PROJECT SCROLL · A STORY

# Princess Mishawaka

How a Michigan judge’s tale of 1875 became the story of a city’s name.

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LORE AND LEGEND

# Princess Mishawaka: the princess who never was

DISCOVERY · 8 NEW FINDINGS › UPDATED 22 MIN READ

Mishawaka calls itself the Princess City, after a Shawnee princess, a scout called Dead Shot and a rival called Gray Wolf. The whole cast first appears in a Michigan judge's book of tales in 1875, and the story was attached to Mishawaka between 1907 and 1909.

By Michael Urbanski · Project Scroll · First published 27 October 2026 · Updated 27 October 2026 · 22 min read



South Part of Mishawaka, in Higgins, Belden & Co., An Illustrated Historical Atlas of St. Joseph Co., Indiana (1875). Allen County Public Library, via the Internet Archive. Public domain.

### The short version

The princess, her father Chief Elkhart, Dead Shot and Gray Wolf all come from F. J. Littlejohn's *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West* (Allegan, 1875), a book of fiction. There the heroine is "Mishawaha," and Littlejohn never says the town was named for her. The county histories of 1880 and 1907 explain the name without a princess.

The story was tied to Mishawaka by 1907–09 and promoted through pageants, a 1925 contest, a 1926 seal, a 1932 tablet and a 1987 statue. The name was asked for the post office in May 1833 and given it that December, for a place; scholars read it as "dead trees" or "firewood-tree land."

> Read the whole story ›

✦ NEW FINDING 8 new findings in this story. **See what's new ›**

Outside City Hall stands a bronze of a young woman with a bow. Mishawaka calls itself the Princess City, and for more than a century its people have been told why: the town was named for Princess Mishawaka, daughter of the Shawnee chief Elkhart, who was loved by a white scout called Dead Shot and wounded by a jealous rival called Gray Wolf.

It is a good story. It is also, as the evidence shows, a story with an author, a publisher and a date, written as fiction by a Michigan judge in 1875 and attached to Mishawaka about thirty years later. This is the history of a legend: where it came from, how a city adopted it, and what the name Mishawaka really seems to mean.

HOW TO READ THIS PAGE DOCUMENTED READING ✦ NEW FINDING

25 documented · 7 readings · 8 new

? What the marks mean

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| | |
|---|---|
| DOCUMENTED | A source says so, and you can read it yourself. |
| READING | Our interpretation of the sources, kept separate from the facts. |
| ✦ NEW FINDING | Something we found in the record that we have not found in any earlier telling. |

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**Chief Elkhart**
A character in Littlejohn's 1875 tale, the Shawnees' "Grand Sachem"; no record we have found shows a real Shawnee chief of that name.

**Flavius J. Littlejohn**
Allegan lawyer and judge who wrote *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West* (1875) as "Old Trailer."

**Edward A. Jernegan**
Editor of the *Mishawaka Enterprise*, the "Mr. E. A. Journegan" credited with the legend in 1909.

**Jennie Skelly**
Played Princess Mishawaka in the 1909 pageant, arriving by canoe.

**Vincent Brunner**
Mishawaka's city historian; a paper by the elder Jernegan is cited from his papers at the Mishawaka library.

**Elisabeth Steele**
Wrote a 1920 *News-Times* feature on the princess, then a poem with her own drawing.

**Christian Petersen**
Chicago sculptor consulted in 1931; he made a clay model of the princess in 1933.

**Jacob Piatt Dunn**
State historian who explained Elkhart as "elk's heart" and read Mishawaka as "country of dead trees."

**Princess Mishawaka**
The legend's heroine. In Littlejohn's original she is "Mishawaha," and he never says the town was named for her.

**Henry Yerrington**
First postmaster, who asked for a post office "by the name of 'Mishawaka'" in May 1833.

**Frederick Eberhart**
Played Chief Elkhart in the Hotel Mishawaka pageant of 4 July 1909.

**Ralph H. Jernegan**
Lawyer and son of Edward A., who chaired the Lions Club memorial committee of 1931–32.

**Alexis Coquillard**
Trader whose word gave the 1916 pageant its gloss: "rapid water between wooded banks."

**Vera Hatfield**
Won the 1925 Booster Week "Princess Mishawaka" contest, with votes earned by shopping.

**Sufi Ahmad**
Sculptor of the bronze princess placed at City Hall in 1987.

**Alan McPherson**
Author of *Indian Names in Indiana* (1993), who called it "the fictitious legend."

PART I

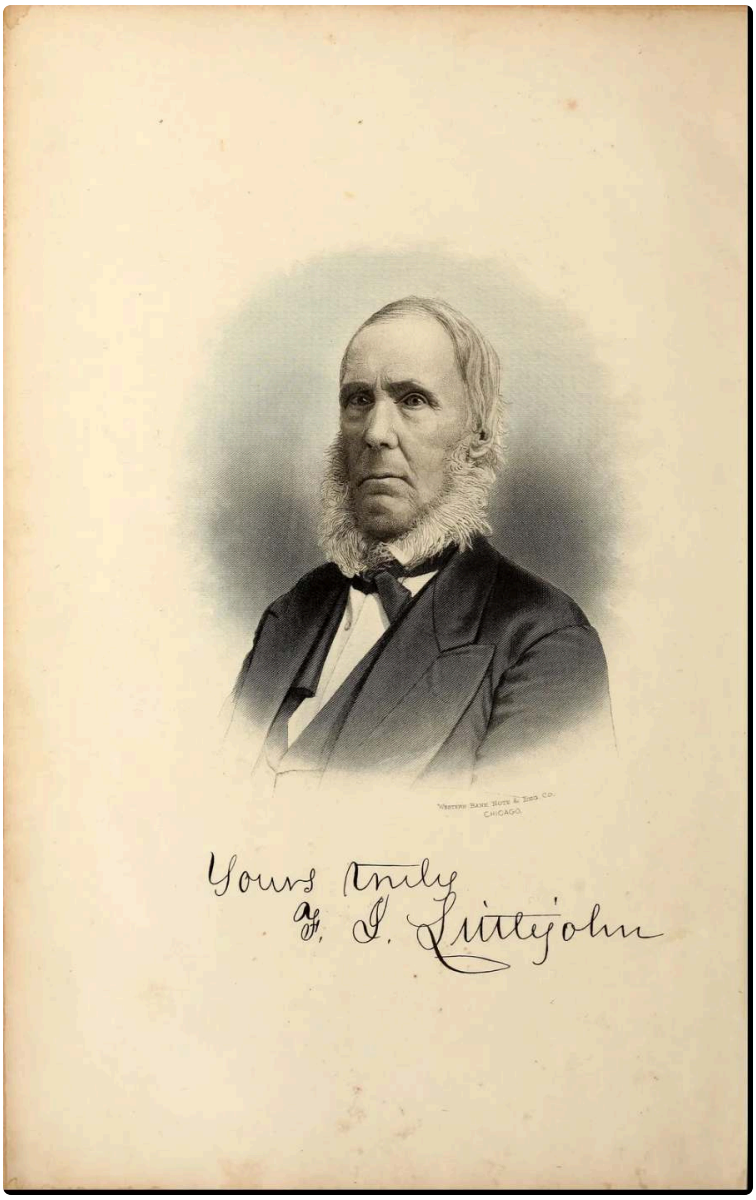
# The story as it is told

DOCUMENTED The version on the city's monuments runs like this. Around 1800 the Shawnee lived along the St. Joseph under their great chief Elkhart. His daughter, the princess, was beautiful and brave. A warrior named Gray Wolf wanted to marry her and was refused. In a war between the Shawnee and the Potawatomi she was wounded, by Gray Wolf in some tellings, and rescued by a white frontiersman known as Dead Shot, who killed Gray Wolf and married her. The falls of the river were named for the hero, and the town, the tablet of 1932 says, for her.

