EXPLORING

Captive Heart

The Frances Slocum Story

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JAN 26-FEB 27, 1999 IRT UPPERSTAGE

AN IRT STUDY GUIDE

Frances Slocum's Journey

Maconaquah's Journey

The Wyoming Valley along the Susquehanna River near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, was the edge of the American wilderness in 1778. The Slocum family—Jonathan, Ruth, and their nine children—had moved there from Concord, Massachusetts, to avoid being caught up in the Revolutionary War. Although they were loyal to the Colonies, their Quaker beliefs would not permit them to fight.

Unfortunately, their new home was no more peaceful. The Delaware tribe who had been forced from the Wyoming Valley by the American pioneers had joined with the British and were attacking the new settlements. Although the Slocums were protected by their known status as Quakers, that protection was shattered when Giles Slocum decided to risk shunning by the Quaker community and join the militia. Angered by this betrayal, three Delaware Indians attacked the family home in November 1778, killing a visiting neighbor boy, Nathan Kingsley, and kidnapping his brother Wareham and five-year-old Frances Slocum.

Spending the day hidden in a nearby cave, the Indians and their captives traveled by night to a nearby village. After a few day's rest they moved on. One of the captors, Chief Tuck Horse, spoke a little English; he told the children they were headed for his village, near Niagara Falls. The Indians treated the children with care; white children were a valuable commodity in the Indian community, where death robbed the tribes of many of their own children. Frances, with her bright red hair, was a particular treasure.

At Niagara, Frances became part of the Tuck Horse household, and Wareham was taken in by another family. Tuck Horse's wife, Flicker, began to teach Frances the Delaware language as well as various household tasks to occupy her through the long, cold winter. Frances was officially adopted by the family and given the name Weletawash after a previous daughter who had died. Having grown out of her Quaker dress, she wore Delaware clothes as she learned more about Delaware customs. In the spring the family planted corn, then journeyed south along Lake Erie to spend the summer along the Sandusky River. In the fall they returned to harvest the corn and winter in Niagara.

By now Weletawash had lived among the Delaware for over a year. She made no attempts to get help from the many white people traveling through Niagara. In 1780 the Tuck Horse family, along with several others, were moved north of Lake Erie in Canada by the American Army. They remained here for the duration of the American Revolutionary War, ranging as far west as Detroit. Fearing that the Slocums might come looking for their daughter when the war ended, Tuck Horse moved the family west and south to the Miami vil-

