

Papakeechee's Reserve  
Kosciusko County  
43.1962.1

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### **Marker Text**

You are now leaving Papakeechee's Reservation, 36 square miles. This Miami Chief, also known as Flat Belly, held this land from 1828 to 1834 when it was returned to the National Government. It was later owned by the Wabash and Erie Canal.

### **Report**

The reservation was comprised of land set aside for Miami leader Papakeechee (also spelled Papakeecha or Papakitei)<sup>1</sup> by the "Treaty with the Miamis, 1826"<sup>2</sup> also known as the Mississinewa Treaty or the treaty of Wabash.<sup>3</sup> Jacob Piatt Dunne gives the literal translation of Papakeechee as Flat Belly.<sup>4</sup>

The marker correctly states that the reserve was thirty six square miles. Article Two of the "Treaty with the Miamis, 1826" states that the reservation was to be made of "thirty-six sections at Flat Belly's Village."<sup>5</sup> A "section" was another term for square

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<sup>1</sup> Nellie Armstrong Robertson and Dorothy Riker, eds., *The John Tipton Papers*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: The Indiana Historical Bureau, 1942), 1: 432-33. In footnote 60 the editor gives the alternate spellings of Papakeechee.

<sup>2</sup> Charles J. Kappler, ed. "Treaty with the Miamis, 1826" *Indiana Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 2: 199-200. Flat Belly also received a wagon, a yoke of oxen and a house "not exceeding the value of six hundred dollars."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* The treaty was "made and concluded near the mouth of the Mississinewa on the Wabash."

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Piatt Dunn, *True Indiana Stories with Glossary of Indiana Indian Names* (Indianapolis: Sentinel Printing Company, 1909), 264-25.

James W. Armstrong, *History of Leesburg and Plain Township* (Leesburg, Indiana: The Leesburg Journal (Publisher), 1914), 17. There is not a lot of reliable information about Flat Belly himself, but there is much lore that surrounds him. It should be noted that Armstrong's history is secondary and unreliable. Armstrong writes that Papakeechee "was one of the most prominent chiefs in the Miami nation and wielded an undisputed influence in all councils." Armstrong describes Flat Belly as "a dark copper color and inclined to be corpulent." Armstrong puts Flat Belly's age at "seven hundred and twenty moons." There is also little information on how many Miami lived in Flat Belly's village. Armstrong states that Flat Belly's tribe "at one time had been numerous and powerful" but by "the time of their removal to the west it numbered but seventy-five warriors all told." Armstrong claims that Flat Belly's people were moved west as most of the Indiana Miami. However, in *The Miami Indians of Indiana*, Stewert Rafert states that while most Miami went to Kansas, Flat Belly and his people went to Michigan. See footnote 22. A primary source has not been located to settle this difference.

<sup>5</sup> Kappler, 2:199.

mile.<sup>6</sup> This is confirmed by the Bureau of American Ethnology's "Eighteenth Annual Report" which provides a map showing "Flat Belly's Village."<sup>7</sup> To avoid confusion, it should be recognized that the editor of the John Tipton Papers incorrectly notes that the area was thirty six square acres (as opposed to miles).<sup>8</sup> The editor does correctly give the location of the reservation, which is also confirmed by the map provided by the Bureau of Ethnology.<sup>9</sup> The editor states, "his reservation was in townships 33 and 34 north, ranges 7 and 8 east, crossing the line of the present Noble and Kosciusko Counties."<sup>10</sup> Dunn describes the reservation as extending to Wawasee, or Turkey Lake on the west (which the Bureau of American Ethnology map confirms). He then describes Flat Belly's village as just east of the lake, "at what is now known as 'Indian village'."<sup>11</sup>

The marker states that Flat Belly "held this land from 1828 to 1834." However, the thirty six acres were reserved in 1826 not in 1828.<sup>12</sup> The treaty was completed October 23, 1826 and is, in fact, titled "Treaty with the Miamis, 1826."<sup>13</sup> The 1834 date for ceding the land to the U.S. is correct according to the "Treaty with the Miami, 1834."<sup>14</sup>

Even if both dates were correct, the current marker implies that Papakeechie arrived on the land at the time of the treaty, while it is more than likely he lived there his whole life. The Miami lived in the area for hundreds of years. French explorers met

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<sup>6</sup> *Webster's New International Dictionary*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. "weights and measures," "section." A section is "a piece of land one square mile in area."

