

Ripples of the Black Hawk War In Northern Indiana

By ELLA LONN, Laporte

A whole nation makes pilgrimages to stand reverently at the foot of Plymouth Rock and do obeisance to the spot which marks the beginnings of a nation. Of no less importance and interest are the spots which mark the beginnings of the life of one of our states.

Such a spot for Indiana and the Mississippi Valley is to be found a few miles south-west of La Porte, Indiana. A large granite boulder bears two bronze tablets, on one of which the wayfarer may read the following bit of history:

On this spot a fort stockade was built to defend the lives of the pioneers of Laporte Prairie from a threatened invasion by Black Hawk and his braves in the spring of 1832. Warning of the danger was brought by John Coleman who rode his Indian pony Musquog from Fort Dearborn to this place in six hours.¹

The reader will recall that in 1832 there was a border war with the Indians of Illinois which startled the settlers of Indiana and brought out the state militia, together with a large body of volunteers. Black Hawk was a picturesque and tragical figure, but likewise a skilful and cunning leader of a band of Sauk Indians who lived on the Rock river in western Illinois where the Rock pours into the Mississippi. The old warriors of his band were kindred spirits who had allied themselves with Tecumseh² in the War of 1812 and were notorious for their sympathy with the British, in recognition of which fact they were known along the border as the *British Band*. The allied Sauk and Fox Indians assented to and signed the treaty

¹ The other tablet bears the names of the builders of the fort. The memorial was erected by the La Porte County Historical Society and unveiled September 13, 1910.

² Black Hawk with a band of two hundred Sauk had served with the Shawnee chief until the death of the latter at the Battle of the Thames, October 5, 1813. Black Hawk was near Tecumseh when the latter fell and kept up the border forays along the upper Mississippi until May 13, 1816, when the final peace treaty was signed with the United States.

of November 3, 1804, whereby they ceded fifty million acres of land to the government for one thousand dollars a year annuity. This stretch of land is identical with what is today the eastern third of Missouri and the land between the Wisconsin, Fox, Illinois, and Mississippi rivers. The unfortunate Article Seven proved one of the chief causes of the Black Hawk War, for it provided that "as long as the lands which are now ceded to the United States remain their property (that is, public lands, not parceled out to settlers), the Indians belonging to said tribes shall enjoy the privilege of living or hunting upon them."³ Under this provision the Indians were protected against immediate removal.

The chief seat of the Sauk power was within the limits of the cession, a village situated three miles above the mouth of the Rock river. This picturesque village, one of the largest Indian villages in the United States, was the home of about five hundred families, but, what was vastly more important, contained the chief cemetery of the Sauks. The alluvial soil readily yielded enormous crops and here was located one of the relatively few tracts where the Indians indulged in cultivation of the soil and took pride in their seven hundred acres of maize. But when the government surveyors and settlers began to drift in after 1823 and to flock in after 1830, Black Hawk, early a malcontent,⁴ jealous of the constituted chiefs, sought excuses to oppose the policy of the wiser and more moderate leaders among the Indians, and welded his followers

³*Treaties between the United States of America and the several Indian Tribes*. (Washington, 1837), p. 109.

⁴He was born in a Sauk village in 1767. Though not born or elected a chief, he was accepted as leader over his own band merely by common consent. It is rather remarkable that though not of superior physical, moral, or intellectual ability, he made himself a national figure, due probably to his restlessness and ambition, combined with some of the qualities of leadership. It has been insisted that he was of a too confiding disposition. The invariable courtesy accorded him by the British agent on his annual visits to Malden, contrasted with the American treatment meted out to him, led him to depend upon British aid. He also accepted at their face value the promises of White Cloud, a Winnebago prophet, who deceived him as to the strength of Indian support. And he believed Neapope, his second in command of the *British Band*, when the latter reported promises of aid from the British, Winnebago, and Pottawattomi in any effort the Sauk might make to regain their village. He possessed a peculiar poetical eloquence in haranguing his followers which made him almost the equal of Tecumseh in ability to arouse the Indian passions. For a fuller analysis of this interesting character see R. G. Thwaites, *Essays in Western History*. (Chicago, 1903), pp. 118-123.

into a unit to oppose the former in council. A natural demagogue, he easily aroused the passions of his followers and could bend them to his will. Furthermore, he was easily swayed by the British military and commercial agents, who had been steadily engaged in stirring up the northwestern tribes against the United States from 1776 until 1813, and he placed great reliance on the promised protection of his British father, the military agent at Malden in Canada.