DOCUMENTED The bronze tablet unveiled in 1932 says she "was buried near this spot in 1818, dying at the age of thirty two," that she was "the central figure in two local Indian wars," and that "our city was named in her honor."

PART II

# A judge in Allegan, 1875



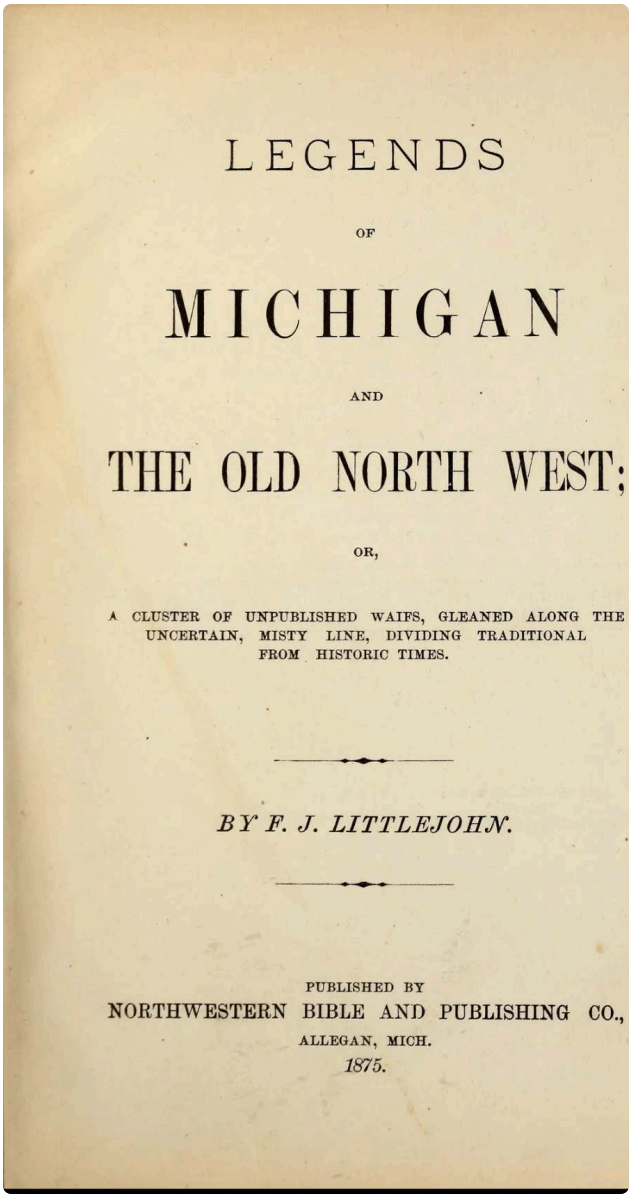

Flavius J. Littlejohn (1804–1880), lawyer, legislator and judge of Allegan, Michigan: the frontispiece of his *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West* (1875). Internet Archive. Public domain.

DOCUMENTED Every element of that story is in a book published at Allegan, Michigan, in 1875: *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West*, by F. J. Littlejohn. Flavius J. Littlejohn, born in 1804 in Herkimer County, New York, had come to Allegan in 1836. He was a lawyer and surveyor, served in both houses of the Michigan legislature, and was a circuit judge from 1858 to 1865.

DOCUMENTED In his preface Littlejohn says the legends "were originally penned by the author for his own amusement ... under the nom de plume of 'Old Trailer.'" He dedicated the

book to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and opened it with lines from *Hiawatha*. He also claimed that his tales were a “close approximation” of real frontier life.

DOCUMENTED The first tale is “The Shawnee and Pottowatomie War; or, The Michigan Scouts of 1800–1,” and it runs from page 9 to page 128. In it, “the Shawnees acknowledged the authority and princely rule of Elkhart, their Grand Sachem.” A white hunter “born and reared near Buffalo” has won the nickname “Dead Shot.” A Shawnee named Gray Wolf “much want to find Elkhart’s daughter. Last year him want Mishawaha for wifie. Elkhart say no.” At the end, “Dead Shot and Mishawaha were united in marriage.”



LEGENDS

OF

MICHIGAN

AND

THE OLD NORTH WEST;

OR,

A CLUSTER OF UNPUBLISHED WAIFS, GLEANED ALONG THE UNCERTAIN, MISTY LINE, DIVIDING TRADITIONAL FROM HISTORIC TIMES.

BY F. J. LITTLEJOHN.

PUBLISHED BY
NORTHWESTERN BIBLE AND PUBLISHING CO.,
ALLEGAN, MICH.
1875.

The book where the princess was born. F. J. Littlejohn, *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West* (Allegan: Northwestern Bible and Publishing Co., 1875). Internet Archive. Public domain.

DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING Read closely, Littlejohn's book does not say what the later legend says. His princess is named Mishawaha, not Mishawaka. "Mishawakee" is a separate village in his story, one that already exists "near what is termed 'the South Bend' of the St. Joseph River." Most of the action takes place in Michigan, at Three Rivers, Prairie Ronde and the Kalamazoo. And Littlejohn never says that the Indiana town was named for his heroine.

DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING The tales seem never to have been printed before 1875; the book's subtitle calls them "a cluster of unpublished waifs." Some were still unpublished in 1919, when the state's *Michigan History Magazine* printed one from a manuscript lent by the author's nephew, E. C. Butler, and his wife, of Allegan. Its editors were frank about the rest: the tales "were not written originally for publication," and "unquestionably much of the narrative is strongly tinctured with the author's imagination." They still thought its "pictures of Indian life, manners and customs" were "true enough"; but that was written a decade after Mishawaka had adopted the princess.

READING Littlejohn wrote romances in the manner of Fenimore Cooper and Longfellow, about a frontier that had vanished in his own lifetime. His dialogue for Native characters, broken English and all, is the stage dialect of nineteenth-century fiction, not the record of anyone's speech. The book is a novel in all but name.