<sup>7</sup> Bureau of American Ethnology, "Eighteenth Annual Report," (Baltimore: A. Hoen & Co., 1896-97), Part 2, Plate 126-27. This map has a scale where one inch equals 10 miles. The area of the reserve is just over half an inch by half an inch...appearing to be about 6 miles by 6 miles, or approximately 36 square miles.

<sup>8</sup> Robertson, 1:432-33. The editor of the *John Tipton Papers* noted that "thirty-six acres were reserved to Flat Belly (Papakeecha, Papakitei) in the Mississinewa Treaty of 1826."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* This information is presented in footnote 60 of the papers.

Bureau of American Ethnology, "Eighteenth Annual Report," Part 2, 1896-97.

<sup>10</sup> Robertson, 1:432-33.

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Piatt Dunn, 264-65; Bureau of American Ethnology, "Eighteenth Annual Report," (Baltimore: A. Hoen & Co., 1896-97), Part 2, Plate 126-127. The village is represented on the map as three 'teepee' icons just southeast of the lake.

Armstrong, 17. Armstrong describes the location of the village as "on the beautiful body of water formerly known as Nine-Mile lake," later called Wawasee.

William H. Loehr, *Biographical and Historical Record of Kosciusko County, Indiana 1887* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1887), 643. Loehr describes the location of Flat Belly's house as "situated in the southwest corner of his village."

<sup>12</sup> Kappler, 2:199; Robertson, 1:432-433. John Tipton also recorded a copy of the treaty.

<sup>13</sup> Kappler, 2:199.

<sup>14</sup> Charles J. Kappler, ed. "Treaty with the Miami, 1834" *Indiana Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903) 2: 315-18. "One tract of land, thirty-six sections, at Flat Belly's village, a reserve made by the treaty of Wabash of 1826" was ceded to the United States by "the Miami tribe of Indians."

Miami Indians in northern Indiana as early as 1654, and it is estimated that they were in the area even a hundred and twenty five years before that encounter.<sup>15</sup> The entire area was Miami controlled until the “Treaty with the Miamis, 1818” ceded much of the land to the U.S. except for reserves.<sup>16</sup> However, there is much primary evidence within the *John Tipton Papers* to show that Flat Belly was in the area long before the 1826 treaty made it official. For example, Flat Belly was charged with “thefts of stock occurring at intervals from 1819 to 1823.”<sup>17</sup> Also, he received annuities for his people starting in 1823 which continued until their removal.<sup>18</sup>

The current marker states that Flat Belly held the land “until it was returned to the National Government.” However, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Miami (and Pottawatomi) were on the land long before white settlers. Therefore, the Miami, including Flat Belly, hardly returned the land, but rather ceded it under enormous pressure or had it taken from them by manipulation or deceit. Charles R. Poinsette, Stewart Rafert and Bert Anson give clear descriptions of the enormous pressure that the Miami were under to move off their land once the state decided to proceed on the Wabash and Erie Canal project.<sup>19</sup> These historians also describe the manipulation that occurred during the series of treaties following the treaty at St. Mary’s that reduced Miami land to several small individual plots given to “chiefs” in exchange for ceding other land.<sup>20</sup> The Miami resisted removal in many ways, through bargaining, “astute leadership,” use of assets and refusing to sign treaties.<sup>21</sup> Other sources describe the grief with which various Miami groups in the area left their lands during various stages of removal.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 1-3.

<sup>16</sup> Charles J. Kappler, ed. “Treaty with the Miamis, 1818,” *Indiana Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2 vols., (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903) 2:119-21. This was also known as the treaty at St. Mary’s.

<sup>17</sup> Robertson, 1:448-49.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>19</sup> Charles R. Poinsette, *Fort Wayne during the Canal Era 1828-1855* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1969), 11-13; Bert Anson, *The Miami Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Publishing, 1970). 19; Rafert. 90. Rafert goes as far to state that “federal and state officials were anxious to remove the Potawatomi and Miami, the last remaining tribal groups, from the state entirely in an American version of ethnic cleaning so development could go forward.”

<sup>20</sup> Rafert, 93. Rafert implies that not all the Miami who signed away land were actually considered chiefs by the people. The high number of them in small areas suggests they were recognized as chiefs by white officials in order to officially make trades and bribes in exchange for tribal lands.

<sup>21</sup> Poinsette, 12-13; Rafert, 89, 91. Rafert describes how the Miami would play state officials who wanted to remove the Miami for the sake of development against the traders and land speculators who were benefiting from the Miami presence in the area.

Anson, 199. Anson describes that because of their tough bargaining, the treaties with the Miami cost the government much more for less land than many other tribes.

