

Common Mystics Podcast
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Episode 6- Trail of Death in Marshall Co, IN

00:00:09 On this episode of Common Mystics, we relate the little known story of the Pottawatomie people of north central Indiana. It's a story of discrimination, injustice, and death, but also one of hope and of love. I'm Jennifer James. I'm Jill Stanley. We're psychics. We're sisters. We are Common Mystics. We find extraordinary stories in ordinary places. And we found another one for you outside of Marshall County, Indiana. That's right, Jen, we found a story in Marshall County, Indiana, and let's remind our listeners how we set out with our intentions. We set the intention to find a story that we could verify with research. And also we wanted to give voice to the voiceless. Right. This day, particularly, it was a little different as you're going to hear. We left South Bend, Indiana and we were headed southwest. Do you remember? I do. I remember driving for a long, long time with nothing to show for it.

00:01:16 That's what I remember. Um, that is true. That is a fair statement. I remember feeling like we were really far away because we were driving for like four hours, just apparently in the same area. The other thing that was unusual about this adventure was that you had no idea where you were, right? So we turned off the GPS. We didn't have any markers to show where we were driving. We just knew we were driving for hours, in the dark, just being led by our psychic impressions. So the first thing I was picking up on was a trade route for the natives, a trail, similar to the one Jen and I had been on before in Apache Junction, Arizona. It was a winding road. It was obvious that a modern engineer didn't construct this road. It was a road created to utilize by natives at the time.

00:02:11 Right. So you were picking up on an experience you and I had driving on the historic Apache Trail route in Arizona. Correct. Okay. I was picking up on Native American vibes too, but I was dismissing them because... well, I was dismissing them because we live in the United States of America. On every adventure when we're looking for vibes, the Native American element always comes to the surface as energy. And so it almost feels cheap if we rely on it, when we're looking for a story. It's like, no kidding, Native American, right. So we always try to go deeper than that. Right. And so when I was getting those vibes, I was thinking, okay... but what's our story? Because so many other times we picked up on Native American vibes and that wasn't related to our story. So, um, I really dismissed those, uh, impressions that I was getting.

00:03:03 It was really cute because she like, slapped her thighs and she was like, Oh, all I'm getting are Native Americans! And I was like, Oh. It was frustrating. I didn't think that that was leading us forward. I was wrong. The one other thing that I was picking up on, which is really funny, is out of nowhere, I'm like we should go to St. Louis as a road trip. I had never suggested that before. Like, we talk about a lot of different places that we would like to go on adventures, but St. Louis has never come up before. So for me to be like, we should go to St. Louis was really weird. And you were like, what, St. Louis? Like, it's true. And there's nothing wrong with St. Louis. It's just not a day trip, not a day trip. Right.

00:03:42 We love St. Louis! But I bring up St. Louis and that, that actually has something to do with the story that we uncovered, we'll find out later. So another thing that we were picking up

on, I don't know if you remember, but as we're driving in this area, we kept feeling like we should be looking for water. And there was different indications that water was around us, like high watermark, but we weren't finding it. We were literally just driving around in the circle, looking for water. Exactly. And at one point we saw a sign that said "Twin Lakes" with an arrow. And we both were like, we need to go to Twin Lakes. So we went that way. We never found any Twin Lakes. We, to this day, we don't even know what that sign was pointing in the direction of, like, it could have been a grocery store. It could have been apartments or a park.

00:04:30 We had no idea what Twin Lakes was. But at the time we looked and we both were like, that's where we need to go. We need to go to Twin Lakes. Another thing I was picking up on was the feeling of a fire as if something had been burned to the ground. Do you remember? I do remember you saying that. Yeah. And we had no idea what it meant, but we were tired and hungry at that point. So we decided to get ice cream. We were fatigued and we were frustrated. And when you're frustrated and you've been driving all day, there's nothing better than Dairy Queen. So we stopped at Dairy Queen, but on the way we saw St. Michael's Cemetery, right? We were driving to Dairy queen and it was, it was almost beckoning us, but we knew we needed the ice cream first.