> *"unquestionably much of the narrative is strongly tinctured with the author's imagination."*

PART III

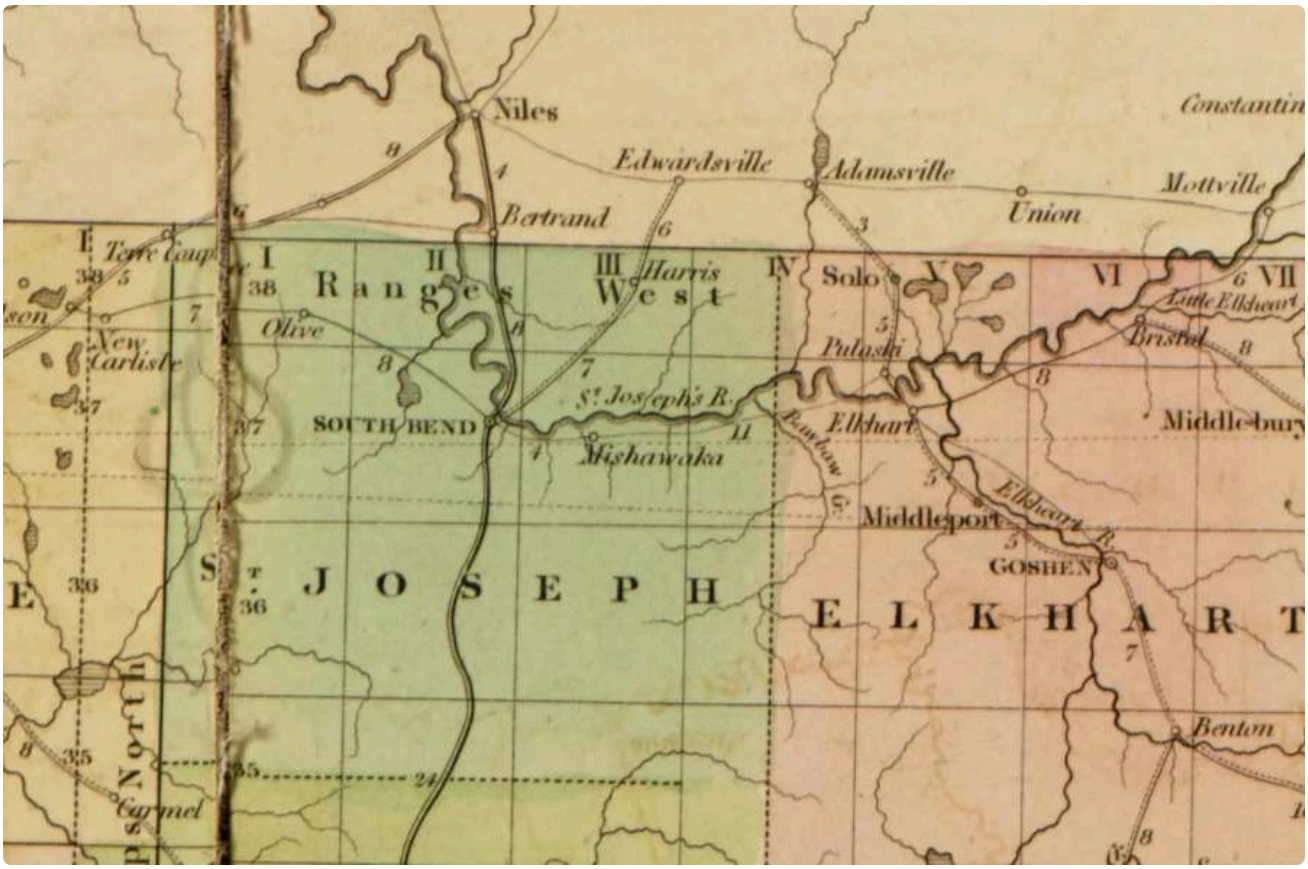
## What the town knew before

DOCUMENTED The town had a name long before Littlejohn wrote. It was platted on 15 July 1833 as St. Joseph Iron Works, after the bog-iron works that brought its first settlers. Chapman's county history of 1880 says that when a post office was opened, "the Indian name 'Mishawaka' was given it at the suggestion of Mr. Yerrington, who was appointed postmaster."

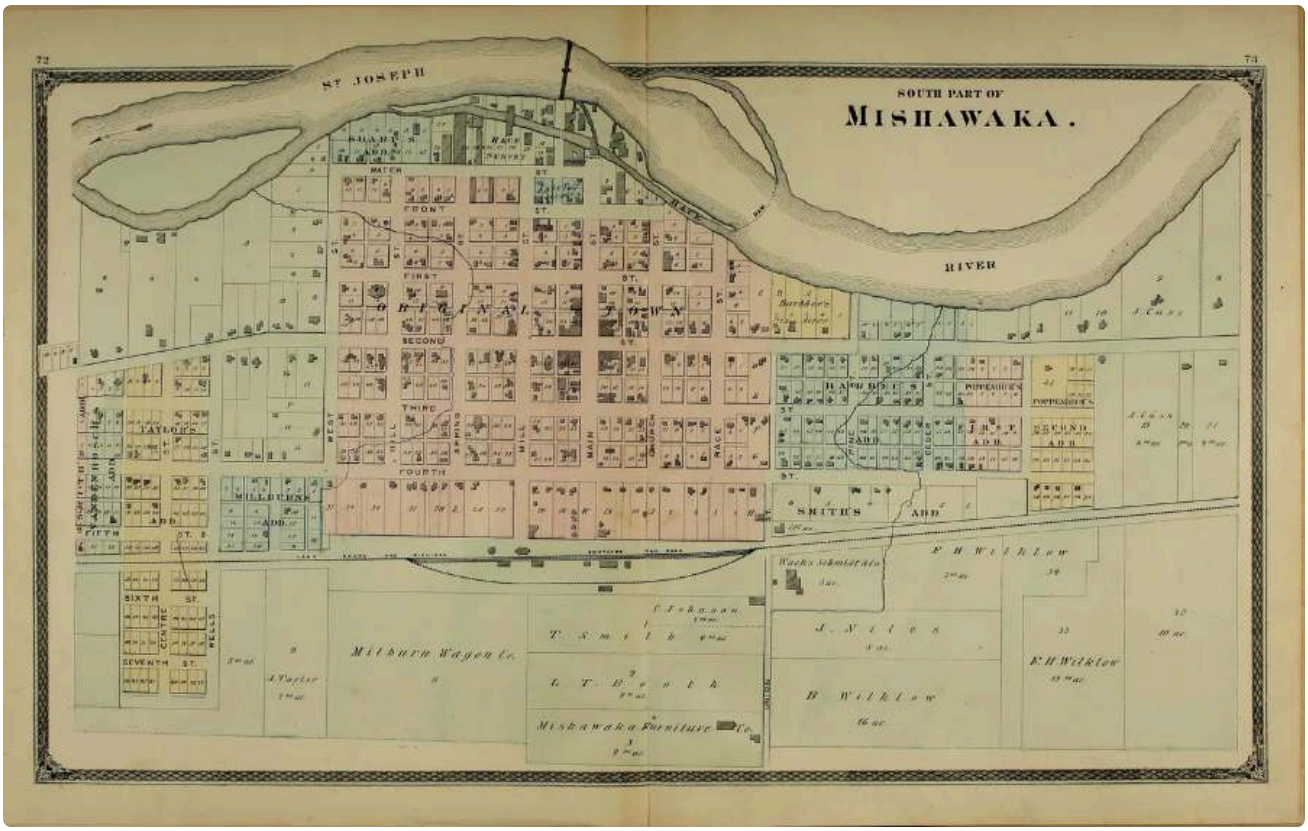
DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING Chapman dates the post office to the spring of 1834. Henry Yerrington's own letter puts it earlier. Writing to Senator John Tipton on 4 September 1833, under the heading "Mishawaka, St Joseph Iron Works," he explained that "on the 9 of May last" he had sent in "an application for the establishment of a Post office at this place by

the name of ‘Mishawaka,’” because the settlers had to travel “four and some ten miles” to the office at South Bend. The office was established on 11 December 1833, with Yerrington as postmaster, according to the Indiana State Library’s index of post offices, cited by the editors of the Tipton Papers; the federal register of 1835 lists “Mishawaka — Hy. Yerrington.”