After he had seen the Sauk fields cultivated for half a century, it is easy to appreciate the anger and despair with which he viewed in the spring of 1830 and again 1831, upon his return from an unsuccessful winter's hunt across the Mississippi, his village in ruins, lodges burned, fields of corn preempted by the whites, even the graves of his ancestors defiled; it is easy to appreciate with what rage he heard tales of squaws and children being whipped for going beyond the bounds drawn by the whites. When remonstrances proved futile, and when in 1831 he was even warned away by the settlers, he notified the intruders in a firm and dignified manner to leave, with the threat of the use of force, if necessary.⁵ Governor John Reynolds, of Illinois, besieged with petitions which grossly exaggerated the situation, sent out a proclamation calling for a volunteer force to "repel the invasion of the British Band." A demonstration by a large body of volunteers thus called out, and by ten companies of United States regulars before Black Hawk's village on June 25, 1831, led the Indians that night quietly to remove to the west banks of the Mississippi whither they had been previously ordered. Five days later they signed a treaty in which they bound themselves not to return to the east side of the river except by express permission of the government. The Indians suffered during the rest of the year for the necessities of life, as it was too late to plant another crop of corn or beans. When he made his usual visit to the commander at Malden, his vanity was fed, his bitterness against the United States encouraged, and bad advice presumably given with the result that in the fol-

⁵ He insisted later in his autobiography that he meant physical force, not bloodshed. *Autobiography*, (Boston, 1834), p. 101.

lowing year, 1832, he rallied his Sauk and Fox tribes for open war.⁶

The kindling of war was the more easy because a general unrest had prevailed among the Indians of the border for a year or more. Early in the summer of 1831 a group of Miami had killed a war chief of the Potawatomi, with the inevitable result of threatened war, averted only by the efforts of General William Marshall, a government agent. Also in 1830 a party of Menominee and Sioux had murdered some of the British Band, whereupon Black Hawk, to preserve the honor of his tribe, felt obliged a few weeks after the removal west of the Mississippi to lead a party of Sauk up the river and to massacre all but one of a band of twenty-eight Menominee. When the Indian agent at Prairie du Chien demanded the surrender of the Sauk murderers for trial, Black Hawk refused, as the act was one of mere reprisal in his eyes.⁷ Conditions, moreover, with the settlers in Illinois were ripe for warfare with the Indians, as many elements in the white population saw benefits to be derived from it.

By the spring of 1832 Black Hawk was ready to move. He had spent the winter of 1831-2 on the deserted site of Fort Madison near the mouth of the Des Moines river recruiting his band against the urgent protests of the more level-headed chief, Keokuk. On April 8 he crossed the Mississippi into Illinois at Yellow Banks with a warlike band of five hundred braves, chiefly Sauk, accompanied by their squaws and children. After sending to the Potawatomi an invitation to meet him in a council of war on Sycamore creek, he proceeded up the valley of the Rock river, awakening the greatest fear and consternation among the white inhabitants and causing them to flee wildly. Only the hot heads among the Potawatomi consented to take the war-path, while the chief, Shaubena, himself carried warning of the danger through the settlements in Illinois and the Rock valley, even as far as Chicago. Black

⁶ R. G. Thwaites, *Essays in Western History*, p. 131. For the treaty see Black Hawk's *Autobiography*, 218-9. A spring in La Porte county, about a mile and a half from Michigan City, where Black Hawk camped during his trip to Canada during 1831 is distinguished by a bronze marker.

⁷ R. G. Thwaites, *Essays in Western History*, 131-2.