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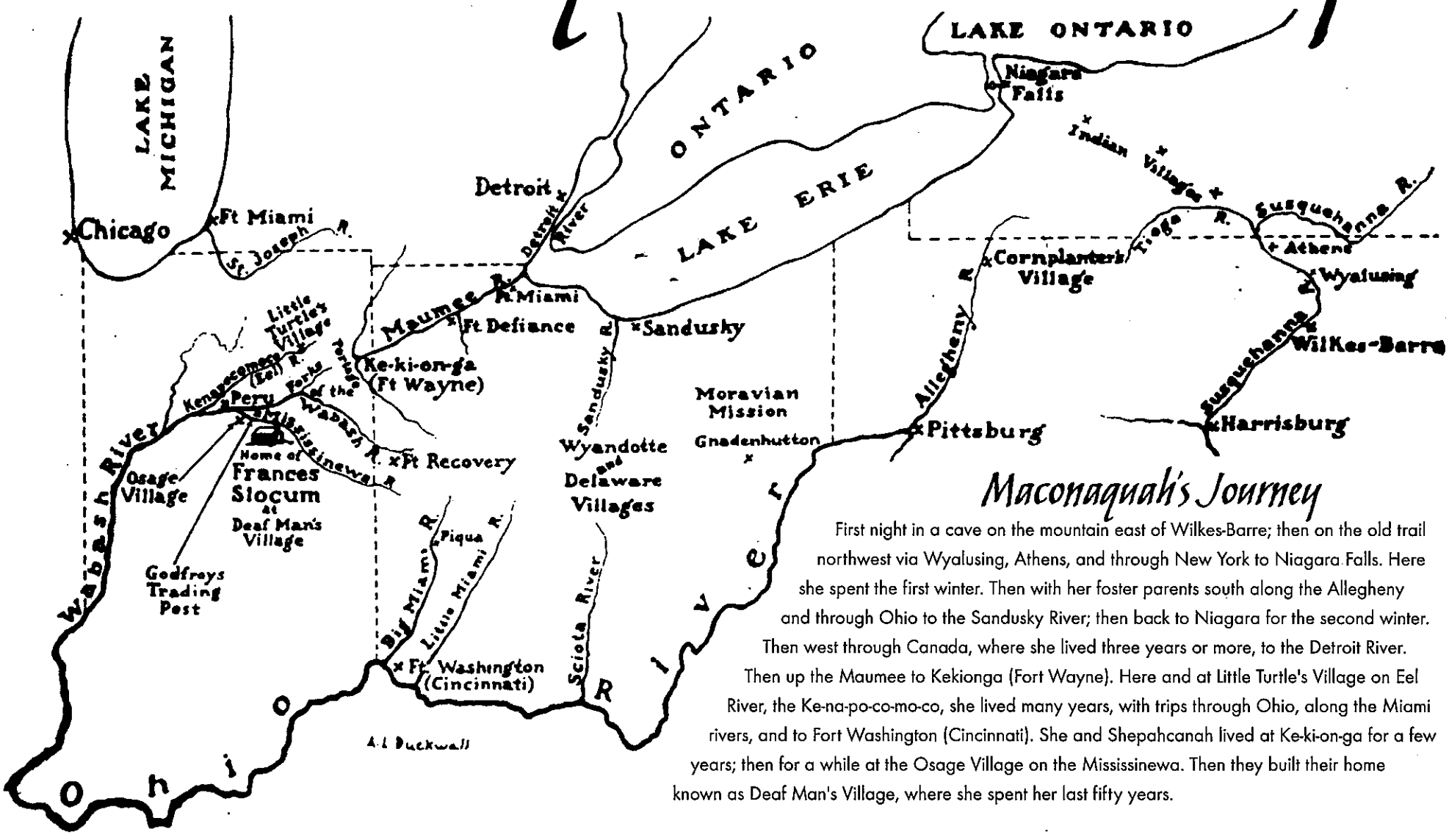


Maconaquah's Journey

First night in a cave on the mountain east of Wilkes-Barre; then on the old trail northwest via Wyalusing, Athens, and through New York to Niagara Falls. Here she spent the first winter. Then with her foster parents south along the Allegheny and through Ohio to the Sandusky River; then back to Niagara for the second winter. Then west through Canada, where she lived three years or more, to the Detroit River. Then up the Maumee to Kekionga (Fort Wayne). Here and at Little Turtle's Village on Eel River, the Ke-na-po-co-mo-co, she lived many years, with trips through Ohio, along the Miami rivers, and to Fort Washington (Cincinnati). She and Shepahcanah lived at Ke-ki-on-ga for a few years; then for a while at the Osage Village on the Mississinewa. Then they built their home known as Deaf Man's Village, where she spent her last fifty years.

lage of Kekionga on the Maumee River (today's Fort Wayne). Weletawash grew to be a woman in the family's isolated wigwam 12 miles from the Miami village.

In the early 1790s Weletawash married a Delaware, but for some reason the marriage did not last and she returned to her family. By this time the frontier had reached Indiana, and confrontations between Native Americans and U.S. troops were increasing. On August 20, 1794, warriors from eight tribes met General "Mad Anthony" Wayne and his troops just southwest of present-day Toledo in the Battle of Fallen Timbers (so named because a tornado had recently felled many trees). The tribes were devastated.

