

Long Grove History

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Half Day

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society

In 1931, if you used the term “the loop” to refer to a part of Chicagoland, it would likely have been assumed you were referring to our very own “Route 22/Half Day Road”. Back then Route 22 was envisioned as a state highway that would be an outer loop around the greater Chicago area. The 1931 & 1932 official Illinois State Map actually referred to the entire Chicago area as the “22 Loop”. Work on the road began in 1918, and while progress was made over the next dozen years or so, by the mid 1930’s the original plan was abandoned and only the northern east-west piece retained the designation of Route 22.



CHIEF OPTAGESHIC

Known to the early settlers as *Chief Half Day*. The Potawatomi name meant ‘sun at its meridian.’

Why is Route 22 through Long Grove called Half Day Road?

A common explanation is “because it’s the road that went from Long Grove to the old town of Half Day and that town was about a half a day’s ride from Chicago back in the day”. That answer is about half right – the part about being “half a day” from somewhere is an urban legend.



The real story of “Half Day” involves an area Indian tribe. The Chief of the local Potawatomi Indians, Chief Optageshic, had a hunting ground in the area near what is now Route 22 and Milwaukee. In the Potawatomi language, his name — Optageshic — meant “sun at its meridian” or something akin to what we might call noon or “half day” in English. The settlers referred to the Chief either by their attempt at spelling his name (say it a few times — see if you can guess what other local place is named for the Chief) or by using the words that equated to its meaning — “Chief Half Day”.

This next part of the story may involve a bit of conjecture. Over time, as it got passed around between the settlers and maybe even the Indians themselves attempting to pronounce the phrase “Half Day”, the name ended up being shortened from “Chief Half Day” to “Chief Hafda”. When local officials filed for the county’s first post office, to be located near modern day Route 22 & Milwaukee Road, they requested the name Hafda. When the request was received by the government, it was assumed the name was a spelling mistake and the name was changed to the proper English words “Half Day”. Perhaps because there was some truth to the spelling issue, the local applicants did not protest and simply adopted the name Half Day for the post office and the town.

A NAME’S JOURNEY



Why would Chief Half Day's parents have given him that name?

One theory is that Potawatomi parents would often choose something relating to a remarkable event or happening observed on the day of birth. You could speculate that calling him Half Day referred to his birth having occurred at noon.

Whatever happened to Chief Half Day?

In the 1830's as settlement increased in Indiana and Illinois, the pioneers became increasingly nervous about living in such close proximity to Native Americans. They lobbied the government to do something to control and prevent possible uprisings. A series of treaties, some signed by Chief Half Day, led to the Potawatomi being forcibly relocated further west. Locals here were sad to see Chief Half Day leave—he was very well liked and respected in this area. After a brief relocation to near Kansas City, the chief ended up near Elmont, Kansas (just north of Topeka). A bit further north, near Mayetta, Kansas, exists today the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Reservation, which is home to about 5000 tribal members.

Apparently, the Chief was as memorable and as well liked in Kansas as he was here. A creek there is named in his honor (Half Day Creek), as is the cemetery where he is buried—Half Day Cemetery. The funny thing is, if you Google the origins of this creek and cemetery, you'll find a story that involves their location being a "half a day away" from that Potawatomi Reservation in Mayetta.