READING So the name Mishawaka was in use, and asked for in writing, two months before the town was platted under another name. The *Richmond Palladium* reported on 17 May 1834 that “the Iron Works at Mishawaka, near South Bend, have made a successful commencement.” In 1838 the legislature joined the Iron Works, Indiana City across the river and their neighbors as the town of Mishawaka.

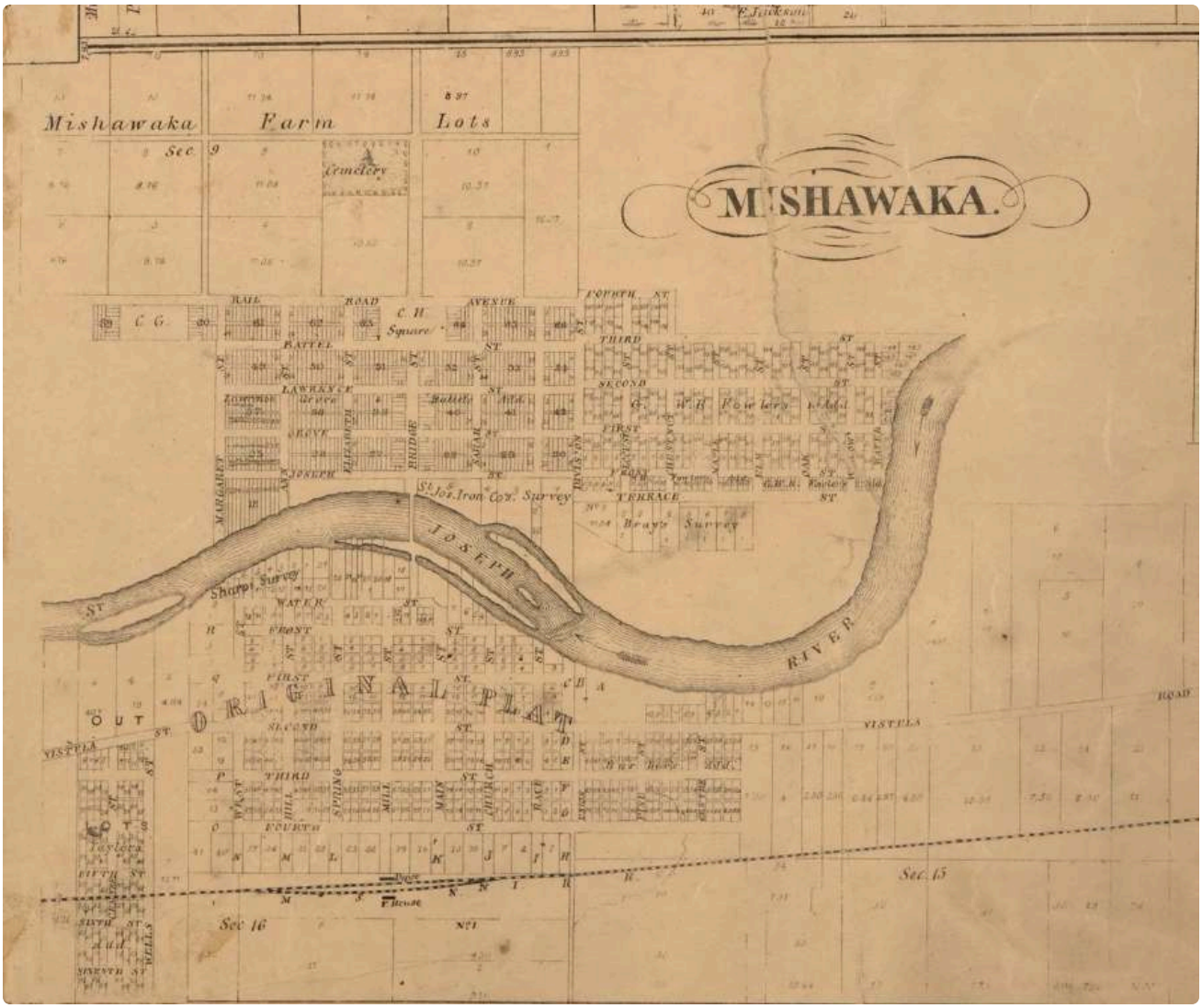



Mishawaka on David H. Burr’s post-office map six years after its office opened: St. Joseph County, Indiana, in David H. Burr’s *Map of Ohio and Indiana Exhibiting the Post Offices, Post Roads, Canals, Rail Roads, &c.*, from *The American Atlas* (1839). Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. Public domain.




The south part of Mishawaka in 1875, with the dam and race at the rapids. Chapman wrote that the Indian village called Mishawaka had stood on Taylor's Addition, at the left of this map. Higgins, Belden & Co., *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of St. Joseph Co., Indiana* (1875), pp. 72–73. Internet Archive. Public domain.

DOCUMENTED Chapman explains the name without a princess. "Mishawaka" was "the name of an Indian village that once occupied Taylor's Addition," and "it signifies 'Swift water,' or as some render it, 'Thick-woods rapids.'" A pioneer doctor who arrived in 1836 remembered it the same way: "The swift water at that point, it is said, gave it the Indian name of Mishawaka." Howard's history of 1907 thought it meant "Big Rapids," after "the great falls in the river at this point."




Mishawaka in 1863: the Original Plat south of the river and the St. Joseph Iron Company's survey north of it, in the town plan inset on M. W. Stokes, *Map of St. Joseph Co., Indiana* (Philadelphia, 1863). The islands at the bend mark the rapids. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. No known restrictions.

"

*"it signifies 'Swift water,' or as some render it, 'Thick-woods rapids.'"*

READING The silence is the evidence. Chapman wrote five years after Littlejohn's book, and Howard thirty-two years after, and both discussed the name at length. Neither mentions a princess, a Chief Elkhart, Dead Shot or Gray Wolf in doing so.

PART IV

# The story moves to Mishawaka

DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING The first local link between a woman named Mishawaka and the town's name that we have found is a short item in the *South Bend Tribune* of 26 January 1907, quoted in Howard's history: "Tradition says that here the Indian chief, Elkhart, and his bride, Mishawaka, after whom this city was named, are buried." In this first version she is Elkhart's bride, not his daughter.

DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING Two years later the full story arrived. The *Witwer Genealogy of America*, printed at South Bend in 1909, includes a "Legend of Mishawaka" and gives its source: "Mr. E. A. Journegan, engaged in writing a sketch of early pioneer days, unearthed an interesting tradition of still earlier times." Here Elkhart is "famous to the far points of the compass as being the father of Princess Mishawaka," Gray Wolf has become "a sub-chief of the Pottawatomies," and Dead Shot carries the princess "to his cabin, near the falls." "In his honor they named the falls in the river 'Mishawaka,' and in later years, the town that grew about it they gave the name of Mishawaka."

Was the town named for her? Three texts, side by side

**1875 · LITTLEJOHN**

*"Dead Shot and Mishawaha were united in marriage."*

The book ends with a wedding. It never says the town was named for her.

**1909 · WITWER GENEALOGY**

*"In his honor they named the falls in the river 'Mishawaka,' and in later years, the town that grew about it they gave the name of Mishawaka."*

The full naming story appears, thirty-four years after the book (the *Tribune* had first tied the name to her in 1907): the falls are named "in his honor," and the town takes the falls' name.

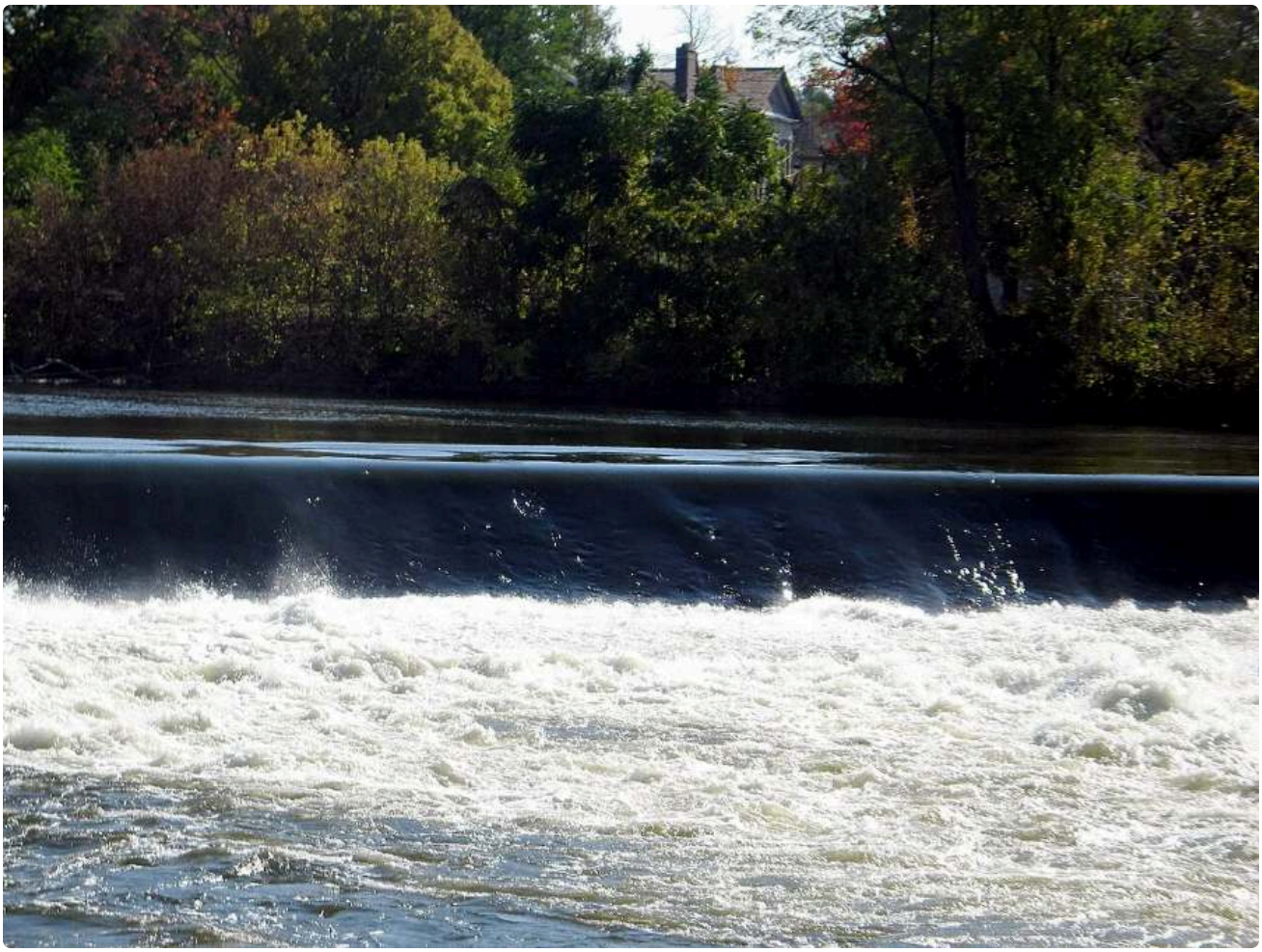
**1932 · THE BRONZE TABLET**

*"our city was named in her honor."*

Cast in bronze for the city's centennial.

F. J. Littlejohn, *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West* (Allegan, 1875); George and A. C. Witwer, *Witwer Genealogy of America* (South Bend, 1909), pp. 142–143; the Lions Club tablet of 1932 at Mishawaka. Meanwhile the post office had carried the name since 1833.

DOCUMENTED On 4 July 1909 Mishawaka opened its new Hotel Mishawaka with a Historical Pageant, and the story went on stage. Frederick Eberhart played Chief Elkhart and Jennie Skelly played Princess Mishawaka, arriving by canoe. The pageant's souvenir pamphlet, printed again in the *Rushville Daily Republican* that August and in the *South Bend News-Times* in 1923, called her "perhaps as notable a character as Pocahontas," and said the falls were named "Mishawaka Falls," meaning "Swift Running Water."



The dam on the St. Joseph at Mishawaka, at the rapids the 1909 pageant called “Mishawaka Falls.” Photograph by Grangernite, 2008.

CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/), via Wikimedia Commons.

DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING “Journegan” is a misprint, and the man behind it was the town’s best-known newspaperman. Edward A. Jernegan, born at La Porte in 1846, had been a drummer boy in the 73rd Indiana; in 1872 he bought the *Mishawaka Enterprise*, and Howard wrote in 1907 that “the name of Jernegan has become almost synonymous with that of the Enterprise.” He was the town’s postmaster under President Harrison and sat in the legislature in 1897. No other E. A. Jernegan, Jernigan or Journegan appears in any Mishawaka record we have searched. He died on 2 March 1922.



Main Street, Mishawaka, about the 1890s: the town of Jernegan's *Enterprise*, a decade before the princess arrived. Photographer unknown. Wikimedia Commons, from the City of Mishawaka's history pages. Public domain.

DOCUMENTED His family carried the story forward. Howard's biography of Ralph H. Jernegan, a young Mishawaka lawyer, names his parents as "Ed A. and Nannie C. (Sherman) Jernegan," and it was Ralph H. Jernegan who would chair the Lions Club committee that raised the princess's memorial in 1931–32. A paper by the elder Jernegan, "Early Pioneer Stores," is cited from the city historian Vincent Brunner's papers at the Mishawaka library; whether he ever printed his "sketch of early pioneer days" in full, perhaps in his own paper, we have not found.