Tuck Horse, Flicker, and Weletawash (now 21) happened to be traveling nearby, and they visited the battleground the next day. Among the dead they found a wounded brave who had somehow survived. They tended to his severe injuries and slowly returned home with him. He was a Miami named Shepahcanah. His recovery was so slow it was decided he would spend the winter with the family rather than try to move on. In the spring, he married Weletawash, giving her the Miami name Maconaquah (Little Bear Woman). The couple remained with Tuck Horse and Flicker for five or six years before returning to Shepahcanah's village on the Mississinewa.

After the War of 1812, clashes between American forces and native tribes began again. Shepahcanah's increasing deafness disqualified him from a leadership position, and the little family (by now they had one daughter) moved a few miles up the Mississinewa and established a home that became known as Deaf Man's Village. There they had two sons (who soon died) and a second daughter. Years passed, and the daughters married and gave Maconaquah granddaughters.

Shepahcanah died in 1833. Now 60 years old, Maconaquah began for the first time to wonder if she had been right to forget her white roots. She feared she was near death and needed to unburden herself. One wintry day in 1835 she revealed her story to an old friend, George Ewing, a white trader. She recalled the name Slocum and retraced her childhood journey.

Upon his return to Logansport, Ewing decided to try to contact the Slocum family. He wrote a letter to the postmaster of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a town he thought might be in the right vicinity. Somehow the letter was lost or ignored for two years, but in July of 1837 it was published in the local newspaper, and a copy found its way to Joseph Slocum, Frances's younger brother, still living in Wilkes-Barre.

The Slocum family had never quite given up the search for their sister. Frances's father had been killed in an Indian attack just six weeks after Frances's abduction. Her mother, Ruth, struggled to keep the remaining family together through the Revolutionary War. In 1784, after studying the locations of various tribes, the Slocums were finally able to begin their search for Frances at Niagara. Despite offering a reward, they found no information.

Several subsequent expeditions offered occasional opportunities for hope but nothing in the way of real information about Frances. The family's search became well-known among frontier dwellers, but never reached quite as far west as Kekionga. Ruth Slocum died in 1807, still obsessed with finding her lost daughter. But no further clues presented themselves.

So in 1837 Joseph Slocum viewed Ewing's two-year-old letter with some skepticism. Nonetheless, he responded immediately. Ewing replied by letter that he was certain Maconaquah was Slocum's sister, and suggested they come visit, using James Miller of nearby Peru to act as interpreter. Joseph contacted his brother Isaac and his sister Mary and they departed for Indiana.

The Slocums were immediately able to verify their sister's identity by a damaged finger from a childhood accident. Thrilled at last that their search had ended, they were disappointed that their sister was less than overjoyed to see them after so many years. For her part, Maconaquah was suspicious of all white people, and particularly worried that these relatives would try to force her to leave her home and return to their world. Nonetheless, she accepted their invitation to a celebratory dinner at their hotel in Peru, and brought a generous gift of venison. Joseph asked Maconaquah to return to Wilkes-Barre with the family. Maconaquah refused, saying she was glad to see her family, but that Deaf Man's Village was her home and she could not leave it. After a visit of several days, the Slocums returned to their homes in the East. Two years later Joseph Slocum visited again, this time with his two daughters.

In 1840 came news that the Miami would be forced to move to Kansas within five years. Joseph's son Jonathan, a lawyer, drafted a petition to the United States Congress exempting Maconaquah and 21 of her Miami relatives from this forced move. The petition was approved in 1845, and Maconaquah was one of only 148 Miami allowed to remain in Indiana.

To protect her family in the coming years, Maconaquah asked Isaac's son George to come live at Dead Man's Village and teach them how to get along in the white man's world. In 1846, after much thought, George and his wife and infant daughter left Ohio and moved into a nearby cabin. George began to learn the Miami language, and Maconaquah became particularly attached to Mary Cordelia, George's daughter. She came to believe that the baby would take her place in the world, and decided to give the child her most precious possession—her name, Maconaquah.

