

Painting Depicts Presbyterian Missionaries' Visit to Indians

Hanging in the parlor of the First Presbyterian church, Coshocton, is a painting that depicts the earliest effort of Christian missionaries to bring the Gospel to Indians in the Ohio country.

The incident depicted in the painting involves the following historical account:

The time is September 21, 1766, and the place is the Delaware village of the Turtle tribe at what is now called Newcomerstown. In the picture are Indians of the Turtle tribe, the two ministers, Charles Beatty and George Duffield, and their interpreter, Joseph Peepy.

George Duffield was pastor at Carlisle, Pa., and later became chaplain of the Continental Congress. He was also the first stated clerk of the general assembly of the Presbyterian church in the U.S.A. The synod of New York and Philadelphia appointed Charles Beatty to visit the frontier and to find out whether the Indians would be receptive to missionary work. Beatty left Philadelphia on August 2, 1766, accompanied by his interpreter, Joseph Peepy, a Christian Indian. They were joined by Duffield at Carlisle, Pa., and set out for Fort Pitt shortly thereafter.

They reached Fort Pitt on Sept. 5. On Sept. 18, they arrived at the village of the Turtle tribe of the Delaware Indians where they were welcomed by a number of Indians. They made their request known that they wished to have an audience with Chief Netawhelman (sometimes called Netawatwes, sometimes called Newcomer) The council was set for the next day.

On the following day they presented their messages and their requests, along with a string of Wampum, as was the custom. The next day five of the principal men of the tribe returned the wampum, saying that they and their "king" (chief) did not understand their request. The request had been to establish a church and school. Beatty and Duffield gave them the string of wampum once more and made the request again. The Indians promptly returned the wampum but did tell the two

missionaries that they would hear them speak. On Sunday, Sept. 21, 1766, Beatty delivered the first sermon. He sang a Psalm, read from Like 15. The theme of his sermon was "The prodigal son". The Indians listened attentively. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon they requested to have them speak again.. This time George Duffield read from First Corinthians 15:22 and preached on the subject, "In Christ shall all be made alive". Again the Indians were responsive and asked many questions about "the great book". Both missionaries remained with the Indians until Sept 24 when they began their return trip, the time allowed by the synod having expired.

It is interesting to know why the request was denied by the Indian council. Many of the Indians desired a church and school and the vote taken was very close. There was a real concern among the Indians about the inconsistencies existing among the white people as far as their religious Beliefs and moral practices were concerned. Beatty, for example, preached against drunkenness. Chief Newcomer reminded Beatty that it was the white people who brought rum and whiskey to the Indians. Another inconsistency which troubled the Indians involved the differences between the Quakers and Moravians whom they had known before, especially in Pennsylvania, and the other white people. Some of the Indians argued that the Quakers and Moravians never took up arms against the Indians, but that Beatty and Duffield came from white people who had taken up arms. This is particularly significant when we remember that one of the Indians in this particular council was named Captain White Eyes. He also is shown in the painting. Captain White Eyes was the Delaware nation's military leader although he was a man of peace. He was, beyond a doubt, the most brilliant of all Indians of his day. He had worked out a plan for peaceful government which had much merit. The English historian, Arnold Toynbee, mentions Captain White Eyes in one of his volumes as an Indian prophet who preached peace. These Delaware

Indians were the descendents of the same Indians with whom William Penn had made the famous treaty at Sax-I-Max-On one hundred years earlier. The Indians remembered the stories about the good Quakers and how they never engaged in warfare. Those who were against Beatty and Duffield argued, "If these men were Quakers, we would approve, but the people these men represent are known to have borne arms against Indians." This argument won the day.

Five years later the Moravian missionary, Zeisberger, came to this same place and asked permission to establish a mission. Since the Moravians were known to have the approval of the Quakers, the argument used against Beatty and Duffield no longer held. In fact the reaction against this argument was overwhelmingly favorable to Zeisberger's request. Thus Beatty and Duffield paved the way for Zeisberger. This is important because the influence of Zeisberger three times kept the Delawares from joining the British in the American Revolution.

The incident in the painting was just before the American Revolution. The Stamp Act Congress was meeting and Patrick Henry was saying, "If this be treason, make the most of it." The painting shows the two missionaries preaching to the Indians who needed and wanted enlightenment, yet who held back because of denominational and other inconsistencies.

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The painting, measuring eight by four feet, was done by William Lucas, a member of the congregation. Mr. and Mrs. Lucas spent the past three years doing extensive study on the subject of painting.