

The Tuscola Indian Settlement

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This document will be a compilation of articles from *The Tuscola County Advertiser* concerning stories listed under the section “Indian Settlement”, which are stories written about the Indian people who live mostly south of Caro, Michigan.

The first article is titled “Grandma Joshua”. She was the matriarch of Caro or Tuscola Band of Indians.

I added some punctuation and spelling corrections mostly with brackets []:

I don't know about others, but I am fascinated by the stories of our local Indian people who left a mark on our culture in writing news for the local *Tuscola County Advertiser*.

The following link is a front page story in the words of Grandma Joshua the wife of Jake Nelson and later the wife of Joshua Mash Kee Yosh.

Joshua was born at the Ox Bowl of the Cass River in 1803.

You will find Grandma Joshua’s story at the following Caro Library link for *The Tuscola County Advertiser*.

Use the search word "yosh" to get to the story:

<http://caro.ploud.net/eshelf-research/digital-collection> .

GRANDMA JOSHUA TELLS LIFE STORY

Oldest Indian Woman Gives Recollections of Days Before White Men Invaded Wilderness

"GOD HAS GIVEN GREAT BLESSING"

Hard Life of Early Days Made Brighter and Easier by Frequent Help from "Uncle Sam".

From a state of savagery to civilization, from idolatry to Christian living, from wigwam to cabin, from clothing of skins to garments of cotton and wool, such changes have come in the life of Grandma Joshua, 94 years old, all her long life a resident of this section of Michigan.

For a long time, the items of news published in *The Advertiser* under the heading "Indian Settlement" have excited the wonder and interest of many readers of this paper. The items are printed just as they are written by a faithful Chippewa Indian and are printed verbatim to give the local color and as much of the Indian manner of speech as possible.

The Advertiser has been favored with the life story of Grandma Joshua as told by herself and recorded by her son by a former marriage, Joseph Nelson, a man beyond middle life who had advantages of schools, which were denied Grandma in her young days. This is given to the readers of *The Advertiser* just as it was written, scarcely a letter being changed, and those only for the purpose of making the meaning clear where it was thought it might be obscure. The penmanship would do credit to many white men and is really above the average for regularity and legibility while the story itself is considered a valuable contribution to the folklore of the county and remarkable in many ways:

"Let me tell you how we use to live. It will take you through the wildlife of earlier days," said Grandma Joshua. My dear children you do not know how your Grandma had hard times and have good time later. Everything was wild. Woods was wild. Some of the Indians was wild. By and by white man come, and the Indians did not know what to make of them. Some said they from under the water in the Great Lake. In short time, they see white man come again from water and landed to the shore with (a) small boats, and the large ship was 1/2 mile away from the shore. The Indians thought sure they from and live in the water. But they learn afterwards where whites from and where they live.

Now my children and grandchildren you having good time. Why, God has giving you great blessing to be wise, and why not now, begin love his word. You able to read and believe all does word you read as well you read newspapers or books. I sure you understand the English language as well as your own language. Keep the words in your hearts same as teacher tell you when at school. School is great for you and learn how to work does good words, and hope you be a worker for our Lord. Us old people did not [k]no[w] learning. Our poor fathers did not know God. They use to worship everything trees, stones, mountains, water sun, moon. God finds us and bless us, wants our hearts and soul. Some white they find us when we in wildness and learn us how to live and learn they language. This is great blessing.

I was born in Michigan where Midland is now in 1810, January 16, whose large settlement my father was war chief but never had war of any tribe. My father and mother live there for long time. Had four sons, one girl. I only girl of five children. Andrew was the oldest and Solomo and James, and I was the next, and younger brother Silus. I have no brother living. All die. Our father and mother die. My father die when I was 16 years old, and my mother was all alone and hard life

of earlier days comes. My three brothers was married. Us two children live with mother and help. We in the spring do little planting where father and mother made they home. We plant corn, differ corn now they r[a]ise. Corn was all colors red, blue, and white, black. White man use[d] to call them Indian corn. Use to grow anywhere. R[a]ise squashes, potatoes, near the river bank of the river flats with a small clearen where the best land, and r[a]ise all our living in the winter time, in the spring, and half the summer. Hard time was there with us in till we harvest corn, potatoes, squashes, and pinkins [pumpkins]. My mother use to dried pinkins to keep in winter time.

