

LIFE AND TIMES OF TECUMSEH AND HIS BROTHER, THE PROPHET

Family Background and History

The father of Tecumseh, Puckeshinwa, was born in Florida (possibly the Savannah river area of South Carolina) in the early 1720's. When Puckeshinwa was first heard of, he was living in Sawanogi, the Shawnee town on the Talapoosa River near present Montgomery, Alabama. The Shawnees had come from the region of the Savannah River to settle in this area after the Yamassee War in 1715. Puckeshinwa married Methoatake, who came from the Creek town of Tukabatchee. This was one of the four most important towns among the Creeks, and its ceremonial name was Ispogoki (Kishpogo). The Tukabatchee Creeks maintained friendly relations with some of the Shawnees even after both tribes had moved to Indian Territory. It is not clear whether Methoatake was Shawnee or Creek.

By the 1740's and 1750's the Shawnees were migrating and beginning to concentrate north of the Ohio River. Shawnees living among the Creeks moved north, and Shawnees living in Pennsylvania moved west. Sometime during the 1750's or early 1760's Puckeshinwa and his family moved north with about half of the Shawnees that had been living at Sawanogi. Of the Shawnees who remained in Sawanogi, some later migrated west of the Mississippi and some continued to dwell among the Creeks.

Puckeshinwa and his family moved to the region of the Scioto River in Ohio. The first son, Cheeseekaw was born while he and his wife were still living at Sawanogi. Puckeshinwa and his family may have taken two or three years to arrive at the Scioto. They walked or travelled part of the way in canoes. The route they took was probably through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky and then down the Kentucky River to the Ohio, and then up the Ohio to the Scioto. On the way they had more children. One was Tecumapease, a girl, and then a boy, Sawaseekau. Another daughter was born after they got to the Scioto. Later they moved to the valley of the Great Miami River and one of its tributaries, the Mad River. By this time, Puckeshinwa had become a chief. He settled on the Mad River at the town of Old Piqua which was six miles southwest of present Springfield, Ohio. Tecumseh was born there in March of 1768. Another large Shawnee town, Old Chilliwothe, was twelve miles south of Old Piqua.

Events in Tecumseh's Boyhood and Youth

Cornstalk was chief of the Shawnees living on the Scioto when Tecumseh was a small boy. Cornstalk was a noted warrior and orator. He was famous among both whites and Indians. He had fought with Pontiac, the Ottawa chief, in 1763. After the French and Indian War, (1754-1763) England had agreed that the land north of the Ohio River should be reserved for the Indians. Nevertheless, white settlers began to infiltrate this area. Finally a war--known as Lord Dunsmore's War--resulted in 1774. Lord Dunsmore was the governor of Virginia and he backed the colonists against the Indians. At this time Virginia was still a British Colony.

The Virginians were penetrating the country north of the Ohio River. Cornstalk led the Shawnees and other Indian tribes in resisting the white men's intrusions. The war ended with the Battle of Point Pleasant which was fought October 10, 1774. This was one of the bloodiest and most stubborn battles ever fought between Indians and whites. For a while it looked like the Indians would win this important battle, but as the