Born as Frances Slocum and raised as Weletawash, the woman known for most of her life as Maconaquah died peaceably on March 6, 1847, and was buried as she wished next to her husband Shepahcanah and her two sons. Following Miami tradition, the graves were unmarked until more than 50 years later, when the Slocum family erected a monument over the graves. More than 2,000 people attended the dedication ceremony in 1900. The graves remained undisturbed until 1967 and the flooding of the Mississinewa Reservoir. At the site of the dam today is the Frances Slocum Recreation Area, featuring Lost Sister Trail, a hiking path. Nearby is the relocated Bundy Burying Ground, which includes the relocated graves of Maconaquah, Shepahcanah, and other family members. There is a Maconaquah Park in Peru, and a shopping center, a bank, and a trailer park in the area are named for Frances Slocum. ★

The Miami Tribe

Before the arrival of the white man, the Miami people lived among the lakes and rivers of northern Indiana. For thousands of years Native Americans had lived in harmony with the animals and plants of the region. After being forced into what is now Wisconsin for a brief period by the Iroquois, the Miami returned and settled around Kekionga (now Fort Wayne). During the 1700s the tribe traded goods with European settlers while maintaining their own culture.

As the American Colonies became the United States and white pioneers began moving westward, the Miami found their home threatened. Although led to victory by Chief Little Turtle in two battles against American armies, the Miami were defeated in 1794.

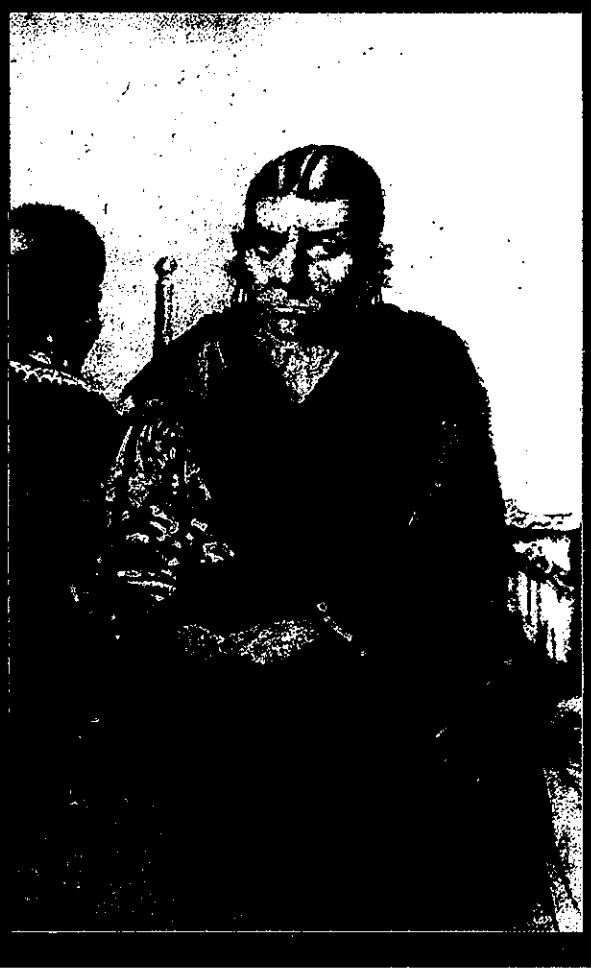
This defeat led to the first of a series of treaties which increasingly removed the Miami from their land; over the next fifty years the tribe's population decreased from 2,000 to 500 people. Alcohol abuse and violence became common. Women far outnumbered men. Finally in 1846 the tribe was forcibly removed from Indiana, as 327 people were relocated to a reservation in Kansas. Only 148 Miami were allowed to remain in Indiana (Maconaquah among them).

