

Chipeta: Queen of the Utes

Chipeta originally became famous as Ute Chief Ouray's wife, and she was a trusted confidant and a beautiful, faithful companion. Later she was to blossom in her own right. Although the title was first used as a derogatory remark, Chipeta eventually became "queen" of both the whites and the Utes (even though she was born a Kiowa Apache). She was even talked about by the press and elite of Washington, D. C. and met with President Taft. Chipeta was often a silent presence when Ouray met with the other Ute chiefs, and after his death many Utes still sought her opinion, welcomed her presence at important meetings, and even recommended her to represent them as a delegate to lobby the United States Congress. Chipeta was to outlive Ouray by almost half a century. During part of this time she was ignored, forgotten, and even cheated by the whites, although immediately after Ouray's death many suitors had courted her and men wrote poetry about her. Then in her old age the whites honored her again on many special occasions. Although she could not have children of her own, she "adopted" many orphaned Utes. Chipeta played the guitar well, sang beautifully in three languages, and was well known for her exquisite beadwork. Perhaps her greatest legacy was that through all that happened to her, she did not become embittered and remained a humble, caring, loving person. Chipeta was a special individual that we would all do well to emulate.

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