In the spring hard times we ever had. Sometimes we go without meals for one day sometimes two. We use to go out in the woods to gather wild roots which we use[d] our silfs [selves]. Father and mother use[d] to make bread of does roots. Heathiest bread you and I ever eat. She use[d] to know just what kind of roots to get for our food and had good life and health before my father died. We use[d] to go down the river with large che-maen white man call dugout boat which use[d] to carry the family.

We use[d] go Saginaw and Bay City is now and camp along the river banks. My father hunts fish and ducks between Saginaw and Saginaw Bay. Mother use[d] to save all the ducks faders for winter-bedding, and we go back to our we-gee warm [wigwam?] and stay until the corn and other crops gets ripe, and we to work harvest them, then put them in pit. Corn mother use to dried. When the corn on little green side and when it's cook, they just as good when they green. All done by hand work those days. Planting and harvest [k]no[w] team work.

My father hunt deer, elk, [and] bear for our meat in winter time. In the fall he use[d] to trap beaver, coon, and muskrats for our cloth coats,

and cape, elk skins for our shoes, and deer skins for our dresses. We dress that way until Uncle Sam call us to come where Detroit is now. We, all Indians, went to Detroit to meet Uncle Sam. What do you think Uncle Sam wants to see us for? Well, when we reach there we see a large ship was loaded with goods and some of the goods has been on-loaded on the shore. Next day the Indian agent call the Saginaw Indians['] names. My father was the first name call Ah-She Wah be-me, received clothing and tools and blankets and money. Next day we return home with back loads. Carry everything on our backs all day long. Camp out when night comes. What do you think? Do you think it's nice to camp out? No not them days. When you hear wolves all around you. Could not sleep. My father use to keep fire all night so we can rest and keep the wolfs away.

We start from Midland to Bay City and front there to Ox Bow we call Pea See Kop-tu qua-yone, and to Squaw lake, and to Bell Creek, then Detroit. No wagon road, nothing but footpath, throw [through] the wild woods. Sometimes took us [going] back home two weeks, sometimes three weeks.

You see I have hard life in my earlier days, but I'm hoping to land(ed) in better life. When my work done here, I trust God to bless you all. I was married when I was young. I was 17 years old. I marie widow[er]. Had three sons Silas and John and Benjamin. The widow[er] was the Chief in Bay County Indians and a preacher for Ojibwa Indians. His home was in Kawkawling River and meetings in the woods. Have no church until later years. Uncle Sam bild [built] church for the Indians and school house and send teacher. That's something we didn't have in our young days is school. Well I must tell you about my wedding present. First gift was a baby cradle all fixed up nice with beads trimmed and bow over the baby head, part bear claws and deer hops strong along the Bow. I did not know what to make of that and lots of other useful

things. I received, and then big supper comes next. A large crowd of Indians had good time. I had good home. My hard days left me. My first baby was a baby name Joseph, and next child a baby girl Elizabeth, third child name Jacob. My husband died when Jacob [was] three years old. My other two children died. My husband name Jake Nelson, Indian name Ba-na -see wah-bee. Jacob Nelson was second chief of this small band of Indians in Tuscola County and Huron County, and I married again another widow[er]. His name was Joshua Mash Kee-Yosh. He was born in Indian fields on the Ox Bow some years ago, and have live[d] there for years, and went Saginaw River. Got a wife and six girls born to them. Girls married: Mrs. William Westbrook, Mrs. John Fisher, Mrs. B. Williams, Mrs. Frank Gage, she is unmarried, Jane Joshua, Miss Mary Joshua; and my children of three boys oldest Ustin Joshua, Samuel Joshua Walter, [and] Joshua all born Indian fields. All died.

I married Joshua 1864. We come here this place where I am now 1868. We stop Tuscola and move near Vassar where they call line racks two miles from Vassar east. My son Jacob went school at Vassar, good thing for Jacob, and we move again to this place, and live since, and now have good friends in this township. I am glad they come see me as I not able to go out [to] see them, but some good people come see grandma every Sunday and week days.

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