



INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

June 19, 2014

Mrs. Shirley Willard
Fulton County Historian
3063 S. 435 E.
Rochester, IN 46975

Dear Shirley,

First, I want to commend you for your many years of work on behalf of the history of Fulton County and its vicinity. You have given enormous amounts of time since the Fulton County Historical Society was founded in 1963 and while serving as its president for 30 years. The Indiana Historical Society was so pleased to recognize you in 2001 with its Dorothy Riker Award for Innovation in the Field of History. The residents of Fulton County and indeed Hoosiers around the state have every reason to value the important work you have done over many years to preserve and share Indiana's heritage.

I am very aware of your many efforts to make the general public understand a sad and deeply regrettable part of our state and national history – the forced removal in 1838 of the Potawatomi from Indiana, long referred to as the Trail of Death. The Trail of Death is the best documented removal of Native Americans from their lands, leaving Indiana just south of Plymouth and walking 660 miles to Osawatomie, Kansas. In 1993, thanks to your efforts and with the support of the Indiana Historical Society, the Indiana State Legislature passed a resolution recognizing the Trail of Death as a Regional Historic Trail, which encompasses the route through Marshall, Fulton, Cass, Carroll, Tippecanoe, and Warren counties. The legislatures of Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri followed suit so that the entire route is designated through all four states. Last fall, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback issued a proclamation acknowledging on behalf of the state to the Potawatomi tribe the injustice and tragic circumstances of the Trail of Death.

On behalf of the Indiana Historical Society, I am writing in support of your efforts to have Indiana issue a similar apology to the Citizen Band of Potawatomi Nation, headquartered in Shawnee, Oklahoma. In addition to Governor Brownback's proclamation of 2013, there are many precedents for elected officials to recognize past actions which history has shown were clearly wrong. It is never too late to seek such acknowledgement upon which true reconciliation is based. As we begin to celebrate Indiana's Bicentennial of Statehood, it is a highly appropriate time to officially go on record about the Trail of Death.

Best regards,

John A. Herbst
President and CEO

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