

Native built historic Brantford home

In the Echo Place section of Brantford, on Colborne Street, the house built by Kah-ke-wa-quon-a-by still stands. Kah-ke-wa-quon-a-by means Sacred Feathers in the Mississauga Ojibway language. He got this name from his grandfather soon after his birth in 1802. This was long before he became a minister in the Methodist Church. His English name was Rev. Peter Jones.

The home which Sacred Feathers built in Echo Place was named Echo Villa. The area was called Echo Place because of strange echoes which could be heard there after the forest was partially cleared away. Echo Villa was a large house for the time. It was built in 1851. Eight of the rooms had their own fireplaces, including the boys' room on the second floor. His wife, the former Eliza Field of Lambeth, England, had a wealthy father, who probably contributed to the building of this fine house.

Sacred Feathers' successful marriage with his white wife Eliza, could be called a triumph of love over adversity and racial prejudice. After his conversion to Christianity at the age of 21, Sacred Feathers successfully converted most of his own Mississauga band to the Methodist church. He then proceeded to preach to other Ojibway bands around lakes Huron and Superior. At a time when the Indians were being driven off their land and many were kill-

Our Town

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ing themselves with alcohol, he showed them a way and a reason to survive. He met Eliza on a trip to England where he had been sent to raise money for the Methodist church.

At age 29, Sacred Feathers was tall, muscular and ruggedly handsome. After a childhood among the Mississaugas, he had spent his teenage years learning the ways of the white man in the house of his father, the surveyor Augustus Jones. He learned to read, write and speak English remarkably well. Like many white men of his time, Augustus Jones had two wives, one in the bush and one in the settlement. His Indian son, Sacred Feathers, was a better man in every way than his father.

When Sacred Feathers and Eliza married in 1833 in New York City, it scandalized many white people. President Andrew Jackson was in the midst of removing by force, tens of thousands of eastern Indians to lands west of the

Mississippi. The white people wanted to hear stories that said Indians were wild, bad savages incapable of human emotions in order to ease their own consciences. If Indians could be envisioned as sub-human and unworthy of fair treatment, then no one needed to lose any sleep over their plight.

A New York newspaper of the day compared the marriage of Sacred Feathers to that of Othello in the Shakespearian play. It dismissed Shakespeare's story as "too unnatural for probability" that a white woman would willingly marry "such a black a moor as Othello". The Kingston Chronicle and Gazette called the marriage "improper and revolting". The York Patriot called Eliza an "unhappy and deceived woman". Only the Niagara Gleaner wished them well and assured its readers that Eliza would be "well provided for" by the now industrious Mississauga Indian farmers.

Sacred Feathers continued as a famous preacher until his death years later. He and Eliza had several sons whose descendants have carried on the family name down to the present time.



Echo Place, where Rev. Peter Jones, Ojibway chief and missionary, died in 1856

I ended my walk, with lots of Colborne still ahead, at No. 743. This is about the most interesting building on this interesting street. It is featured in at least one standard work on Canadian domestic architecture, and as the picture shows it is a symmetrical Georgian design, with classical pillars at the entranceway, a graceful window above the door, and clean white trim and shutters.

This is Echo Place, formerly Echo Villa, the home of Rev. Peter Jones, or Kaheewaquonaby, Ojibway chief and Wesleyan Methodist missionary, and his wife Elizabeth whom he met on a fund-raising journey to England in 1830. As Jean Waldie, that most readable and romantic of local historians, later told the story:

"Here, in the midst of the forested wilderness (Brantford was a hamlet of several hundred souls) she built an English mansion, spending a large amount of money to clear the land, to form a large country estate. . . Many prominent figures in Canadian history visited the happy home. . . until 1856 when the remarkable career of the Rev. Peter Jones was cut short by death. The Governor-General, Sir John Colborne, was one distinguished visitor who spent the night in one of the spacious guest chambers."

There ought to be a book written, or a TV special done, about the life and times of Rev. Peter Jones. It would also be a love story, of a unlikely love that lasted, in sickness and in health, until death did them part.