<sup>22</sup> Poinsette, 103. Poinsette presents the words of John Dawson, a Fort Wayne resident who watched the departure of a group of Miami in 1846. Dawson wrote, “Well I remember the sober, saddened faces, the

In fact, the sectioning off the land into small private reserves made the land almost impossible to live on for the Miami. The people were unable to hunt or farm over the large areas they were used to, making them more dependent on the trade economy, and thus on dealings with white settlers and the state and federal governments.<sup>23</sup> Flat Belly left the land and house that was given to him in the 1824 treaty under direct pressure from the government and the indirect pressure of being surrounded by growing white communities.<sup>24</sup> After much negotiation, Flat Belly and his followers finally went to southwestern Michigan to live among the Pokagon Potawatomi.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the marker states that the reserve “was later owned by the Wabash and Erie Canal.” The original 1826 treaty establishing the reserve had a provision in article two that “the State of Indiana may lay out a canal or a road through any of these reservations, and for the use of a canal, six chains along the same are hereby appropriated.”<sup>26</sup> Canal building in Kosciusko County began in 1832 with “the Wabash and Erie Canal being the largest undertaking.” In 1835, only one year after the reserve was ceded to the government, “thirty-two miles of the Wabash and Erie Canal were completed.”<sup>27</sup>

While there is not enough primary evidence to show that the Wabash and Erie Canal Company bought the reserve, it is more than likely that this statement true. Poinsette describes in detail the buying up of the lands around the Wabash in Fort Wayne during the canal Era. In the 1820s, the area north of the Wabash-Maumee line was still dominated by the Miami. The high population of white settlers in the area just south of this “led to an inexorable demand for Indian removal.” Since the 1826 treaty included a provision for a canal, this would have been a way to remove Papakeechee from the land set aside for him, thus opening it up to white settlers.<sup>28</sup> Various other treaties also gave valuable lands surrounding the proposed canal to white settlers.<sup>29</sup> So while the reserve

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profusion of tears, as I saw them hug to their bosoms a little handful of earth which they had gathered from the graves of their dead kindred...”

Loehr, 643. Loehr discusses the Miami’s “evident dislike to leave a country which was theirs by inheritance, and which had for many years been their favorite hunting ground.”

Rafert, 92-93. Rafert presents a section of a speech by Miami chief Le Gros who responded to the 1826 treaty proposal. Le Gros accused whites of destroying his people with liquor and deceit. He spoke of the Miami resistance to moving west, based on the fact that the proposed reserve lands were already occupied by other native American peoples.

<sup>23</sup> Rafert, 93-95. Tribal lands were purposefully divided into small and separate areas in order to fragment the people, the land and their power.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-3, 127. Most of the Miami were removed in 1846 and were sent to Kansas.

<sup>26</sup> Kappler, 2:199.

<sup>27</sup> Loehr, 149.

<sup>28</sup> Poinsette, 11-13, 18-19, 97-103.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

was not on the area directly surrounding the canal, the company and the state bought up all surrounding Indiana land for industry and towns to evolve.<sup>30</sup>

### **Recommendation**

The current marker should be removed. There is no denying that the “Treaty with the Miamis, 1826” that officially gave this allotment of land to Papakeechee occurred in 1826, not 1828. Furthermore, the statement that he “held this land from 1828-1834,” despite the incorrect date, implies that this is the amount of time he was on that land. However, he probably lived in the area for much longer, possibly his whole life. In 1826 he was only confined to a smaller portion of the area which the Miami had roamed for hundred of years. Furthermore, the statement that the land was “returned” to the government in 1834 perpetuates the idea that the U.S. was destined to settle the land or was in any way the rightful owner. The statement about the Wabash and Eerie Canal later owning the land is likely correct but needs more research.<sup>31</sup>

While the current marker is incorrect and misleading, a new marker in the same area would still be appropriate. A new marker could focus on the fact that the whole area was home to the Miami for hundreds of years. During the treaty years, the area was divided into reservations and individual plots, separating the people from their land and livelihood. Flat Belly could still be mentioned as living on this reserve with his followers. The new marker would provide an opportunity to talk about broken treaties and Indian removal. Perhaps, the marker could mention that some Miami returned to the area, and their descendents are still fighting for tribal recognition today.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*; Rafert, 88-89.

<sup>31</sup> Poinsette, 28. Poinsette cites sources they may be relevant to this pursuit in footnote 18 of *Fort Wayne during the Canal Era*.