READING The Witwer book says only that Jernegan "unearthed" the tradition, not that he wrote it, and nothing we have found shows where he got it. What is clear is that the 1909 texts follow Littlejohn's plot closely, his war of 1800, his Elkhart, his Dead Shot and his Gray Wolf, while adding the one thing Littlejohn never claimed: that the town was named for her. The 1907 "bride" fits a half-memory of the same book, in which Mishawaha ends as Dead Shot's bride, and the two forms ran side by side for years: a pastor's radio talk of 1925 still had the region named for Elkhart "and his wife."

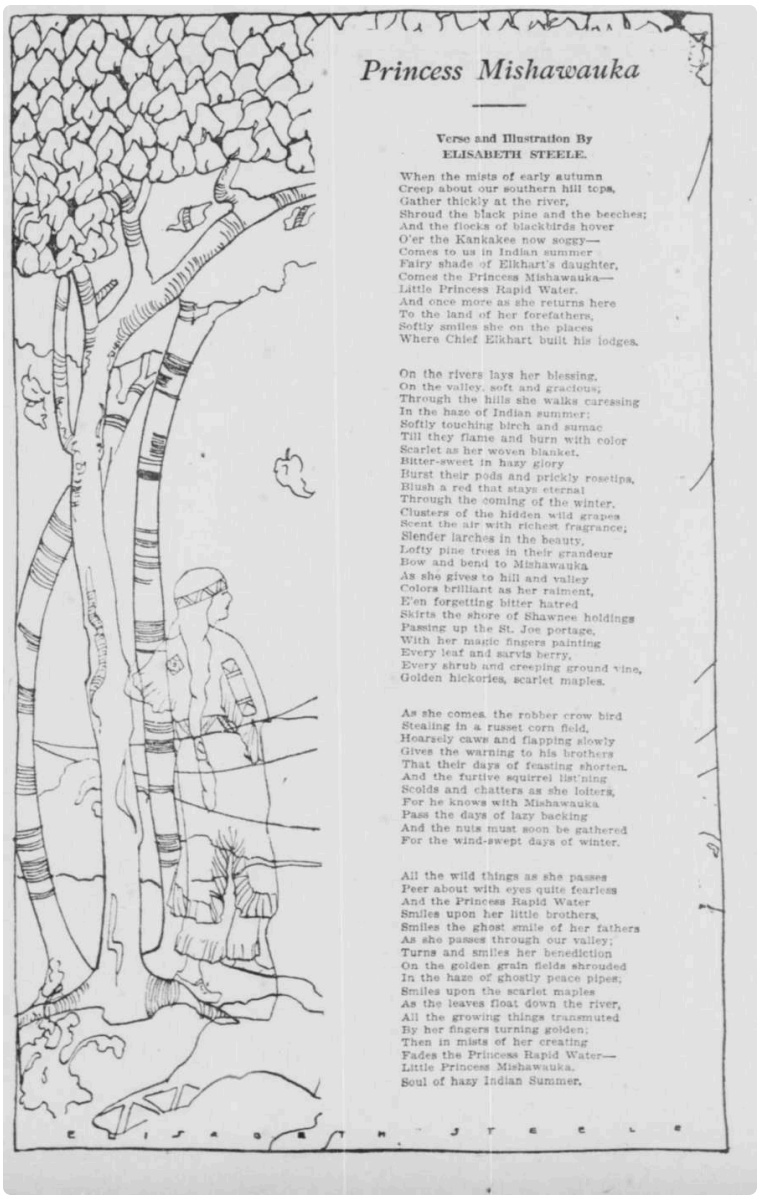
DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING Not everyone took the princess up at once. Seven years after the hotel pageant, South Bend's Indiana Centennial Association staged *The Historic Pageant of St. Joseph County* on 3–5 October 1916, with most of the Mishawaka scenes

performed by Mishawaka High School. They showed the building of the town, its blacksmiths, its mills and a spelling bee. There is no princess, no Elkhart, no Dead Shot and no Gray Wolf anywhere in the printed program, which gives the name a plainer gloss: “It was said by Alexis Coquillard that the name Mishawaka, meant ‘rapid water between wooded banks.’”

PART V

## How a city adopted a princess

DOCUMENTED ✦ NEW FINDING Once the story had a home, Mishawaka put it to work. In February 1914 a businessmen’s dinner had solos by “Princess Mishawaka.” In 1920 the *News-Times* ran a feature by Elisabeth Steele, who wrote that “records show” Dead Shot had lived with the tribe ten years and gave the princess a death year of 1814, and then a poem with her own drawing.



## *Princess Mishawauka*

**Verse and Illustration By**
**ELISABETH STEELE.**

When the mists of early autumn
Creep about our southern hill tops,
Gather thickly at the river,
Shroud the black pine and the beeches;
And the flocks of blackbirds hover
O'er the Kankakee now soggy—
Comes to us in Indian summer
Fairy shade of Elkhart's daughter,
Comes the Princess Mishawauka—
Little Princess Rapid Water.
And once more as she returns here
To the land of her forefathers,
Softly smiles she on the places
Where Chief Elkhart built his lodges.

On the rivers lays her blessing,
On the valley, soft and gracious;
Through the hills she walks caressing
In the haze of Indian summer;
Softly touching birch and sumac
Till they flame and burn with color
Scarlet as her woven blanket,
Bitter-sweet in hazy glory
Burst their pods and prickly rosetips,
Blush a red that stays eternal
Through the coming of the winter.
Clusters of the hidden wild grapes
Scent the air with richest fragrance;
Slender larches in the beauty,
Lofty pine trees in their grandeur
Bow and bend to Mishawauka
As she gives to hill and valley
Colors brilliant as her raiment,
E'en forgetting bitter hatred
Skirts the shore of Shawnee holdings
Passing up the St. Joe portage,
With her magic fingers painting
Every leaf and sarvis berry,
Every shrub and creeping ground vine,
Golden hickories, scarlet maples.

As she comes the robber crow bird
Stealing in a russet corn field,
Hoarsely caws and flapping slowly
Gives the warning to his brothers
That their days of feasting shorten.
And the furtive squirrel list'ning
Scolds and chatters as she loiters,
For he knows with Mishawauka
Pass the days of lazy backing
And the nuts must soon be gathered
For the wind-swept days of winter.

All the wild things as she passes
Peer about with eyes quite fearless
And the Princess Rapid Water
Smiles upon her little brothers,
Smiles the ghost smile of her fathers
As she passes through our valley;
Turns and smiles her benediction
On the golden grain fields shrouded
In the haze of ghostly peace pipes;
Smiles upon the scarlet maples
As the leaves float down the river,
All the growing things transmuted
By her fingers turning golden;
Then in mists of her creating
Fades the Princess Rapid Water—
Little Princess Mishawauka,
Soul of hazy Indian Summer.

Elisabeth Steele's "Princess Mishawauka," verse and drawing, *South Bend News-Times*, 17 October 1920, p. 17. Library of Congress, Chronicling America. Public domain.

