

Potawatomi Trail of Death remembrance will visit MO.

By Brent Engel
Hannibal Courier-Post

PALMYRA, Mo. — A loathsome chapter of American history is jumping from behind the cloak of time.

The 170th anniversary of the Potawatomi Trail of Death will be observed at stops in the Hannibal region.

A caravan featuring ancestors, tribe members and others who want to keep alive the memory of the 1838 march will pass through or stop in Naples, Perry, Liberty and Quincy in West-Central Illinois and West Quincy, Palmyra and Paris in North-east Missouri.

Steve Ticken is director of the North American Archaeological Institute and helped plan many of the area stops.

“This is more of a spiritual journey for them,” Ticken said. “They’re trying to keep that heritage alive.”

The 1838 Trail of Death began on Sept. 4 in northern Indiana with the forced march of 860 Potawatomi by the United States government under terms of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which dictated that all tribes be relocated west of the Mississippi River.

When the 660-mile trek ended on Nov. 4 in eastern Kansas, typhoid fever and the stress of the journey had killed more than 150 tribe members. Most of the victims were children and older people.

The first area stop will be lunch Wednesday in Perry, Ill., followed by a 4 p.m. Mass at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Quincy and a community supper on Quinsippi Island.

After breakfast in Palmyra Thursday, the group will visit the Josephine Gander farm between Palmyra and Monroe City. That will be followed by lunch and a museum visit in Paris.

The caravan will spend Thursday night in Moberly and complete its tour on Sunday.

In Palmyra, the Heritage Seekers will be the host.

“When we heard they were passing through we thought we should acknowledge that,” said Becky Taylor, the group’s president. “In the diaries we have, one of the (Potawatomi) women died here.”

The 1838 encampment was from Oct. 11-13 at Pleasant Spring north of Palmyra. A stone monument that was dedicated Oct. 6, 2001, rests near the site at the junction of U.S. 61 and County Road 320.

“They’ve done a terrific job of getting these campsites marked,” Taylor said. “Now, they’re going back to put up highway markers.”

In Paris, the Monroe County Historical Society will be the host.

“I can’t imagine walking that far and being sick and having kids and following a path, but they did it,” said society president Nancy Stone.

The 1838 encampment settled in a valley along the Salt River northeast of Paris. A marker on the lawn of the county courthouse commemorates the journey.

This week’s visit will “put a personality” on the trek, Stone said. “We do not study history in-depth, anymore.”

The caravan makes its trip every five years and is in the process of putting up additional signs marking the Trail of Death.

Ticken, an archaeologist who continues the search for physical clues to the Trail of Death, hopes the caravan will re-awaken an interest in area history.

If nothing else, he said, it may help break down stereotypes.

Native Americans “are still alive and their ancestors are still here,” Ticken said. “They face the same problems we all do.”

Affidavit adds detail to death of toddler

By Zachary Franz
Great Falls Tribune

GREAT FALLS, Mont. — The woman accused of killing her 2-year-old son and hiding his body in the trunk of her car told police the toddler died after falling from a high chair, but prosecutors believe James Many White Horses met a more violent end.

Cascade County Attorney Brant Light filed a 26-page affidavit in District Court on Monday, outlining his argument for charging Summer Many White Horses, 31, with murder. The document builds prosecutors’ case on police interviews with the defendant and her relatives, arrest records and an X-ray of the child’s body.

It is full of disturbing new details about the young boy’s death and what authorities believe happened in the following months.

Throughout the summer, prosecutors say, Many White Horses drove around the state with her 11-year-old daughter. Many White Horses paid for food, gas, hotel rooms and alcohol with checks the government sent her to take care of James, who was autistic, prosecutors said.

But all that time, they said, James’s body was in the trunk of the car.

‘Come On, Little Boy’

In an interview with police on Sept. 5 — the day after the child was listed as missing —

Many White Horses initially told officers her son was staying with a friend in Portland, Ore., according to the affidavit. Police checked with the friend, who denied having the child.

Officers grew suspicious, and pressed Many White Horses to admit James was dead, suggesting the toddler might have died in an accident. Eventually, she did tell them that’s what happened, documents state.

Many White Horses told detectives she, her son and her daughter were at her trailer, at 4727 2nd Ave. No. 25, on the night of May 28, according to the affidavit.

Her son, who went by the nickname “Hymmie,” was in his high chair, she said. Many White Horses told the officers she was in the next room watching TV, with the door open.

“He fell and I jumped up and I went running over there and I grabbed him,” she said, according to an excerpt from the interview that is transcribed in the affidavit.

The excerpt goes on:

“I hugged him and I laid by him on the couch and when I laid by him on the couch, like, his eyes rolled back ... I thought he’d be all right, and he went back to sleep.”

The next morning was Summer Many White Horses’ birthday. It started off badly.

Her son wasn’t breathing, she later told police, and she

tried to revive him.

“I was like, ‘Come on, little boy — you can snap out of it,’” she said.

But he didn’t. James’ mother told detectives she tried to give him CPR, but the boy was dead, according to the affidavit.

Many White Horses told police she hadn’t reported her son’s death immediately because she didn’t have a phone and she thought he would be OK, according to the affidavit. After that, she knew she would be blamed for his death and for not calling for help right away, the affidavit states.

