

Angeline Chapoton (Chapeteau)

Fort Wayne, Allen County

At the age of 16, Miss Angeline Chapeteau, daughter of Louis and Catherine Meloche Chapoton arrived in Fort Wayne in 1804. They came from Detroit in a dugout canoe called a pirogue. Her family of three first lived in a log house outside the fort, but within an outer stockade. It was during a time when the Three Rivers area was a French trading post and Angeline, or Emeline as she was sometimes known, became the wife of Louis Peltier an interpreter and trader. Later she married Edward Griswold, a contractor.

When first arriving in Fort Wayne a red headed Angeline became known to the Indians as “Golden Hair.” She was a bright young girl and at once became a favorite with the Miami who so admired her that they made her a member of their family. Angeline and Louis Peltier became close friends with the various tribes including the Miami and Potawatomi.

In an unnamed and undated newspaper clipping that recalls the “golden-haired” woman who saved, “the lives of an emigrant party consisting of twenty-three people, who had been ambushed and would have been massacred by the hostile” Indians, were it not for the bravery of Angeline. With her infant son in her arms she, “pleaded in the Miami language for the lives and freedom of the prisoners and succeeded in having her request granted.” Angeline sent a friendly scout to arrange a meeting for her with an Indian chief whom she had once befriended. Using his influence a release was brought about for the entire party.

During the 1812 siege of Fort Wayne, Angeline, who had declined to take refuge in Ohio, remained by her husband’s side. After the siege raged on Angeline continued to remain in her house from which she served as a friend of both the garrison and the besiegers using her good offices to bring about peace. During the milieu the Indian people brought venison within reach of the house to exchange it for salt which Mrs. Peltier had received from the fort. So the garrison was kept in food and the tribes provided with salt.

On one occasion an intoxicated Indian actually attacked her. Angeline managed to overpower him and bring him to such a degree of subjection that she could tie him securely with a rope and give him a severe beating. In this condition, he had no choice but to remain until following morning when he was finally released. Soon a group of excited natives surrounded the house and demanded to see her. From the doorway, she saw the fellow who had attacked her the night before. To her surprise she found that the warriors had come to pay homage to a woman of bravery and skill in facing such an opponent. The guilty brave had organized the party which came to pay their respects and obtained her forgiveness.

Angeline lived a full life in Fort Wayne. She died in 1877 and is buried in Fort Wayne’s Catholic Cemetery.



Photo Courtesy: Allen County Public Library Digital Collection
https://digital.library.in.gov/Record/ACPL_coll6-842



This profile was provided to ICW by Tom Castaldi, Allen County Historian

For more information about Angeline Chapeteau, go to:
<http://contentdm.acpl.lib.in.us/digital/collection/coll6/id/842>.

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