

1988

Tecumseh topic of this year's

pageant

OHSWEKEN — A few weeks ago I was invited to a meeting of the Six Nations Pageant committee. They wanted to use the Shawnee war chief Tecumseh as the subject of the 1988 pageant. As they did not have a script, they asked me if I would write one. It didn't take me long to agree.

After many years of repeating the same subjects from Six Nations history, such as Hanyon-wat-ha (Hiawatha), Tha-yen-da-ne-gea (Joseph Brant), Red jacket, etc., last year they tried a new subject, Molly Brant. Molly Brant was Joseph Brant's older sister who had married Sir William Johnson, the Indian superintendent. Molly kept her own family name at a time when it was unheard of among the whites. It is now becoming more acceptable. However, this was the custom in the Six Nations Confederacy and it enabled her to later become a powerful clan mother. She was a great force among the Six Nations in keeping them loyal to Britain after Sir William Johnson died. Her story was a fitting addition to the Six Nations pageant.

Last year was the 39th annual pageant, according to the advertising pamphlet. That means this will be the 40th edition and the pageant committee is enthusiastic about presenting another new subject. The one last year was very well received.

The pageant committee would welcome high school or adult native volunteers who are

Our Town
George
Beaver



sincerely interested in helping in this year's pageant. Performers selected by stage director Lisa Martin will be committed to many rehearsals at the outdoor Forest Theatre on Sour Springs Road. Also, there are numerous other jobs to do during the pageant.

The Six Nations Pageant was started by members of the Indian Defence League of America years ago, in order to make the young people of the reserve aware of, and proud of, the Indian patriots of the past. And no Indian patriot was greater than Tecumseh, who had a dream of uniting all Indians into one great nation. They would stop the whites from getting their land by uniting and refusing to sell or to make treaties for it. He saw that the treaties always resulted in the loss of Indian land and the whites did not abide by the treaties anyway.

Tecumseh spent years of his life travelling to various tribes, trying to unite them in a political way. It was not enough to unite Indian armies for battle. He tried to get them to agree that the land that was still left belonged to all Indians, not just to certain tribes. He very nearly succeeded.

If he had succeeded, the map of the U.S., and perhaps Canada, would be different than it is today. The history of the Indians would have been different too. Perhaps the Cherokee Nation would not have had to follow their "Trail of Tears" to far-off Oklahoma. Probably many would have died defending their land but many died a more horrible death, from starvation and disease, after they were dispossessed. From the Indian viewpoint, Tecumseh's way to die was more honorable, even for the women and children. He was truly, a man before his time.

The pageant committee is composed of Robert Jamieson, who is president, Emmert General, Lynne Bradley, Bill Smith, Mark Jamieson and Mona Staats. The next meeting is on March 20 at 2 p.m. in the home of Mona Staats, near Little Buffalo.

Pageant is put on Sat & Sun for three weeks during August.