Hawk, although warned at once by General Atkinson⁸ to withdraw west of the Mississippi, replied defiantly and continued his march up the river until May 14 when he unexpectedly came across Major Isaiah Stillman with nearly three hundred Illinois volunteers, who had secured a reluctant permission from Brigadier-General Whiteside, who was an experienced Indian fighter, to press on alone as a scouting party.⁹ Stillman gave Black Hawk just provocation for retaliation by failure to observe the most ordinary rules of war, seizing three Indians whom their leader had sent with a flag of truce, as the latter had by this time become convinced of the futility of the war, and killing two of the five braves sent to observe the outcome of the effort for peace. As could be expected, Black Hawk struck with savage fury and simply overwhelmed Major Stillman and his forces, who took to their heels in an ignominious flight, an act of cowardice which later conduct did not redeem. Some continued their flight for forty miles to Dixon, spreading wild and terrifying reports of the ferocity and strength of Black Hawk's forces.

Governor Reynolds, who had, in 1831, interpreted Black Hawk's warning and threat of the use of force as a declaration of war, had on April 16, 1832, sent out a call for a special levy of mounted volunteers, called out the state militia, and notified the inhabitants that the Sauk and Potawatomi were on the war-path.

Governor Reynolds referred only to the prairie Indians of Illinois, but the settlers of Indiana, scattered and already rendered uneasy by various circumstances, interpreted the warning to mean the Potawatomi of their own state. The story of Stillman's defeat marked the beginning of a reign of terror from the Mississippi to the Wabash and to Lake Michigan—

⁸ General Atkinson was soon busy at Fort Armstrong, as he was a man of executive ability with much military skill, courage and perseverance, and knowledge of Indian character. His first move was to make sure of the fidelity of the Sauk and Foxes.

⁹ There were about two hundred and seventy-five men in this party. They were reckless frontiersmen, impatient at the slow advance of the army, and anxious to cover themselves with glory. On May 14 they went into camp in a small copse of open timber three miles south-west of the mouth of the Sycamore creek, surrounded by clear prairie in a position which was entirely easy of defense.

indeed, throughout the entire border. In a few days the region was rife with rumors, serious enough at best to give grave cause for anxiety, but rendered appalling by the gross exaggerations with which they became embellished. News came that men had been murdered on Hickory creek; that all the settlements of that section had been abandoned and that the people were pushing with the utmost speed to the Wabash; that not a person was left in the outlying sections; that the whole frontier was aflame; that Black Hawk was sparing neither man, woman, nor child; and that hostile Indians had already reached Fort Dearborn. The poor new settlers expected momentarily to hear the warhoop of the red man and to see the gleam of his tomahawk. Shaubena and his friends again rode through the settlements with the word of warning.

Black Hawk was pursued by the Illinois volunteers and by United States regulars, as is well known, under Colonel Zachary Taylor;¹⁰ additional regulars were hurried west from the seaboard under General Winfield Scott;¹¹ and the misguided savages were defeated and utterly crushed at Bad Axe on August 2, only about one hundred and fifty of the entire body of a thousand making good their escape across the Mississippi. Black Hawk himself was taken prisoner and imprisoned for some time in Fortress Monroe until he was consigned to a worse fate—released into the custody of his chief rival, Keokuk.¹²

¹⁰ All writers seem to feel moved to call attention to the fact that at least four men served in this war who later attained national distinction: Captain Abraham Lincoln and Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, besides the two named in the text. The writer duly discharges her apparent duty in repeating these facts.

¹¹ It will be of passing interest to hear the story of Mrs. G. L. Andrew, a pioneer still living in La Porte, concerning these same government troops. On September 23, 1832, the first Sunday after her arrival in La Porte county as a little girl of eight, her parents were urged to go on a knoll several rods above their newly erected cabin to look out over the prairie. She saw from this height a long train of forty white canvass-covered wagons slowly following the only trail east. It was the soldiers with their tents returning from the campaign in Illinois. On the personal testimony of Mrs. Andrew.