00:05:10 Right? So after ice cream, we went back to St. Michael's Cemetery. It was a really old cemetery. And we spent a lot of time looking at all the graves, but one grave in particular stood out to me. And I took a picture of it, if you recall, Jill, and I called you over to it. And we talked about it. The only grave that was really speaking to you. And the grave said the following. It was the grave of Anthony Nigo and the grave marker said "A Miami Indian, 1805 to 1878, Baptized 1828, Erected by Plymouth Circle Daughters of Isabella as a token of esteem of the last Red Man of this community." Wow. So when we left the cemetery, we had a lot of questions and it was as if Anthony was really the linchpin. Well, he started the whole thing. He gave us direction, is what he did.

00:06:08 He did. He really gave us direction. And the reason why is because we were questioning the grave marker. Him being the last native in the area- what happened to the others exactly? Why was he the last one? Why wasn't he a part of it? Right. And baptized. And he was at St. Michael's Cemetery. How did it come about that a Native American would be baptized and buried in a Catholic cemetery. So we had all of these questions and then we did the research. Do you want to get into it? Let's. Okay, so let's start. What did we find out about Anthony? Jen? We knew already from his headstone that he was a Miami Indian and quote unquote, the last Red Man of the community. But actually the research said that he was only half Miami and half Pottawatomie, but his half Miami blood on his mother's side would prove to be pivotal in his life later on, we were to find out..

00:07:05 He was born in 1805 in Indiana. And his name wasn't Anthony at first, obviously it was actually something like "Otwan Onago" or some variation of that. But the local white folks just called him Anthony, because it was easier for them. 1828 was a big year for Anthony. He came to live in Marshall County and he was actually married to a half-breed French and Indian woman, whom people called Angeline. He was married to her at a chapel at, get this, Twin Lakes Pottawatomie Village in 1828 (ding, ding, ding, ding, ding). Also in 1828, he was baptized into the Catholic faith by a missionary who was sent to the area to "look after the spiritual welfare of the Aborigines of the Western wilderness". And that's a quote. By all accounts, he

was a devout Catholic and he chose to live close to St. Michael's Catholic church so he could be an active member of that parish. And yet, Jill, in 1838, 10 years after his baptism and his marriage at the Twin Lakes Pottawatomie Village chapel, he would have been forcibly removed to Kansas in an event known today as the Pottawatomie Trail of Death that occurred in 1838. It was then that the entire Pottawatomie settlement of Twin Lakes was forcibly removed. And only for the fact that Anthony was half Miami, and not entirely Pottawatomie, was he allowed to stay. Crazy. So I'm reading this and I'm like, Holy crap, what did they have against the Pottawatomie people? It was a perfect storm. Let me tell you what the situation was. So at the time we have three groups of people in the area. You have the white settlers, you have Native American reservation land, and you have missionaries, as you described, coming over for the welfare of the natives to help, you know, convert Catholicism or to push Catholicism.

00:09:22 Really. So at the time there was a series of treaties happening between the United States government and the Natives of the land and this particular reservation, or, the land that we were driving on that day was a part of a native reservation. And the person in charge of the lands was Chief Menominee, if I'm saying that correctly, I apologize if I'm not, but he had a village in the reservation called the Twin Lakes Village. And it was on the banks of the Twin Lakes. And at the time the government wanted to procure that land as well. So they were tricking Natives and being really unscrupulous, trying to get the Natives to sign away their lands for money, money that many times was never paid. So there was one treaty at the time called the Whiskey Treaty, where the government had rounded up the chiefs of the different tribes, got them drunk, and tried to have them sign away the rights to their lands.

00:10:26 Well, Chief Menominee was like, ah, that's not going to happen. So he declined to sign that treaty. And that's how he retained this reservation and the Twin Lakes Village on the reservation. So at this time there were squatters coming onto the reservation and now Chief Menominee, he was a standup citizen. He was Catholic. He was peaceful. He was a wise. The community at large really loved him. Not only because he was a good neighbor, he wasn't a savage at all, but because he retained the right to his land, right? Other Natives that didn't want to leave, came to the area and stayed with him in the village of Twin Lakes, right? A source called True Indian Stories by Jacob Dunn indicates that chief Menominee wasn't only a good man. He was an exemplary man. He was religious. And he exhorted his followers to abstain from liquor. And to be honest, and to be peaceable. So his village on Twin Lakes was notable because they were Catholics and they were good neighbors. So these, like, if you, if we're saying Native Americans and you have that picture in your head of Hollywood Indians and scalpers, this is not what we're talking about. We're talking about people who were living in a community that they believed was theirs, right? So at the time, like I was saying, a lot of Natives came to live with Chief Menominee at Twin Lakes because he had such a great reputation. It was peaceful and those lands were still in the Native Americans' care. So at the time there were white settlers trying to live on the reservation, squatting there. And so the chief, and it was hard for him to do, contacted the governor of Indiana and said, sir, please look into people squatting on our reservation.

