

# Speech Given at the Commemoration of Chief Shaw-Waw-Nas-See's Grave Marker 1920's

Note: I found this speech in our camp records. I do not know who was speaking, or where camp staff from the past located this speech. There is a notation at the top of the document that says, "Pg 58, VOL 1" I do not know what it refers to. All of the history of Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See and Chief Shaw-Waw-Nas-See has been found in camp's historical documents and has not been verified through further research. – Emily Wever Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See Director February 21, 2011

To the friends who are assembled here this afternoon in the interest of local history of Kankakee County, I extend a hearty greeting in the name of the Kankakee County Historical Society. We meet under rather peculiar circumstances, in fact, for never in the history of the County has such an assemblage of representative people of the County met before for such a purpose. We meet to do honor to an historic Indian character, noted for his intelligence and bravery, a hero of many an Indian War waged against the Whites and who after the War of 1812 changed his historic "War Bonnet" and became a friend of the "Smoke Man" ever after.

He had long been a noted Chieftain of one of the tribes of the great Indian nation which inhabited this country long before the white man had ever laid eyes upon it. They were located here when the great explorers, Marquette and LaSalle journeyed down the beautiful Kankakee valley, both of whom made history, of which we read in the early history of this country.

These brave and intrepid explorers perhaps were the first white men to visit here, and to have met these red men of the prairies of the Great North-West Country. These people of whom I mention, the Pottawattamies, has long since made this their permanent home. They occupied the beautiful and fertile valleys of the Iroquois, the Kankakee, the Des Plaines, the, none less historic Rock and Illinois Rivers, all located in what is now the great state of Illinois. Also, they occupied the valleys of the streams of the greater part of the state of Indiana and of the western part of Ohio.

But we are more particularly interested in that part of the tribe, which occupied the beautiful valleys of the Iroquois and Kankakee Rivers. Naturally the Indian must have his home located upon the streams of running water, that he might be supplied with water for culinary and other purposes. He had not yet acquired the knowledge that water in abundance could be procured almost anywhere by going into the earth a few feet, neither did he have the means for doing so.

So that upon this beautiful and picturesque stream of running water, Rock Creek, we find located one of the largest and most important of Indian villages in this part of the country. This village was known far and wide as the village of Shau-wa-nas-see, or as translated into our language, the "Little Rock Village."

Important, because of the fact of its being the home of their great Chief Shau-wa-nas-see, their chief councilor and ruler, it had become the great center, or, Capital as it were, where all of their most important tribal and inter-tribal councils were held. And it was here Chief Shau-wa-nas-see, as Head Chief, or presiding officer of the powerful Pottawattamie tribe, held sway, and gave council to his people, as occasion required. We have no reliable data where Shau-wa-nas-see was born, nor have we any history of his early career in life. But we have knowledge of his having lived at this village and its immediate vicinity for many years.

And because of his fidelity and intelligence, personal magnetism, and acute knowledge of human nature, and ability to always administer wise council to his people, he was early recognized an able leader in his nation. It is said that he held a wonderful influence over his people, and to him credit is given, whereby, the members of the tribe were taught to abstain from the use of the white man's intoxicating beverage, "Firewater", and it is a well-known fact, that during the latter years of their existence here, they did not use intoxicating liquors internally.

I find too, that this man Shau-wa-nas-see was always given a very prominent position, when for any reason his people had dealings with the United States Government. I find his name, more frequently than that of any other, appended to instruments of the many treaties between the different bands of his tribe and the United States Government.

It is said that he was held a very wise councilor at such times, and that he was always able to procure for the Indian that which was to his better interest.

To write an extensive biography of this powerful chief and noble specimen of his race would be impossible, for it is a well known fact that the Indian had no means of recording and preserving any of their former governmental transactions, and that the real history of the Indian, as presented to the public in general is rather traditional, and that we have no means of referring back to published records.

