PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-59

A chief named Shipshewana in Kansas and Washington in 1841 and on the Osage River muster roll of 1842: four records in the letters of the Office of Indian Affairs

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SUMMARY

The monument of 1931 at Shipshewana, Indiana, says that Chief Shipshewana died by the lake in 1841. The letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs from the Osage River Agency (National Archives microfilm M234, roll 642) carry the name in Kansas and in Washington in that year and the next. On 3 February 1841, at Potawatamie Creek on the Osage River, “Ship she wah no” was one of twenty-seven chiefs and warriors of the Potawatomi “who lately emigrated from Indiana & Michigan” who told the Secretary of War that Mucka moat and three others had gone to Washington with the Rev. Mr. Ketchum without the tribe’s consent; the sub-agent Anthony L. Davis wrote that the letter “embraces the principal men of the late Emigrants with whom Meck E moote emigrated.” On 22 March 1841 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. Hartley Crawford, told the Secretary of War, John Bell, that “immediate provision should be made for the return of the four Potowatomies, improperly brought here by Mr. Ketchum,” at a cost estimated at 350 dollars, and Bell approved; an office note records that the party left on Sunday morning, 28 March 1841. On 16 November 1841 the chiefs, head men, warriors and young men of the St. Joseph and Prairie bands named “Ship she won no” third of six delegates to Washington in a petition to President John Tyler, and he signed it by mark; on 15 December 1841 “Ship she wan no” made his mark on the delegates’ letter to Crawford from Washington. And on the muster roll of the Potawatomi of the Osage River Sub Agency taken by Davis on 12 October 1842, two heads of family are entered as “Shep She wi no”: no. 179, with a household of eleven

including one man over forty, and no. 277, with a household of three. Louise Barry's annals of 1963 summarised the February letter with five of its signers, not including this one; we have found the four records in no other publication.

THE RECORD

1. **The chiefs and warriors of the Potawatomi to J. R. Poinsett, Secretary of War, Potawatamie Creek, 3 February 1841, enclosed in Anthony L. Davis to T. Hartley Crawford, Osage River Sub Agency, 8 February 1841, National Archives, M234, roll 642, images 821–823**

   > *"We the Chiefs and warriors of the tribe of Potawatamie Indians who lately emigrated from Indiana & Michigan would most respectfully represent to you that Mucka moat and three others of our tribe have left us at our new homes on the Osage river in company with the Revd. Mr. Ketchum for Washington City"; among the signers, "Ship she wah no". Davis: the letter "embraces the principal men of the late Emigrants with whom Meck E moote emigrated"*

   National Archives (NAID 164251872) · See the record (https://catalog.archives.gov/medialz/dc-metro/rg-075/300331/M234-642/M234-642-0823.jpg)

2. **T. Hartley Crawford, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to John Bell, Secretary of War, Office Indian Affairs, 22 March 1841, endorsed "Approved", with the office note of 28 March 1841, ibid., images 522–524**

   > *"It is important that immediate provision should be made for the return of the four Potowatomies, improperly brought here by Mr. Ketchum. Major Pilcher the Superintendent at St. Louis, estimates that it will cost 350 dollars to defray the expenses of their going back to the Osage river country and those of the conductor, who I presume ought to be Mr. Rosecrants"; Ketchum acted "not only without authority, but directly contrary to the prohibition of the Superintendent at St. Louis." Office note: "One of these men had a sore and swollen thigh", the party setting off on "Sunday morning, 28 March 41"*

   National Archives (NAID 164251872) · See the record (https://catalog.archives.gov/medialz/dc-metro/rg-075/300331/M234-642/M234-642-0523.jpg)

3. **Petition of the St. Joseph and Prairie bands of the Potawatomi to John Tyler, President of the United States, 16 November 1841, with the certificate of Anthony L. Davis, ibid., images 518–521**

> *the bands "do hereby nominate and appoint To pen e bee, our principal Chief, and Che bess. Ship she won no, Mich. E ke ko-ba Abram Burnett and L. Rice to be our delegates to Washington City"; among the marks, "Ship She won no × his mark"*

National Archives (NAID 164251872) · See the record (https://catalog.archives.gov/medialz/dc-metro/rg-075/300331/M234-642/M234-642-0518.jpg)

4. **The delegates of the St. Joseph and Prairie bands to T. Hartley Crawford, Washington City, 15 December 1841, ibid., images 515–516**

> *"We the undersigned Delegates of the St Joseph and Prairie bands of the Putawatimie Nation have arrived at the seat of your Government"; signed "To pen e bee his x mark · Che bass his x mark · Ship she wan no his x mark · Much ke kau boy his x mark · Abram Burnett · Luther Rice"*

National Archives (NAID 164251872) · See the record (https://catalog.archives.gov/medialz/dc-metro/rg-075/300331/M234-642/M234-642-0516.jpg)

5. **"A Muster Roll of Putawatomie Indians within the Osage river Sub Agency taken by Anthony L. Davis Ind Sub Agent … this 12th day of October 1842," ibid., images 680–699**

> *no. 179, "Shep She wi no": males under 10, 3; 10 to 40, 2; over 40, 1; females under 10, 2; 10 to 40, 2; over 40, 1; total 11. No. 277, "Shep she wi no": a male under 10, a male 10 to 40, a female 10 to 40; total 3*

National Archives (NAID 164251872) · See the record (https://catalog.archives.gov/medialz/dc-metro/rg-075/300331/M234-642/M234-642-0686.jpg)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The name Shipshewana, in the spellings of four government clerks, is found among the Potawatomi in Kansas in February and November 1841, in Washington in December 1841, and on the Osage River in October 1842. In the year the 1931 plaque gives for the

chief's death by the lake in Indiana, a chief of the name was one of the principal men of the emigrants of 1840 and a delegate of the St. Joseph band to the President. The way the unauthorized journey of Mucka moat and his companions to Washington ended in March 1841 is also documented.

LIMITS

The four records give the name, not the man: the clerks wrote it four ways, and they do not say whether the signer of 1841, either head of family of 1842, or both, are the chief who signed the treaties of 1828–33. The office note of 22 March gives 300 dollars where Crawford's letter of the same day gives 350; the letter is quoted here. The office notes are in a hurried hand and are read here as far as they are legible. The image numbers are those of the microfilm frames (file names M234-642-0515 to 0823).

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

National Archives Catalog, M234 roll 642 (NAID 164251872), images 424–930, read on the page images; Barry, *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (1963); *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 21 (1892); the *Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1841–43; McPherson (2007); Edmunds (1978, 1987); the *HowNiKan* exchange of 1994–95; the La Grange County histories of 1874–1936; full-text searches of the Internet Archive for the signers' names; web searches for the petition, its signers and the names Ketchum, Rosecrants and Mucka moat.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"New" means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note's version.

Project Scroll is independent research and does not speak for any Potawatomi nation or other tribal nation. Potawatomi history on this page is drawn from the published record cited below, written largely by outsiders, and the nations' own accounts may differ.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. Louise Barry, "Kansas Before 1854: A Revised Annals, Part Eleven, 1840–1841," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (1963), pp. 336–339. https://www.kansashistory.gov/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-kansas-before-1854-a-revised-annals-11/17912

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in The Shipshewana Puzzle: One Name, at Least Five People (projectscroll.com/news/who-was-shipshewana/). In the discoveries register:

- `shp-1841-feb-letter` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#shp-1841-feb-letter)
- `shp-1841-mar-return` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#shp-1841-mar-return)
- `shp-1841-petition` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#shp-1841-petition)
- `shp-1842-roll` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#shp-1842-roll)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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