00:12:25 And so the governor did look into it. And as a plot twist, it was not the squatters that the government decided to remove, but unfortunately, Chief Menominee and his, his tribe. Well, you know what, Jill, there was a precipitating event by one of the squatters that I'll share with

you here. Tell me. There was a Mr. Waters who is a white man who had settled on the reservation without authority. So basically he was a squatter. Now he desired the Indians to leave so he could preempt 160 acres of the reservation land for himself under a law that was recently enacted by Congress. I don't know the details, but the point was the judge who looked into it, the honorable MacDonald found that it was Mr. Waters, who was the disturbing element here. He worked up a disturbance so that the government would be compelled to remove the Indians.

00:13:23 He said that Indians came to his door at night, chopped down his door and threatened his life. Now this account of this event is completely contrary to everything else that the people in the area, including the missionaries, were saying about this group of people. But nevertheless, because this was said, it followed that about 10 to 12 of the Indian cabins were burned as a result. And now you have a situation where there's violence. So the government comes in and makes a decision about what to do. And by the way, I also want to say, Jill, that I am using the word "Indians," and I know it's not politically correct today. And the reason I am is because in a lot of cases, I'm using direct quotes from old sources. So I apologize if anyone is offended by the term, I don't use it to cause offense, but I just want to say that I'm using...

00:14:20 Jen is completely woke and she understands. It's just, she's giving quotes from the book. So the governor of Indiana is like, no, you guys need to leave. So the governor had assigned the task of rounding up the Pottawatomie to a General John Tipton. So now Tipton wrote orders and letters regarding his plans to capture the Pottawatomie. And he invited them to meet at the Pottawatomie chapel at Twin Lakes, where he rounded them up, locked them in and tricked them and said, you guys are going to be leaving in a couple of days. So get your stuff together. And took Chief Menominee prisoner, right? And it's so unscrupulous here because he really tricked them. They thought that they were having a council meeting. It was a complete ruse. And one of the missionaries, Father Petit at the time, he was appalled at the behavior.

00:15:18 Not only that, Jill, but Tipton and the militia, they fired shots and they burned all their crops and completely destroyed the village so that there would be nothing left, no village left for them to come back to. It was said when Chief Menominee objected for his people, they tied him up like a dog and imprisoned him. It's heartbreaking. So I have an anecdote I want to share about that day. Tell me. When the militia came in and were firing shots, Chief Black Wolf and his elderly mother were living at Twin Lakes at the time because remember a lot of different Native peoples came, a lot of the other Pottawatomie in the area, and came to Twin Lakes. So over the course of a few years, it grew from like four wigwams to like over a hundred wigwams and cabins, you know, so it was this huge group. (I like the name wigwam. It's a fun, it's a fun word, wigwam.) So Chief Black Wolf and his elderly mother are living there at Twin Lakes. When she hears the gunshots of the militia, she runs into the woods barefoot and hides there. She wounds her foot and she is sick and unable to walk. And she stays in the woods for, like, six days until a Native American finds her and saves her. It was just awful.

00:16:43 So the march of death Or the Trail of Death began on September 4th, 1838. Chief Menominee and two of his chiefs were placed, like we said, in a jail wagon or imprisoned in a jail wagon and crossed Indiana. The Natives at the time implored their missionary friend and father to come with them. So Father Petit came to the area. He was a young man in his mid twenties and he loved the Natives so much as his own flock. He had been known to say that

when he was walking through the woods, if he came upon a Native or a Native hut or an encampment it would joy his heart. And he felt as if he were among his own family. And that was the missionary father and priest that the Natives came to love and asked for him to accompany them on the trail. He did ask the bishop if he could accompany them and he was not granted permission to do so.

