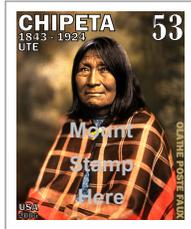


Chipeta

Queen of the Utes



A life of hard work, love and compassion for her people, along with a beauty as enduring as the Shining Mountains is captured in this 1914 portrait (on stamp) of Chipeta, wife and best-friend to her husband, Chief Ouray (1833 - 1880). The Shining Mountains (renamed by whites as the Rocky Mountains) were the ancestral homelands to the Ute Indians of the early Colorado Territory. Chipeta, along-side Ouray, defended these homelands as best they could on behalf of all seven of the Ute tribes, diplomatically, against the invasion of their lands by white settlers. She loved horses and was an excellent rider, raising many of her own horses at her home, located in the Uncompahgre Valley, fourteen miles south of present day Olathe, Colorado.

How this stamp came to be . . .

At the beginning of August 2002, I was working with C. J. Brafford and Bill Pritchard of the Ute Museum in Montrose, Colorado, to come up with one or more stamp designs to commemorate and inaugurate the first annual *Chipeta Days* celebration that would begin mid-month. With C. J. and Bill's help, we rummaged through some boxes that were stored in a back room at the museum, looking for old images of both Chipeta and Chief Ouray, that would be different from the usual images of these two historic leaders of the Ute nations, that have been used time and time again for many years. (A difficult task, considering that in the late nineteenth century, photographic portraiture was not nearly as common as it is today and that *any* photographs of historical Native American figures are rare.) As a result of our search, we happened to find an old picture frame covered in dust and in ill-repair. Once the dust was wiped away, the "treasure" was revealed.

The portrait of Chipeta that was held in that old dust covered frame was absolutely stunning. An original black and white photograph, that had been hand oil tinted to give the portrait life-like coloring was in excellent condition. The portrait of Ouray's best-friend and wife, Chipeta, was made in 1914, with a hand-written inscription on the back of the photograph authenticating the date it was made and that Chipeta was indeed the subject portrayed.

So as you can see by the stamp, a rare glimpse of Chipeta has been preserved for more to behold. A glimpse of a noble woman who became the respected leader of the Utah Indians – perhaps the only woman to ever be looked upon as a Native American Indian Chief – from a later period in her life that was captured long after she and Ouray were in the national spotlight. When many U.S. politicians and curious Americans living on the east coast, fussed over them while making false promises through treaties that were repeatedly broken.

Originally released in 2002, the stamp was revised slightly and reprinted in 2006 as a cherished addition to our Gunmen and Great Chiefs series. I do hope that you enjoy this memento of the timeless beauty of Chipeta – Queen of the Utes.

W. C. "Bill" Porter
The Olathe Poste