DOCUMENTED In 1925 the Lions Club's Booster Week held a "Princess Mishawaka" popularity contest, with votes earned by shopping; Vera Hatfield won, and was paraded in costume as "the Indian princess from whom Mishawaka took its name." A junior-high essay contest that week taught the story as the city's beginning, and a local pastor told it on the radio. In 1926 the Chamber of Commerce adopted a seal bearing the princess's head.

DOCUMENTED In 1931 the Lions Club began raising money for a memorial. The city's historian, Vincent Brunner, told a banquet that he had identified the princess's grave from the memories of three old settlers, and a Chicago sculptor, Christian Petersen, was consulted. One reader wrote to the paper that it "would be a far more humane act to organize a free clinic for children." It was the only objection we found.

DOCUMENTED For the city's centennial in May 1932, the D.A.R. provided "the large native boulder" and the Lions Club the bronze tablet, which declared that the princess "was buried near this spot in 1818" and that "our city was named in her honor." The death date had moved four years since 1920. Petersen made a clay model of the princess in 1933, but the full-size statue did not come until 1987, when the city placed a bronze by Sufi Ahmad at City Hall.

DOCUMENTED Generations of schoolchildren met her. A "Princess Mishawaka" was crowned at Mishawaka High School homecomings in the 1940s; a 1944 teachers' journal described a classroom unit on finding her grave; and an annual Princess Mishawaka contest was still being held around 1970. The WPA's state guidebook of 1941 told the story to the whole country.

### 1875

LITTLEJOHN'S *LEGENDS OF MICHIGAN*

Mishawaha, Chief Elkhart's daughter, marries Dead Shot

*Named for her?* Not said

### 1907

*SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE*

Mishawaka, Chief Elkhart's *bride*

*Named for her?* Yes, "after whom this city was named"

### 1909

WITWER GENEALOGY; HOTEL MISHAWAKA PAGEANT

Princess Mishawaka, Elkhart's *daughter*; Dead Shot, Gray Wolf, the falls

*Named for her?* Yes, the falls and the town

### 1920

ELISABETH STEELE, *NEWS-TIMES*

"records show" Dead Shot lived with the tribe; Steele gives her death as **1814**

*Named for her?* No new claim

### 1932

THE BRONZE TABLET

The tablet gives her death as **1818**, "at the age of thirty two"

*Named for her?* "our city was named in her honor"

### 1987

THE STATUE AT CITY HALL

A bronze princess, by Sufi Ahmad

*Named for her?* The story in bronze

How a legend grows: each retelling adds something. Littlejohn's heroine is a wife in 1907, a daughter again in 1909, and gains a death year in 1920 that moves four years by 1932. Only from 1907 is the town said to be named for her. Sources as in the text: Littlejohn (1875), pp. 9–128; the *Tribune* of 26 January 1907, quoted by Howard (1907); Witwer (1909), pp. 142–143; Steele, *South Bend News-Times*, 8 August 1920; the 1932 tablet; the 1987 statue.

PART VI

## Was there a Chief Elkhart?

DOCUMENTED No record we have found shows a Shawnee chief named Elkhart. The name of the Elkhart River, and of the county and city that took the river's name, was explained by the state historian Jacob Piatt Dunn in 1909 as a translation of the Potawatomi name of the stream, which "refers to an island at its mouth, which resembled an elk's heart in shape." The linguist Michael McCafferty, in his study of Indiana's Native place names (2008), traces it to the same "elk heart."

READING Nor have we found evidence of a Shawnee town on the St. Joseph about 1800. Littlejohn himself placed Elkhart's Shawnee "occupying the Wabash Valley." The story has even run backward: Alan McPherson, in *Indian Names in Indiana* (1993), reports that local historians had come to derive the name of Elkhart from the fictional chief.

PART VII

## What the name means

DOCUMENTED The name is real and much older than the legend; only its meaning is in doubt. The early settlers heard "swift water" or "thick-woods rapids" in it; a history of Notre Dame printed in 1888 has "swift-running water," and the 1916 pageant program "rapid water between wooded banks," on the word of the trader Alexis Coquillard. Dunn, in his *True Indian Stories* (1909) and again in 1912, gave the Potawatomi *m'sheh'-wah-kek*, "country of dead trees," meaning "a deadening," a stand of timber killed by fire or storm. McCafferty's modern reading, *mšwakig*, is "at the firewood-tree land." None of these authorities derives the name from a person.

READING On the evidence, Mishawaka was named in 1833 for a place, a Native village or locality on the river at the rapids, at the suggestion of its first postmaster. The princess came seventy-six years later.

PART VIII

## The legend as a kind of story

READING Princess Mishawaka belongs to a large family of American "Indian princess" stories, in which a chief's daughter loves a white man, suffers for it, and gives her name or her

blessing to the place the settlers make their own. The pageant writers of 1909 made the comparison themselves, to Pocahontas. Such stories said more about the towns that told them than about the Native people they claimed to remember, and they flourished in exactly the years Mishawaka's did, in pageants, booster weeks and centennials.

DOCUMENTED Others have said so before us. McPherson called it "the fictitious legend" and "the romantic, but untrue story," and placed its birth at Three Rivers, Michigan, where Littlejohn set it. The History Museum in South Bend writes that "more likely the name was part of a fictional story to drive tourism to the city," and the city's own published history speaks of "legendary Princess Mishawaka and her supposed grave site." The statue and its plaque, though, still tell the story.

PART IX

## Story or record? Play along

Now that you have read the record, try these six. For each claim, make your call: true, false, or no record either way. Then see what the record says.

"Mishawaka was named after an Indian princess."

**FALSE**

The name was asked for the post office in May 1833 and given that December, for a place. The princess came seventy-six years later.

"The princess story was written as fiction by a Michigan judge."

**TRUE**

Every element is in F. J. Littlejohn's *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West*, published at Allegan in 1875.

"In the original book the heroine is called Mishawaka."

**FALSE**

Littlejohn calls her Mishawaha. His "Mishawakee" is a separate village that already exists.

"There really was a Shawnee chief named Elkhart."

**NO RECORD**

No record we have found shows one. Dunn traced the river's name to an island at its mouth shaped like an elk's heart.

"The name Mishawaka is older than the town."

**TRUE**

Henry Yerrington asked for a post office by that name on 9 May 1833, two months before the town was platted as St. Joseph Iron Works.

"E. A. Jernegan made up the princess legend."

**NO RECORD**

The 1909 Witwer book says only that he "unearthed" the tradition, and nothing found shows where he got it.