The remaining Indiana Miamis (as well as a few who returned in secret) began to adopt more American ways, attending elementary schools and taking up farming. In 1854 a new treaty recognized the Indiana Miami as a separate tribe from the Western Miami. At this time, the tribe's remaining lands were jointly owned and protected. But in 1870 government officials divided the land among the people and treaty payments stopped. Farm prices dropped, many of the new Miami farmers went into debt, and within 25 years nearly all the Miami land was lost. In 1897 the United States government ruled that the Indiana Miami were no longer a tribe, thus denying them even what little protection other tribes receive.

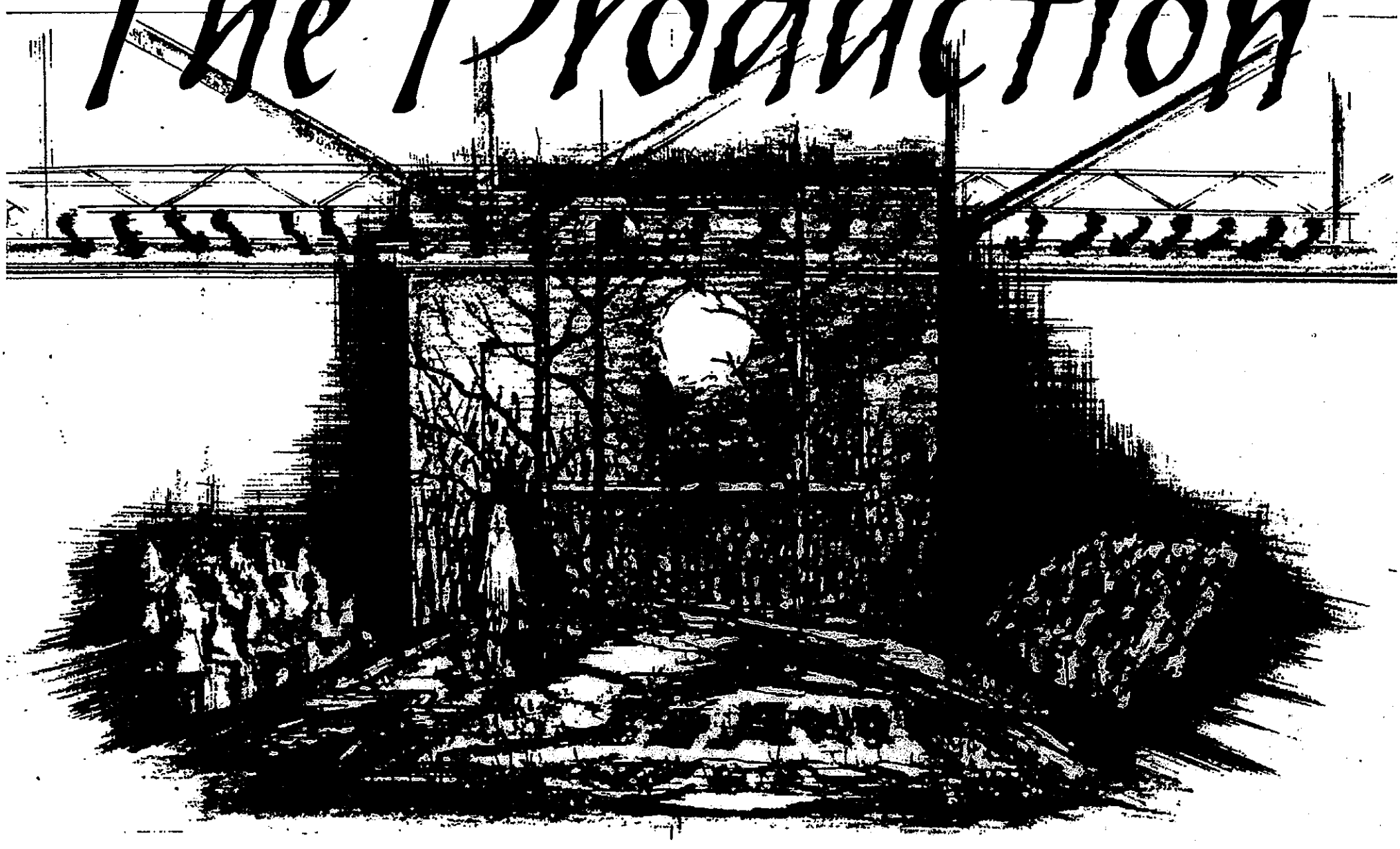
Without government recognition, the Miami have faced a constant struggle during the past century. Tribal cemeteries have been desecrated, including the grave of Chief Little Turtle; many sacred sites were flooded by the creation of the Mississinewa Reservoir in 1964.