“I was scared and I was like, ‘I don’t know,’” she told police. “I was all messed up because I just lost him and I didn’t even call. I didn’t even call the ambulance. I didn’t do anything.”

She told them the body was in the trunk of her car.

Police went to an impound lot where the car had been towed in July, after Many White Horses was arrested for drunk driving. They found the boy’s badly decomposed body, tightly wrapped in a gold blanket that had been stuffed into a white laundry basket, according to the affidavit.

The body — still wrapped in the blanket — was sent to the state crime lab in Missoula. Scientists are still working on an autopsy to determine a cause of death, but an X-ray taken by police shows the boy’s head turned 180 degrees

— an injury that Light doesn’t think can be explained by a fall from a high chair.

Arrests and cashed checks

In the interview, Many White Horses told police she put James’s body in her car on May 29, but officers later learned she didn’t buy the car until the next week.

Police believe Many White Horses and her daughter took a bus to Missoula on June 3, where Many White Horses bought the 1996 Ford Taurus. They would cover many miles in that car over the next couple months, and Many White Horses would be arrested several times.

Because James was autistic, the Social Security Administration issued him a \$637 check each month. Prosecutors believe Summer Many White Horses lived off that income. She cashed a check on June 3, the week after the toddler is believed to have died, according to the affidavit. She continued to receive and cash checks the rest of the summer, including two in July after falsely reporting that the first one never came, the affidavit states.

Officers believe Many White Horses went to Browning on June 4, then came back to Great Falls around June 11. It was when she returned that police believe she moved her son’s body from her trailer to the trunk of her car.

On June 14, she was arrested in Browning for disorderly conduct after police found her car parked in the road, the affidavit states. The next day, she was arrested on a charge of shoplifting from the Town Pump in Browning. She was arrested again in Browning on June 18, on a charge of driving under the influence.

Her final arrest before the interview with police came in Great Falls on July 21, when she was charged with DUI and a host of other misdemeanors after crashing into a parked car. Many White Horses’ daughter told police in an interview that her mother tried to cover a bad smell in the car with fabric spray and that they drove with the windows open.

History of violence

Many White Horses is a registered violent offender, with at least three convictions for assault. People who know her told police that she had a history of violence toward James, according to the affidavit.

One relative told officers she saw Many White Horses punch her son in the face three times while the boy was sitting in his car seat at a convenience store in March, prosecutors said. Another acquaintance told police she saw James with a black eye around the same time.

Many White Horses is charged with deliberate homicide and tampering with evidence.

Nap time



Cable Hoover/Independent

Erich Hubmann of Switzerland takes a nap on his Harley Saturday afternoon outside of Grants City Hall. Hubmann and 12 other riders from Switzerland, Germany and Austria are traveling Route 66 from Chicago to LA and took a break in Grants before stopping for the night in Gallup.

Government seeks appeal of Indian trust case

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government has requested an appeal of a judge’s ruling to award American Indian plaintiffs \$455 million in a 12-year-old trust case.

The government’s request to appeal comes two weeks after the plaintiffs signaled they would ask for an appeal of the same decision. U.S. District Judge James Robertson said Aug. 7 that the plaintiffs are entitled to the \$455 million, a fraction of the \$47 billion that they had sought.

The long-running suit claims the Indians were swindled out of billions of dollars in oil, gas, grazing, timber and other royalties overseen by the Interior Department since 1887.

The government appeal,

filed Thursday, contends Robertson’s court does not have the jurisdiction to award the money at all, pointing to his January decision that the task of accounting for the trust money was ultimately impossible.

“If the accounting were indeed impossible, it was not the role of the court to devise an alternate remedy,” the government lawyers wrote.

In 1994, Congress demanded the Interior Department fulfill an obligation to account for money received and distributed. Two years later, when account statements still had not been reconciled, Elouise Cobell, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe from Montana, joined with others in suing.

Because many of the records have been lost or destroyed, it has since been up to the court to decide how to best estimate how much individual Indians — many of whom are nearing the end of their lives — should be paid, or how the money should be accounted for.

At issue in the trial’s most recent phase was how much of the royalty money was withheld from the Indian plaintiffs over the years, and whether it was held in the U.S. treasury at a benefit to the government. Robertson said in his opinion that plaintiffs did not successfully argue that it was.

The plaintiffs argued for more money in their appeal, saying Robertson is too narrowly defining the govern-

ment’s obligations in managing the Indian trust. The government trust should be treated the same as a private trust, which would have been held to stricter standards, plaintiffs’ lawyers said.

Robertson originally intended to begin a new phase of the trial that would determine how and to whom the government should award the money. But he said at an August status hearing that he would allow appeals now so the process would not be delayed further.

The class-action suit deals with individual Indians’ lands and covers about 500,000 Indians and their heirs. Several tribes have sued separately, claiming mismanagement of their lands.

Royalty seminar planned

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota officials have scheduled an oil and gas royalty seminar for trust land and mineral owners on Wednesday.

The meeting is being sponsored by the Minerals and Mining Service, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The event will be held at the Four Bears Casino and Lodge near New Town from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.