

Captain Billy Caldwell a.k.a. Chief Sauganash (March 17, 1780-Sept. 27, 1841)

William "Billy" Caldwell also known as Chief Sauganash ("Englishman in the Potawatomi language) was the Metis son of William Caldwell Sr. an Irish soldier (a Captain in Butler's Rangers) and a Mohawk woman (the daughter of Rising Sun). Billy was particularly powerful among the Ottawa, Potawatomi and Ojibwa Indians around Lake Michigan. Thus he was recruited by both the British and the Americans in 1812. Although he traded out of Chicago, he chose to take as Commission as a British Captain in the Indian Department. While leading the Caldwell Rangers he fought at the Battle of Raisin River in January 1813 and was severely wounded. He later served during the sieges at Fort Meigs and Fort Stephenson, and the Battle of Moraviantown.

Sauganash fought in the War of 1812 as a captain of Indian forces aligned with the British. During the war he was a close friend and advisor to Tecumseh and acquaintance of Black Hawk. Although supporting the British, Sauganash won the admiration of Americans when he saved the lives of U.S. captives taken from Fort Dearborn in Chicago. Caldwell's unit was a rather small one, probably not more than fifty men. Nominally organized as two companies, they often worked in conjunction with the Indian Department and fought dispersed alongside the Indians (chiefly the Ojibwa, Wyandotte and Potawatomi). The unit, or parts of it, fought at the Battle of Moraviantown, the Battle of Longwoods, the Battle of Lundy's Lane and in several actions on the Niagara peninsula.

Later, he settled near Chicago in about 1820. The Old Treaty Elm marked the Northern boundary of the Fort Dearborn Reservation, the approximate edge of the Billy Caldwell Reservation, and the trail to Lake Geneva. Under its branches there was an Elm tree under which the Indian Treaty of 1835 was signed. As a result of this 1830 treaty with the U.S. government, he was granted a land tract of about 1,600 acres (6.5 km²) north of Chicago, where he lived with a band of Potawatomi. Most of the Sauganash land eventually was annexed by the city of Chicago in 1889. The Chicago neighborhood Sauganash is today located on a portion of the Sauganash land. In the Potawatomi language, the name "Sauganash" (*Zhagenash*) is said to mean "Englishman."

Billy began working for the Thomas Forsyth – John Kinzie trading partnership in 1797, first in what is now southwestern Michigan and along the Wabash River, later in the northern part of present-day Illinois, where in 1803 he rose to the position of chief clerk in the firm's new post at Chicago.

Billy was married four times: first to La Nanette, the daughter of Potawatomi chief *Nee-scot-nee-mag*, a Catholic convert from the village on the St. Joseph River, MI. De Nanette died soon after the birth of their son (twin daughters born earlier, Helene and

Susanne, were baptized by Father Badin on Oct. 17 and 18, 1830); his second wife, who was the daughter of his employer Robert Forsyth and an Ojibwa woman, died in childbirth the year after they married; his third wife was a Métis woman whose name is not recorded; his fourth and last wife was a French woman named Sauqua LeGrand whom he married on Nov. 18, 1834, with whom he settled at Council Bluffs. All told he had some eight to ten children in all, none of whom lived to adulthood or survived him.

Caldwell later was made a Justice of the Peace. He eventually sold the land and moved to Iowa where he led a Potawatomi band of ca. 2000 individuals, their main village called “Caldwell's Camp”, located in present day Council Bluffs, Iowa. Billy Caldwell died at Trader’s Bluff near Council Bluffs, Iowa, on September 27, 1841.



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