracy of the information. There are still many things to be added and tweaked. Take a look and let us know if you have any suggestions. [montrosemuseum.com](http://montrosemuseum.com) The new web site will eventually have a spot to sell T-shirts, phones, parts and whatever. **Montrose Veterans Bell** was included to showcase their hard work.

The **Veterans Bell Committee** continues to have their meetings at the museum. They are currently selling coffee mugs as a fund raiser.

The **Montrose 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Committee** have their meetings here also. Lost your yearbook? There are many year books here for a \$10.00 donation.

A new fund raiser has started for the museum. Please save the **UPC labels of "Our Family"** products from **Riverside** or any of the stores that carry that brand. This is an easy fund raiser that you can do at home to support the museum. For every 500 labels we get \$25.00.



Museum member and telephone collector **Ted Barbier** died and the estate, at his wishes donated his telephones, tools, accessories and other things to the museum. John Lewis, Les Christensen, Anne Follett and I went to pick it up. Les, John and a young man did all the work since I had a hand out of service. They worked extremely hard getting everything, including three switchboards out of the basement. Among the items that will go on display is a WWII Japanese type 93 field switchboard. This is a very rare and unusual item that I don't think you will ever see anywhere else. A model 72 Japanese field telephone has been donated to make this exhibit correct for the 1930's & 40's. There were other phones among the donation that we didn't have and they will be going on display shortly.



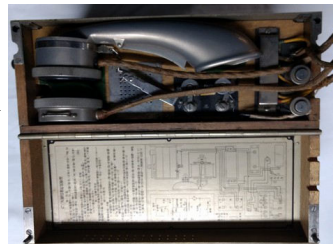
The cost of doing the mailing the newsletter continues to grow. If you would prefer it in your email, let us know.

Things we are looking for – **2004 Hill McCloy year book, old Montrose newspapers, old pictures, anything related to Montrose. Shirts, mugs, pens you name it.**

**We have started to collect more books and rummage for our sale during (16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> of August) Blueberry. You can bring donations to the museum or we will pick them up.**

The basement sump pump was replaced and it's getting some new shelves. The extra storage is badly needed.

The museum was requested by the city of Montrose to let them have the Genesee County's small city's meeting here. Several of us were there to answer questions and a short talk on the creation of the museum was given. Some of the city's people were impressed.



## Our Blueberry book and rummage sale – August 16 & 17

**Donations are welcome.**