

New Potawatomi Trail of Death Highway Signs Erected in Indiana

On Sept. 15, 2006, the Manitou Chapter and several Indiana state DAR officers took part in the dedication of 5 new highway signs to mark the route taken by the Potawatomi Indians from Indiana to Kansas in the fall of 1838. The Potawatomi were marched at gunpoint down Rochester's Main Street on Sept. 5, 1838. So many died along the way that it is called the Trail of Death. Of the 859 Potawatomi who began the trip, 42 died. They crossed into Illinois at Danville, went through Springfield, and ferried across the Mississippi River at Quincy, Ill. They crossed Missouri and ferried across the Missouri River at Lexington. The end of the trail is at Osawatomie, Kansas.

These are the first historic highway signs in the nation for the Potawatomi Trail of Death Regional Historic Trail. The signs are the same size as the Lewis & Clark Historic Trail signs. There are now five Potawatomi Trail of Death highway signs across Fulton County, Indiana - the first in the nation. The one pictured is at the Marshall - Fulton County line, on Old 31 about seven miles north of Rochester. It is at the corner of Indiana 110 and Old 31 by the County Line Landfill. The other signs are at the north edge of Rochester by the railroad tracks, south edge of Rochester by CVS Pharmacy where Indiana 25 heads south, the north edge of Fulton, and in front of Caston School at the Cass - Fulton county line.

The logo was created by David Thomas Anderson, Seattle, Washington.



Members of the National Daughters of the American Revolution pose by the newly erected highway sign that marks the Potawatomi Trail of Death. The sign was sponsored by Manitou Chapter DAR, of which Shirley Willard is Regent. Seated in front: Cynthia Stout, Frankfort, State Regent. Standing from left: JoAn Nichols, Indianapolis, Vice President General; Sharon Baldwin, Cloverdale, State Treasurer; Martha Barnhart, Churubusco, State Vice Regent; Shirley Willard, Rochester, Manitou Chapter Regent; Nancy George, South Bend, State Chaplain. (Photo: Lyn Ward, Plymouth, Indiana.)



George Godfrey, member of Citizen Potawatomi Nation, blesses the new historic trail highway sign north of Rochester, Indiana, Sept. 15, 2006. Godfrey, Athens, Illinois, had an ancestor on the Trail of Death. He is president of the Potawatomi Trail of Death Assn., headquartered at the Fulton County Historical Society, Rochester, Indiana. The signs were sponsored by Manitou Chapter of National Daughters of American Revolution, Rochester. (Photo: Lyn Ward, Plymouth, Indiana)

He is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. The little family is being protected by a red-tailed hawk.

Plans are to erect these signs on the whole 660 mile Trail of Death route from Indiana to Kansas, with the help of other DAR chapters and volunteers, so that motorists, hikers and bikers can follow the historic trail and find the 78 Trail of Death historical markers. "It is our hope that people will read the Trail of Death historical markers and the highway signs, and say a prayer for peace for all mankind and that there will never be another terrible forced removal, and that all people will learn to be kind to each other and take care of each other as we travel Earth together," stated Shirley Willard, Manitou Chapter Regent and president emerita of Fulton County Historical Society, Rochester, Indiana. Shirley served as coordinator for erecting the Trail of Death historical markers 1988-2006. There are now 78 historical markers, including markers at each camp site every 15 to 20 miles.

See www.potawatomi-tda.org for pictures of all the Trail of Death historical markers, GPS locations, driving directions, 1838 diary, and more. See www.icss.net/~fchs for information on the Trail of Death caravans that traveled the route in 1988, 1993, 1998 and 2003.