

The story of Catherine Gouger Goodman Indian Captive and Ohio Frontierswoman

On Orr Road (old U.S. Route #23) about nine miles north of Chillicothe there is a monument about 200 ft. east of the highway. This monument marks the final resting place of one of the first white women to live in this section of our state. It is the grave of Catherine Gouger Goodman. Catharine made two trips to Ohio. The first time she came she was a captive of the Shawnee Indians. Fifty-four years later she again came to live here. This time she came with her son's family and, strangely enough, settled in the very same place where she had lived as an Indian captive fifty-four years before.



Catherine Gouger was born in Northumberland County in New Jersey in 1732. When Catherine was a small girl her family moved to Berks County, Pennsylvania. Here she lived with her parents, her sister, and three brothers. One day in 1744, during the King George War, her father and one brother went to work in the fields and her mother and sister went to a spring to obtain water. Catherine was in the cabin home with her two younger brothers. A band of Shawnee Indians appeared and Catherine sent the older brother, who was with her, to warn her father and brother in the field of the Indians. It was too late! The Shawnees killed her father and two brothers and took twelve-year old Catherine and her four-year old brother as captives. Her mother and sister escaped unnoticed by the Indians.

The Shawnees started westward through the wilderness with the two white captives. The four-year old boy could not keep up with the party and after three days was killed by his captors. The party traveled many miles until they arrived at the Shawnee Village in a beautiful river valley. Here the Indians treated their white captive kindly. They referred to her as the "white squaw". She was given a tepee of her own and played with the Indian children. The squaws taught her how to make pottery, to prepare skins for clothing, and some of the other duties of Indian

women. She lived with the Indians for five years, but she never lost her desire to return to her home in Pennsylvania and to her own people.

When Catherine was seventeen years old some French-Canadian traders came to the Indian village to trade with the Shawnees. Catherine managed to tell the traders of her captivity and of her longing to return to her old home. The traders bargained with the Indians for the girl and took her back with them to Canada. Here she worked for two years to repay the French-Canadians for her ransom. One day some traders from Pennsylvania came to Canada to trade some grain and Catherine went back with them to her old home in Pennsylvania. Her homecoming was a sad one. She learned now, for the first time, that her father and brothers were killed by the same Indians that captured her, and that in the meantime the remainder of her family had died. She went to live with friends.

In 1756 she married George Goodman and they became the parents of six children. As a mother, Catherine often told her children about her life as an Indian captive. She even taught her children some of the things the Indian squaws had taught her. She helped her husband on the farm and worked especially hard when her husband and oldest son, John, fought in the American Army during the Revolutionary War.

In 1795 George Goodman died and Catherine went to live with her son, John. This was the time when the fever to move to the Ohio Country was so great, and her son, John, decided to move west. In the autumn of 1797 he came, with his helper, Honnes, to the west and secured 200 acres of Congress Lands in what became Greene Township in Ross County, Ohio. The two men built a cabin, cleared some land, and early in the spring planted their first crops. John left Honnes in charge of the new farm and he returned to Berks County in Pennsylvania to bring his family to their new home.

The sixty-six year old Catherine came with them. While enroute she took care of her two young grandchildren, the younger child, Daniel, was only two years old at the time of the trip. The family traveled overland until they reached the Ohio River, floated down the river until they arrived at Portsmouth, and then traveled northward overland on horseback toward their new home. As they approached this new home, the area became familiar to Catherine because this was

the same spot where she lived for five years as a captive of the Shawnee Indians more than 50 years before!

Catherine led her grandchildren to the creek where she had played with the Indian children. With her own hands she cleared a spot, near her son's house, where her tepee had stood while she lived with the Indians. She requested that when she died that she be buried on the spot. Catherine Gouger Goodman died on July 15, 1801 and was buried in the place that she requested. In 1915 her descendants erected a monument over her grave.

Catherine's son, John, chose his land wisely for his farm was located in the rich agricultural Scioto River Valley. It is interesting to note that Catherine's descendants owned and lived on the farm for 173 years. Across the road from Catherine's grave her son, John, built a large home. It served for a time as the Wayside Inn and here were entertained many notable travelers on the Chillicothe and Circleville Pike.

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