PART X

## Questions we answered

**2** answered

**ANSWERED**

**When the post office opened** When was the Mishawaka post office asked for and opened?

Yerrington's letter to Senator Tipton: applied for on 9 May 1833; established on 11 December 1833, with Yerrington as postmaster. Answered 27 October 2026

**ANSWERED**

**Who was "Journegan"?** Who was the "Mr. E. A. Journegan" the 1909 Witwer genealogy credits?

Edward A. Jernegan, editor of the *Mishawaka Enterprise* from 1872 and father of the 1931 memorial chairman. Answered 27 October 2026

The whole story as one PDF › (projectscroll.com/data/princess-mishawaka.pdf)

PART XI

## A timeline

**1833** Henry Yerrington applies for a post office named Mishawaka, 9 May; St. Joseph Iron Works platted, 15 July; the office opens, 11 December

**1834** The name in print, 17 May

**1838** The settlements joined as Mishawaka

37 YEARS LATER

**1875** Littlejohn's *Legends of Michigan*: Mishawaha, Elkhart, Dead Shot, Gray Wolf

**1880** Chapman: the name means "swift water"; no princess

27 YEARS LATER

**1907** First local tie of the woman to the town's name

**1909** The Witwer genealogy, crediting E. A. Jernegan, and the Hotel Mishawaka pageant

**1916** The county centennial pageant: no princess

**1919** *Michigan History Magazine*: Littlejohn's tales "strongly tinctured with the author's imagination"

**1920** Elisabeth Steele's story and poem

**1925** Princess Mishawaka contest in Booster Week

**1932** Centennial boulder and tablet

55 YEARS LATER

**1987** Bronze statue at City Hall

**1993** McPherson calls it "the fictitious legend"

PART XII

## Test yourself

Six questions from the story. Tap an answer to see whether you are right, and why.

1. **Who wrote the 1875 book in which the princess story first appears?**

Timothy Howard | E. A. Jernegan | F. J. Littlejohn | Jacob Piatt Dunn

Flavius J. Littlejohn, a judge of Allegan, published *Legends of Michigan and the Old North West* in 1875.

2. **What is the heroine called in Littlejohn's book?**

Mishawaha | Mishawaka | Mishawakee | Mishawauka

His princess is Mishawaha; "Mishawakee" is a separate village in his story.

3. **What was the town platted as on 15 July 1833?**

Indiana City | St. Joseph Iron Works | Princess City | South Bend

It was named for the bog-iron works that brought its first settlers.

4. **When was the Mishawaka post office established?**

Spring 1834 | 1838 | 1875 | 11 December 1833

Yerrington applied on 9 May 1833, and the office was established that December.

5. **Who was the "Mr. E. A. Journegan" credited with the legend in 1909?**

A Michigan judge | A Notre Dame historian | Edward A. Jernegan, editor of the *Mishawaka Enterprise* | A Lions Club officer

"Journegan" is a misprint for Jernegan, the town's best-known newspaperman.

6. **What did Chapman's 1880 history say the name Mishawaka means?**

Princess of the river | Swift water | Elk's heart | Place of iron

Chapman wrote that "it signifies 'Swift water,' or as some render it, 'Thick-woods rapids.'"

Score: **0** of 6

PART XIII

# If you go

DOCUMENTED The 1987 bronze stands at Mishawaka City Hall. The History Museum in South Bend and the Mishawaka-Penn-Harris Public Library hold the city's history. Littlejohn's book can be read free on the Internet Archive.

✦ NEW FINDING **WHAT'S NEW HERE**

In Littlejohn's 1875 original the heroine is "Mishawaha," "Mishawakee" is a separate village that already exists, the action is mostly in Michigan, and Littlejohn never says the Indiana town was named for her: the naming claim was added later.

*Found by Michael Urbanski [redacted], Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

Littlejohn (1875) read in full; Wikipedia; McPherson (1993); James (2013); The History Museum; De Kever.

The earliest local tie of a woman named Mishawaka to the town's name found is the *South Bend Tribune* of 26 January 1907 (quoted in Howard, 1907), where she is Chief Elkhart's bride, not his daughter.

*Found by Michael Urbanski [redacted], Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

Chapman (1880), Howard (1907), the 1875 atlas, Chronicling America ("princess mishawaka," earliest 1914), archive.org full text.

By 1909 Littlejohn's plot had been transplanted to Mishawaka with the new claim that the falls and town were named for the princess: in the *Witwer Genealogy of America* (1909), crediting "Mr. E. A. Journegan," and in the pamphlet of the 4 July 1909 Hotel Mishawaka pageant.

*Found by Michael Urbanski [redacted], Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

Archive.org full text, Chronicling America, De Kever's city history, McPherson (1993), Wikipedia.

The legend's promotion traced year by year in the *South Bend News-Times*: the 1914 "Princess Mishawaka" singer, Steele's 1920 story (death in 1814) and poem, the 1925

Booster Week contest, the 1926 seal, the 1931 Lions Club drive with its “grave” claim and lone objecting letter, and the 1932 tablet (death in 1818).

*New documentation · Found by Michael Urbanski, Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

Chronicling America (*News-Times* 1913–1931), *Billboard* 1932, the *Indianapolis Times* 1932, HMdb.

The Mishawaka post office was applied for by that name on 9 May 1833, two months before St. Joseph Iron Works was platted, and established on 11 December 1833 with Henry Yerrington as postmaster (his letter to Senator Tipton of 4 September 1833 and the editors’ note in the Tipton Papers), not in the spring of 1834 as Chapman (1880) and later histories give.

*Found by Michael Urbanski, Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

Chapman (1880), Howard (1907), De Kever’s city history, the 1875 atlas chronology, Wikipedia, the article’s earlier sources, the 1835 federal register.

The “Mr. E. A. Journegan” credited with the 1909 legend was Edward A. Jernegan (1846–1922), editor of the Mishawaka Enterprise from 1872 and father of Ralph H. Jernegan, who chaired the Lions Club memorial committee of 1931–32 (Howard, 1907, pp. 505–506, 525–526).

*Found by Michael Urbanski, Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

Archive.org full text for Journegan, Jernegan and Princess Mishawaka; Chapman (1880); Goodspeed (1893); Howard (1907); Chronicling America 1900–1931; web searches.

The St. Joseph County centennial pageant of 3–5 October 1916, whose Mishawaka scenes were staged by Mishawaka High School, has no princess, Chief Elkhart, Dead Shot or Gray Wolf; its program glosses the name, on Alexis Coquillard’s word, as “rapid water between wooded banks.”

*New documentation · Found by Michael Urbanski, Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

The 1916 program read in full; Chronicling America; archive.org full text; De Kever.

Michigan History Magazine (October 1919) already judged Littlejohn’s tales “strongly tinctured with the author’s imagination” and “not written originally for publication,”

printing an unpublished one lent by his nephew's family.

*Found by Michael Urbanski [redacted], Project Scroll, 27 October 2026.*

▼ What we searched

McPherson (1993), The History Museum, De Kever, Wikipedia, archive.org full text.

A **new finding** is a fact found in a primary source that we could not find in any published history, article or website we searched. Credit: Michael Urbanski, Project Scroll. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will say so here. All our discoveries › (projectscroll.com/discoveries/)

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Numbers in the text point to this list; entries without a number are further sources we consulted. How we research › (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/) · The libraries behind all our stories › (projectscroll.com/sources/libraries/)

### ▾ CORRECTIONS (1)

First published 27 October 2026. Like all our pages, it is expanded from time to time with new records, pictures and features. Factual corrections are listed here, with their dates.

**27 October 2026** The post office was asked for by the name Mishawaka on 9 May 1833 and opened on 11 December 1833, not in the spring of 1834.

## ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Research and reporting

**Michael Urbanski** (projectscroll.com/about/michael-urbanski/) [redacted]

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|---|---|
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