It is stated by a recent writer of Indian history, which I will here quote: "That one of the peculiar customs of the Pottawattamies was, that from the tribe a selection of the most intelligent women was made, and when a council was being held, these women sat in a circle, and were attentive listeners to all that transpired.

None of them were allowed to suggest or even say anything in an advisory way in the council, neither to gossip about what they had heard. In this way, they indirectly kept a record of their councils, and, though all their warriors should fall in battle, yet, there would remain within the tribe an authentic history, and at no time was it possible for the tribe to be without the means of a referee on past events.

These women were held in high esteem by all the members of the tribe, and were possessed of rare and admirable qualities, and were selected with great care, and must have been the pride of the Indians who had them for wives."

It is at this village here in 1830 that one of the greatest councils of his nation was held in which he promulgated to his people the advisability of maintaining the friendship and good will of the great Father at Washington, whom he had learned to respect, as well the white settlers who were ever persistently extending their settlements into the Indian country.

So this council of the tribes of his nation, and those of the Ottawas and the Chippeways, which whom they were closely allied, was called with a view of, on their part, of prearranging for the great question which had long been agitated among these people, for their removal in a body to the far west, as a more suitable country for their welfare. This was a preliminary movement on their part, to arrange for future treaties that were being arranged for.

Among the most important treaties held in which his nation had an active part, were perhaps, those of the treaties of Camp Tippecanoe in 1832, and that of Fort Dearborn in 1833. Both Shau-wa-nas-see and Shau-be-nee his super chief, who was higher in rank, being chief of the Pottawattamie, the Ottawa and the Chippeway tribes, were present at the making of these treaties, and their names are appended to each. It was at this last mentioned treaty in which the fate of the removal of his, and the above mentioned allied nations were sealed, for it was here arranged that they should be removed by the U.S. government to a large reservation set aside for them, consisting of about five million acres, later added to, until it consisted of about eleven million acres.

In 1835, the great task of removing was undertaken, and it was not until 1838 that the task was fully consummated. And even then, a number of them continued to return here every Spring, and going back late in the Fall. It was as late as 1858 that the last band returned. Many of the older residents can remember seeing them in the early Spring coming in single file and returning in the late Fall.

Game finally became so very scarce here that they were obliged to abandon their yearly migrations. The last few years while here the Beaver Lake country, and the upper Kankakee swamps in Indiana were their great game country.

Their journey West, when first undertaken in a body was a very mournful one. Their departure was a sorrowful one. To fully impress you of its solemnity with its heart-rending scenes I will quote you the words of a recent writer of Indian history. He states: "The departure of Shau-wa-nas-see's and the subsequent band of Indians for western Iowa is described by reliable pioneers, as among the most heart rending and mournful of their experiences. Here was everything to make life a continuous song; there was uncertainty at best, and ceaseless longing for a land to which they might never return. Here they had been born, and spent their childhood and here were buried their courageous sires; here was timber in abundance, water on every hand – as gracious and providing prairies as ever resounded to the echoes of war whoop or song. Small wonder that the squaws wrung their hands and tore their hair; that bitter tears fell in the furrows of dark chieftain faces; that little children felt the sob of

premonitory desolation rising in their throat. They had bartered their lands, their peace of mind, the heritage of the little ones for gold and over their dull consciousness swept the gripping chill of a regretted and unattractive fate. Indian history presents few more pitiable situations.”

Strange is the fact that both these men, Shau-wa-nas-see and Shau-be-nee, in connection with the great Chief Tecumseh, took an active part in the great massacre of the whites at Fort Dearborn on that fateful day May 15, 1812. And later on when that great Chieftain, Tecumseh, fell, pierced by the ball from the pistol of Col. Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky fame, Shau-be-nee was fighting by his side, and was the first to give him aid, but he died almost instantly. Shau-wa-nas-see was but a short distance away and hastened to his side, but too late to be of any service.