00:17:53 So on September 4th, when the Pottawatomie people were marched out of their Twin Lakes village, unfortunately, Father Petit was not able to join. He would join them later, having not given up on the cause, he repetitioned his request. Jen, can you tell us a little bit about the march itself? Absolutely. So that season was unusually hot and dry and dust floated in clouds around the people as they left their village. Most ordinary sources of water had dried up at that point because of the weather or were unfit for use. And so we have malaria and fevers are prevalent among, among this group that are traveling. The Natives were treated like savages, urged on by the militia with harsh gestures and bitter words. Many of the sick people rode in the baggage wagons, Jill. They were stuffed in there with luggage and they were, this is from father Petite's journal: "They were rudely jolted under a canvas, which far from protecting them from the dust and heat only deprived them of air, for they were as if buried under this burning canopy and several died thus." On the first day they traveled 21 miles to a Chippewa village on the Tippecanoe River and 51 were too sick to continue on day two.

00:19:27 Also, and this is interesting, there was a 10 year old white boy by the name of William Ward who left with them. He just followed the caravan out because he was friends with them. Oh my God. I know. He followed him all the way to Rochester, Indiana until his mother caught up with him and took him home. That is the cutest thing. Cute, horribly sad, but just so sweet that he loved them. And he didn't want his friends to leave. The first casualty was an infant who died on day two. And this is... so many infants died. So many children, father wrote in his journal: "Almost all the babies exhausted by the heat were dead or dying. I baptized several newly born happy little ones whose first step was from the land of exile into heaven." So heartbreaking. I just can't. Oh, so a trail of the sick and elderly, Jill, were left along the way, all the way through Indiana, because at every stop, some were too sick to continue.

00:20:20 And so you've got people who are leaving their mothers, their wives, their children behind, because they couldn't continue with the understanding that, oh, they'd either die or they'd catch up later. It was awful. So families are being separated by this terrible march. Two or more deaths occurred every day that they trekked through Indiana. And their last encampment was on the Illinois Indiana state line. And there the water was so filthy and unhealthy that it was pretty much useless to them. By September 16th, 1838, the group camped at Danville, Illinois, where four more Pottawatomie people died and were buried. And also it was here in Danville, Illinois, that Father Petit finally showed up because the Bishop had granted him approval to go on this march. And it was there in Danville, that Father Petit convinced the militia to let Chief Menominee and the other chiefs out of this jail wagon, where they had been, like we had said, tied like dogs between September 20th and October 10th, 1838.

00:21:23 They traveled through Illinois. And after arriving in Missouri, they hardly had any sick left and the Indians were allowed to hunt and to supplement their diet through hunting. So that helped a lot. So by the time they got to Missouri, things were looking better. Oh my God, this... so this whole time they weren't allowed to eat fresh meat. Exactly. They're just, I guess, just

eating what the, uh, what they brought or what the militia was providing them. I can't even imagine. When they reached the end of their, uh, their journey, Jill. in Kansas... So when they arrived in Kansas, they were expecting, they had been told, that they would have homes, ready-made homes for them, but nothing was set up for them. It was just empty. So they had to make their own homes. After walking two months to the day to get there, then they had to make their own homes.

00:22:09 Why am I not surprised by that? So, of the 859 who began the journey, 756 survived it, 42 were recorded as having died. And the rest escaped. After they arrived in Kansas, Jen, what did Father Petit do? Well, he stayed with his people until January, 1839, but he was sick himself and severely weakened by the journey. He headed back to Indiana, but he never made it. He died in St. Louis, Missouri on February 10th, 1839 at the age of 27. Oh my goodness. So, Jill, in the 1990s the Trail of Death was declared a regional historical trail by the states of Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas. And today you can find over 70 Trail of Death history markers along that route. That would have been helpful to find. No kidding. They need more markers. So let's debrief. Let's talk about our hits. Let's do it. Okay. Now I said earlier that I was getting Native American vibes and I dismissed them.

00:23:15 Well, I shouldn't have, apparently that was our story. I was describing the Apache Trail that I was feeling. I have a quote from the Slice of History by Lloyd E Anderson that I picked up at Marshall County's history museum. And in this book, it describes that in the southwestern part of Marshall County early in the 19th century "was a winding trail trotted by the Indians and wild beasts. It was through the dense forest across the little stream where wolves were numerous. Later, the white man discovered this trail and found a place to live along it." So literally that describes almost exactly how the Apache Trail was used in Mesa or Apache junction, Arizona. So what you just read was about the trail that the Natives used in Marshall County, which was exactly like the trail that we were driving on in Arizona.

