

FIRST DRAFT

Chipeta's later years marked by celebrity and frugality

A 1921 photo of Edith Abbott Green of Grand Junction shows a square-faced woman with penetrating eyes and dark hair that is adorned with a sparkling headband.

On the back of the photo, a type-written caption says Green is "Wearing a Beaded Headband from Chipeta, Queen of the Ute Indians."

But the caption adds a note that suggests Chipeta's economic situation was bleak. Chief Ouray's famous widow, who had once enjoyed material wealth, traded the headband to Green "for a loaf of homemade bread," it says.

Chipeta was often called "The Queen of the Utes" by whites, first as a derogatory remark, but later as a sign of respect. However, it is clear that by the 1920s, when she resided on a ranch at Bitter Creek, near Dragon, Utah, Chipeta was not living like royalty.

As early as August, 1911, The Daily Sentinel reported that friends of Chipeta had started to raise money for the Ute woman, who, the paper reported, was "almost destitute."

It added, "The old woman, whose husband was the best friend the early white settlers had among the Indians, is nearing the century mark."

In 1911, Chipeta was only 68 years old, having been born in 1843. She was far from "nearing the century mark."

But inaccurate stories about Chipeta were not unusual. Here are some others:

■ **Chipeta was born a Ute princess.** Actually, she was probably born a Kiowa, but was adopted by a Ute family after she was discovered as a toddler, wandering among the bodies of her Kiowa relatives who had been massacred by unknown attackers.

■ **Chipeta and Ouray had a son together.** In fact, Chipeta likely never gave birth to any children. But she helped raise Ouray's children, as well as her own siblings. Throughout her life, she adopted or cared for a number of children.

■ **Ouray's son, known as Pahlone or Paron, was born to his first wife, Black Mare. After she died, and Ouray married Chipeta in 1859, Chipeta treated the youngster as her own son.** But Paron was kidnapped by Sioux or Cheyenne warriors while the Utes were hunting on the Front Range in 1863. He was traded to Arapaho Indians and became known as Ute Hannah. He grew up in Wyoming and never reunited with his Ute family.

■ **In 1879, Chipeta "rode four days and nights to rescue the white women and children held as hostages by the hostile Utes" following the killings of Nathan Meeker and his employees at the White River Indian Agency.** This persistent story apparently was started by a Denver newspaper editor in the 1880s. But Chipeta's own words disprove it.

"I was at my house when they (the hostages) came there" after they were released by the White River Utes, she told the Congressional Committee on Indian Affairs in 1880. "General Adams came with them."

Charles Adams was the man who actually went to the Ute camp and negotiated the release of the women and children. Ouray's sister, Susan or Tsashin, who was sometimes confused with Chipeta by whites, had protected the hostages during their captivity.

Exactly how destitute Chipeta was in her later years is also debatable. There is evidence that her economic situation was



Chipeta as she appeared about 1905. An inscription on the back of the photo says it was taken "at the fairgrounds in Grand Junction," which were then at Lincoln Park.

MUSEUMS OF WESTERN COLORADO

to be frustrated. For one thing, a promised government-built irrigation ditch was never constructed, leaving much of their land unusable.

Additionally, white settlers were allowed to purchase reservation lands from the Utes, often at ridiculously low prices, under a law known as the General Allotment Act.

Also, Utes on the reservation often complained they had inadequate food and that commitments made to them in treaties weren't being upheld.

Still, Chipeta remained friendly to whites. And as the new century dawned, inhabitants of Colorado sought to honor her.

She joined President William Howard Taft in his car during the 1909 ceremonies opening the Gunnison Tunnel.

She visited Montrose, Ouray, Colorado

Springs, Durango and Grand Junction on various occasions, and was treated as a celebrity, enjoying automobile rides and motion pictures.

Known for making traditional Ute apparel, she gave items such as finely beaded moccasins and purses to white friends.

So, Edith Abbott Green's headband may have been a simple gift from Chipeta, and not the act of an impoverished woman desperate for a loaf of bread.

Chipeta died on Aug. 16, 1924, at her home on Bitter Creek and was buried nearby. People in Colorado soon pushed to rebury her next to Ouray, but that reunion never occurred.

Chipeta's remains were moved to Montrose and were buried on the property where the Ute Museum now sits. Ouray's body was eventually moved to the Southern Ute Reservation in Ignacio.

Sources: *Historic Daily Sentinel at newspapers.com; "Chipeta, Queen of the Utes," by Cynthia S. Becker and P. David Smith; "Chipeta, Queen of the Utes, and Her Equally Illustrious Husband, Noted Chief Ouray," by Albert R. Regan and Wallace Stark, Utah Historical Quarterly, July 1933.*

Bob Silbernagel's email is bobsilbernagel@gmail.com.

Ute Chief Ouray and his wife Chipeta, with Charles Adams standing behind them. The photo was taken in Washington, D.C., in early 1880, when all three testified before Congress about events on the White River in 1879. Ouray died about six months later.



partly of her own choosing.

In 1916, during conversations with Albert H. Kneale, superintendent of the school on the Ute reservation, Chipeta dismissed the notion that she needed more compensation from the U.S. government.

"I am as well provided as are other members of my tribe. I desire nothing," she told Kneale. "I am not better than they and what is good enough for them is good enough for me."

Even so, it's clear that Chipeta had lost much since her life with Ouray.

Before the 1879 killings at the White River led to the removal of most Colorado Ute Indians to Utah, Chipeta and Ouray lived in a large adobe house near the Uncompahgre River south of present-day Montrose.

Household furnishings included a piano, fine china and many items they had received as gifts from white friends. They had a farm and many head of cattle, sheep and prized horses.

Ouray died of kidney disease in August of 1880, as the treaty was being completed that would require the removal of the Uncompahgre and White River Utes from Colorado.

When that forced exodus occurred in 1881, Chipeta joined her fellow Uncompahgre Utes on the long march to the new reservation in Utah, even though she was initially told she could continue to live in



SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

Edith Abbott Green of Grand Junction, wearing the beaded headband that was given to her by Chipeta.

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Interstate accident closes Fruita exit

BY SENTINEL STAFF

An accident on Interstate 70 on Sunday afternoon closed the Fruita exit (exit 19) in both directions because of downed power lines. Both lanes of the interstate were shut down for several hours.

Shortly before 9 p.m., the Colorado Department of Transportation announced that the eastbound lanes were reopened. The westbound lanes remained closed at that time. U.S. Highway 50 was being used as an alternate route for motorists.

If you have an arts or entertainment event, or want to stay up-to-date on arts & entertainment happenings in the area, head to the **GJ Sentinel Out & About Facebook** wall, facebook.com/gjoutandabout

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