Both Shau-wa-nas-see and Shau-be-nee were greatly grieved at the loss of their allied Chieftain, and they immediately enter into a solemn agreement to never again war against the Smoke man. This agreement they kept faithfully to their dying day, and ever after did everything in their power to prevent their people to war against the whites.

Shau-wa-nas-see was not only considered a great and wise councilor, but had one fame as a great warrior as well. And in the great battle that was fought in the immediate neighborhood here upon the farm known as the John Bilyard farm and now occupied by his widow, he took a very active part and distinguished himself as a leader in battle, a great general as it were, and strategist. This battle was the largest, greatest and most bloody one fought in this part of the country, and it was here that he won Laurels and the battle by his coolness, intelligence, and clever handling of his forces that he was enabled to entrap his Indian enemy and practically annihilate him.

The mound now standing near the home of Mrs. Bilyard contains the remains of the great Chiefs and head warriors that were slain in this battle, and marks the spot where the bloodiest part of it was sustained, while the others who fell were buried in simple, separate graves, just in the edge of the grove immediately north of the house eighty rods or more. I very well remember seeing the little mounds in great numbers, in rows running north and south. I doubt if any can now be located, as the timber has been cut off and the ground tilt just where they were.

Shau-wa-nas-see died here in this village, which he had founded, while living in a very comfortable log cabin that was built for him by an early white settler named Case Wadley, who died a few years ago in the little old village of Aroma. I can remember the old cabin as it stood in the edge of the grove, but had lost track of the spot until my friends S.J. Mann and Lud Sampsill located it for me a few weeks ago, when I had the good fortune to leave my footprints upon the spot where it once stood.

At the time of the treaty of Fort Dearborn in 1833, Shau-wa-nas-see was a very sick man, although able to append his name to the document, but never recovered from his sickness, and when his people left in 1835 he was too feeble to be removed.

His death occurred here a few years later. Upon his death-bed it was claimed he appealed to his family and friends, and procured from them a promise that his remains should not be buried in the ground, but placed within a log shack or, cabin built for the purpose, as was sometimes the Indian custom. So when death came, his white friend Case Wadley was again called, and arrangements were made, by which his wishes were put into execution.

A suitable shack was built at, or, very near the spot where his monument has been placed. Its dimensions were said to be four by four and a half feet and about five feet high, with a single opening 4x4 inches in the front facing the creek.

Within this enclosure his body was placed in a sitting position clothed in the garb of a Chieftain, with blanket and head regalia, his rifle resting upon the ground and leaning against his shoulder, other war implements at his side. Also some food placed within his reach, supposed, consisting of some raw rice, Indian maize and jerked meat. This to furnish him food on his journey Happy Hunting Ground. His body remained in this position a number of years, his clothing and blankets holding it in position. Finally the head and hands dropped off and fell to the ground, and in time the shack torn down and the body removed, and it is claimed buried in the immediate vicinity.

The story of him having being buried in the vicinity here is denied by some of the older residents, who claim that the party removing him, convey him to Chicago, where he was prepared and the skeleton mounted, and afterwards hung in the office of a prominent surgeon where he exhibited him to his friends and patients as that of a prominent Indian Chief.

And now after the lapse of so many years of progress and changes after the death of this great warrior, councilor, chieftain, and friend of the white man, we have decided to place a simple, plain, boulder monument, as a memorial to his proved evidences of friendship and loyalty to his government and white man. A monument not made by the hand of man, but one of nature's own molding, and to our minds much more appropriate and significant, as exemplifying the simplicity in nature of the Indian as he lived in the midst of nature's environments.

To the memory of Shau-wa-nas-see we will proceed to dedicate this monument. And in so doing, may it serve to inculcate in the minds of the youth of our land, a greater desire to study more of nature, and to become more familiar with its environments of long ago.

Written on the monument:

We consign this monument, rooted to Mother Earth to stand forth for all time as an emblem and token of kindly remembrance of American citizenry to him whom we have this day shown an endeavor to honor, Chief Shau-wa-nas-see.