00:24:19 Right? And there's also a parallel there between the actual Trail of Death, which is another trail of the Natives. So I think that checks out on different levels. That's a good metaphor, right? And let's not forget Jill, that when we were driving, meandering around back and forth, we were driving on the reservation lands. I know, right. We were driving four hours in a big circle because we never really got far. You know what else is weird about that? That we were looking for the water, just like the Natives. They were looking for water when they're on their march and the water was out of reach. My gosh, that is nuts. That's crazy. Obviously we saw that Twin Lakes sign and we wanted to get to it. And couldn't find Twin Lakes. We were both attracted to that sign. And it turns out that was the name of the settlement.

00:25:13 And it was the beginning of the Trail of Death. And St. Louis, Missouri, when I bring up St. Louis, Missouri out of the blue? Well, Father Petit died in St. Louis, Missouri, and was buried there for a time. So that totally checks out. Crazy. What about the fire? The grounds that we were driving on for hours had been burned by the militia. They literally burned their crops and destroyed the village. So yeah, that checks out too. And obviously how you honed in on Anthony's grave. Oh my gosh. Let's talk about that for a minute. Anthony really led us to this story. He did. We didn't stop after, if we didn't go to Dairy Queen, see, being a fatso is helpful. If we hadn't gone to Dairy Queen, we would have never seen that cemetery, because we weren't looking for the cemetery. We were going to look for ice cream, right.

00:26:07 Anthony opened the door to us to start asking the questions about the native people who lived in the area, why they were forced to leave and how it was that some of them were baptized. Right. Absolutely. You know, it was Father Petit that baptized Anthony, is that right? I think Father Petit is a big part of this story. I agree. Tell me why. You know, Jill, when I think of a missionary, I think of someone who is forcing their beliefs and their culture on another people, but that doesn't seem to be the case with Father Petit. No, he loved them so much. It does appear that he did by all accounts and he loved them for who they were. And it seems as if he wasn't trying to take away their spirituality, but to add to it. Wow. Jill, do we have any evidence of how the Pottawatomie people felt about Father Petit?

00:27:05 We do. It's funny you should ask. We do actually on the website, Pottawatomie-tda.org indicates that not only did father love the Native Americans as part of his flock and them as people, but also the Native Americans loved him back. They, when he was dying, they sent one of the most powerful chiefs that they had to take care of him and to bring them as far as he could, after leaving the trail. I'm going to take it a step further. Jill, I found a book Pottawatomie Trail of Death by John William McMullan. And in it, he states that the Pottawatomie pray to Father Petit and feel like he's a saint. Oh my gosh.

00:27:57 It is certain that he is regarded by all as a very good man who gave his all for his flock. How unusual here, how unusual. It's totally contradictory to how I think of missionaries. And I think how many people do. So Jill, who do you think we were meant to give voice to today? All the natives that participated in this event, this really tragic event, and father. I just want to say that not only did Father Pettit give his life to this cause, but also his writing still exists today. And it was because of those letters that he was sending back, that the people of the community that they left behind were so sick and, and appalled, that I believe this was, if not the last, one of the last death trails out of the state of Indiana. Thank goodness for father petite, his words, his actions, and his sincere love for the Pottawatomie People should not be forgotten. Right.

00:29:04 But we're going to take a hard transition now into our new engaging contest. Jen, tell us about it. We would love to give away a 30 minute, free psychic reading to one of our listeners. The listener will be randomly selected. If you would like to participate, leave a positive written review on Apple Podcasts between Sunday, September 6th, 2020 and Saturday, September 12th, 2020 for a chance to win. Again, we will select the winner at random. Simply write your review, take a screenshot of it and email it to us at commonmystics@gmail.com. Good luck. Thank you so much, Jennifer, for that community announcement. And I would like to remind everyone they can check us out and find our website commonmystics.net. Find us on Facebook. Subscribe to us on Stitcher, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and Apple Podcasts, where you can leave us a positive review like Lakelife. Lakelife writes: **"Exceptional!! A must listen!!** Jennifer and Jill's adventures coupled with the historical research have me hooked. I can not get enough and am anxiously awaiting for future episodes! This is truly a must listen. The bonus episode regarding their Mom has reinforced the feelings I know are my Mom! Thank you J & J!!"
Oh, thank you, Lakelife! That is really sweet. Thank you so much. And thank you all for listening. Good night. Bye.