

Claim Big Chunk of Kalamazoo

12-14-24 Potawatomis Search Old Records for Proof.

A white man's house cleaning may have thrown a tomahawk into plans of the Potawatomis Indians who hope to establish their claim to a large chunk of Kalamazoo.

Such a possibility came to light yesterday as a scouting party of Indians paid a visit to Kalamazoo to check old city records in an effort to clarify tribal legend.

A feature story in the Nov. 7 Kalamazoo Gazette told the story of the belief by the Potawatomis Indians living near Bradley that they have an unpaid claim to an 80 acre section of the city.

To further the claim the Bradley band, which now numbers only a few families living in poverty, elected Jacob Sprague, 65, as their chief last summer and began to search for old records.

RECALLS OLD CASE

"The records we need," said Chief Sprague, whose Indian name is Summer Wind, "are those of a court case in Kalamazoo about 1899 or 1900.

"I remember as a boy of nine camping on the shores of the Kalamazoo River north of the city while our chief, Shaw-be-coung, and other leaders took part in a court case which was to determine our rights to the land or payment.

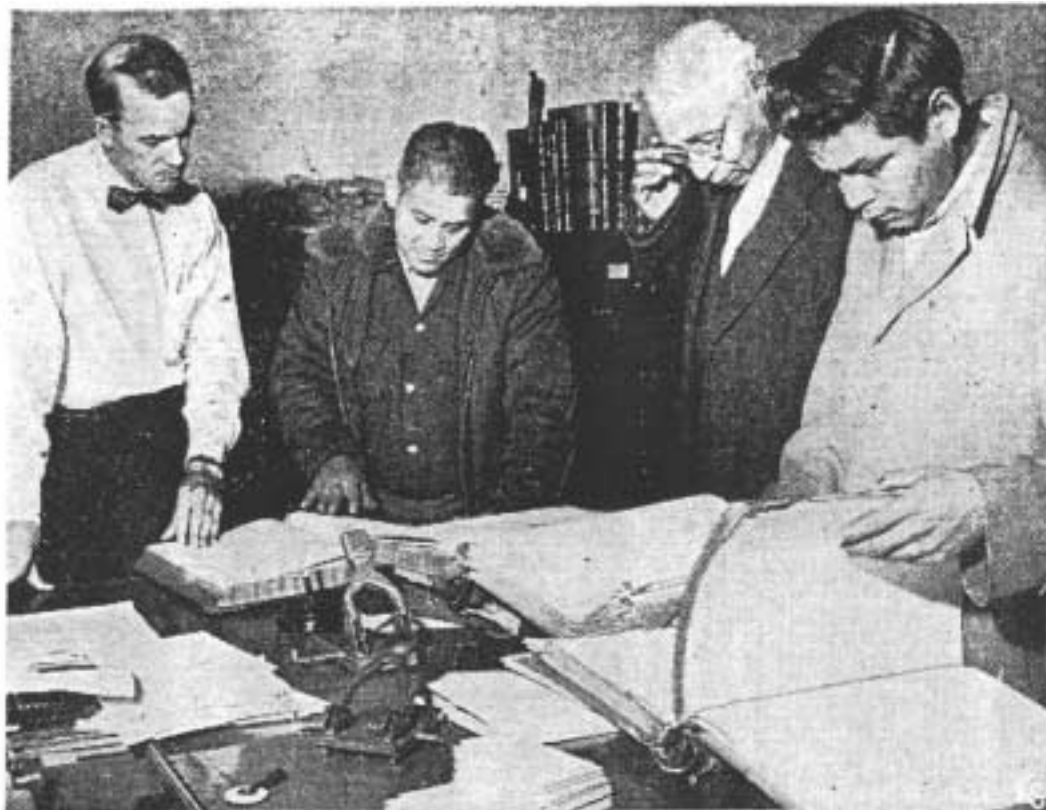
"I remember those of us in the camp sitting around the fire each night while the chief told us in our language how the trial had gone during the day. I remember how happy we all were when the trial was over and were told we were to receive payment."

According to Chief Summer Wind, there were records of the case kept by Shaw-be-coung, whose Americanized name was Moses Foster.

"We were to return to Bradley and make up a list of all members

of the band entitled to payment as former residents or descendants of former residents of the ground known as the Match-a-be-nash-e-wish Reservation," says the chief.

"But Indians work slowly and before the list was completed Chief Shaw-be-coung died. That was about 1900 or 1902. No other chief was ever appointed until I was named this summer. With no leadership the claim was never pressed. Now we try again.



WHITE MAN'S RECORDS NO HAPPY HUNTING GROUND FOR INDIANS
Burl Reed, Left, Aids Raymond Foster, Chief Jacob Sprague and Herman Sprague
Search Old Files for Claim Clues
—Gazette photo

PAPERS THROWN OUT

But the chief reports that when he and his fellow Indians searched for the old records this month they discovered that the Foster home had been rented to a white family several years ago and that the housewife had cleaned a little

too completely and the Indian papers had been thrown out.

Sure that the white men's government would have the same records Chief Summer Wind, Herman Sprague and Raymond Foster called at the Kalamazoo County Building Monday afternoon.

With the assistance of Burl G. Reed, Circuit Court Clerk, the three Indians searched through pages of dusty court records hoping for a clue to their claim. They were not successful.

"I trust my memory," says Chief Summer Wind quietly. "My people were never paid for this land. I suppose our only hope is that Washington will have records of the case.

"It was not so long ago. Per-

haps there are others who remember. Perhaps they will let us know if they can help us."

If anyone should have such information Chief Summer Wind may be contacted through the editorial office of the Kalamazoo Gazette.

56 12-14-24