Today the Miami tribe maintains headquarters in an old school building in Peru. Besides continuing their efforts to restore government recognition of their tribe, they maintain a few tribal cemeteries and are slowly repurchasing tribal lands. Since 1903 the tribe has held annual reunions, where elders pass down the old ways and old symbols to the young. The tribe also attempts to teach their history and way of life to non-Indians through a variety of powwows, pageants, and school programs. In 1997 and 1998 the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art held a major exhibition of Miami artifacts and other items depicting their history. Through studying such "forgotten" stories we learn about the rich historical legacy of our state and we come to appreciate the diversity of people and experiences which make Indiana their home. ★

Maconaquah's Portrait



The Production



Preliminary sketch by scenic designer Robert Koharchik brings the Indiana wilderness to the IRT's Upperstage.

The creation of *Captive Heart: The Frances Slocum Story* has been a long process. IRT artistic director Janet Allen first heard Maconaquah's story almost ten years ago, when the IRT first began the Junior Works Program (now known as the Discovery Series). She knew it would make a compelling play, but it took a while to find the right creative team. Enter Jeff Hooper and Bob Lucas of Mad River Theatre Works, a company which tours Ohio with its own original plays, often devoted to local and regional history. The IRT produced *Freedom Bound*, a play about the Underground Railroad by Hooper with songs by Lucas, on the Upperstage in 1994. A grant from the National Endowment for the Arts brought Allen and Hooper together again for what became known as "the Frances Slocum project" to create a new work for the IRT and for Mad River.

Producing a new play requires a great deal of flexibility from all participants. The script constantly evolves as the playwright works on it. As recently as December both the IRT and Mad River held readings of the script in its then-current state so the author and producers could hear it with actors. Changes were made based on these readings, and continue to be made during the actual rehearsal process for the IRT production. Such rewrites require the actors to forget or re-arrange old passages of dialogue and to learn new passages, sometimes right up until the opening performance. Likewise the director must be able to restage the play to accommodate these changes. These challenges are part of creating any new play. Another element in this production is songs, which Lucas describes as "nouveau–olde time–Americana–folk–contemporary" in style. Several songs were written and then set aside as the play evolved, again even during the rehearsal period.

Designing for a production in this state of flux is a challenge, as well. In order to have finished scenery by the opening performance, scenic designer Robert Koharchik had to begin designing the production without a finished script. Focusing on the basic elements of earth, fire, and water, Koharchik re-created a piece of Indiana landscape on stage, with limestone outcroppings, trees, prairie grasses, and a running stream, blending into an area with a plank floor and a fire pit. These areas can be flexible and illustrate a wide variety of locales and situations which might be needed for the play.

Almost immediately following the IRT's rehearsal period, Mad River Theatre Works begins rehearsals for its very different production of the same play. Unlike the IRT, where audiences come to the Indiana Theatre, Mad River productions go on tour, performing in a wide variety of auditoriums, gymnasiums, and other open spaces. The Mad River production of *Captive Heart* will use three performers (as opposed to the IRT's five actors plus one musician), including Bob Lucas himself. They will use little or no scenery, bringing a different kind of theatre magic to the tale. This difference seems somehow appropriate for the story of a girl who was born in one world and raised to live in another. ★