

Mas-saw

A Potawatomi Chieftess at Lake Kee-wau-nay, Fulton County

Mas-saw (also spelled Massah) was a Potawatomi chieftess at Lake Kee-wau-nay, now called Lake Bruce, in Fulton County, Indiana. She had a log cabin and provided room and board to George Winter, the frontier artist who came to sketch the Treaty of 1837. Her rank of chieftess was inherited, through her father Wassato. Winter noted that she had uncommon intelligence, and her influence among the Indians was very observable.

Winter made pencil sketches of the Indians at the treaty council and on the back of the sketches he wrote their names, the color and fabric of their clothing, what they said and what they did. Later he made oil paintings from his sketches. His paintings and sketches were published in books by the Indiana Historical Society in 1948 and 1993.

Winter wrote that Mas-saw played euchre and poker. She was an adroit expert at poker and gambling, often raking men of experience who attended her "receptions" in the second floor of the cabin. Her cabin was the headquarters for the Indian Agent, Col. Abel C. Pepper, during the treaty council. Her name is attached to the long list of Indian chiefs, Head Men, and warriors in the treaty signed Aug. 5, 1837. However, this treaty was never ratified by Congress so it did not take effect and is not included in the official Treaty Book.

This profile was provided to ICW by Shirley Willard, Fulton County Historian.

For more information about Ma-Saw, go to: <http://www.potawatomi-tda.org/coura16.htm>.

References will be published at the end of Women's History Month.



Photo Courtesy: George Winter, *Mas-saw in Fulton County, 1837, Watercolor*, Tippecanoe County Museum

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