¹² The best accounts of the Black Hawk war are to be found in R. G. Thwaites, *Essays in Western History*, 115-200; Sanford C. Cox, *Old Settlers*, (Lafayette, 1860), pp. 86-98; P. A. Armstrong, *The Sauks and the Black Hawk War*, (Springfield, Ill., 1887); J. Reynolds, *My Own Times*, (2d ed., Chicago, 1879); vols. of *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, and for a contemporary account, J. A. Wakefield, *History of the War Between the United States and the Sac and Fox Nations of Indians* (Jacksonville, Ill., 1834).

But however remote was the real danger to Indiana settlers, the danger seemed very near and real and marks the nearest approach to warfare that the northern portion of that state has ever known. There were in 1832 very few families in any portion of this northern country and those few were widely scattered. Individuals had already had warning that the Sauk were in an ugly mood. The settlers of New Durham township, now a part of La Porte county,¹³ had been told by the Ottawa and Potawatomi that "as soon as the leaves on the trees became as large as squirrels' ears" it was the intention of the Sauk to invade the settlement and to murder the inhabitants.¹⁴

Another bit of evidence of their surly mood is evidenced by C. W. Cathcart, a pioneer of La Porte county. Early in 1832 a large band of Sauk braves had crossed his land on their way to Canada. An old chief, a giant in stature, jostled him rudely from the path, while several others lifted the cover of their rifle locks to warn him that the priming was dry. He happened to encounter them again at the cabin of a family named Nichols, six miles east of La Porte, as they made the return journey some weeks later—their last through the county. When the Indians boisterously demanded that Mrs. Nichols give them whiskey and she refused, some of the braves got switches and ordered Cathcart to whip her into submission. When he refused, they turned upon him and hustled him about rudely and violently until he was able to quiet them by virtue of his knowledge of Spanish.¹⁵

In May the Indian agent at Fort Dearborn sent word to Arba Heald, one of the settlers at Door Village, in what was to be La Porte county, by John Coleman, who covered the

¹³ The famous Sauk trail passed through this township.

¹⁴ The writer is aware, of course, that this expression had been used by the Indians in connection with the threat of the Potawatomi against the Miami for the death of their war chief. See Logan Esary, *History of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1915), p. 326. But this repetition of a characteristically Indian expression as a warning in La Porte county is recorded by Jasper Packard, *History of La Porte County* (La Porte, Indiana, 1876), p. 70.

¹⁵ C. W. Cathcart, *Pioneer Sketches and Reminiscences*, a manuscript of unusual merit and interest in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Andrew Johnson (Jane Cathcart Johnson). The Sauk Indians were under the government of the Spaniards at St. Louis until 1803 and so many of them still remembered their Spanish "fathers" with affection.

seventy miles which separated the two points in the almost incredibly short space of time of six hours by pony, some of it along the shore of Lake Michigan, that the Indians had begun hostilities in Illinois and advised the settlers to repel invasion. The messenger called out the warning at the cabins along the Sauk trail as he passed,¹⁶ and Heald sent out word over the prairie in this particular portion of La Porte county. A large number of men assembled, hurrying into the Door Prairie all night. The following morning a meeting was called to consult as to the best means of defense, but some confusion arose, a stampede ensued with the natural result that about half of the little company started east with their teams, some never stopping their flight until they reached Cincinnati. Many did not recover sufficiently from their fright to return until the next year, some not at all.

Forty-two men, however, remained and erected a fort, one hundred and twenty-five feet square, consisting of a ditch, earthworks, and a palisade, on the southern edge of a small pond which is now entirely dried up, a site admirably chosen for the purpose. It was a stockade of tall posts driven into the ground, the timber secured from a thick grove of wild cherry and quaking aspen just west of the pond. Upon two of the angles, diagonally opposite each other, were built block-houses with portholes for rifles commanding the sides. A ditch surrounded the whole. A well was sunk in the center and the depression of that old well is still visible.¹⁷ The fort was built under the direction of Peter White, who had secured some previous knowledge in the erection of such defenses in

¹⁶ Mrs. G. L. Andrew relates how she often heard as a child the tale of the warning shouted to her uncle, whose cabin stood on the trail. In response to a loud halloo, the uncle opened the door to hear young Coleman shout, "The Indians are killing the whites on the Fay and Ottawa rivers in Illinois and the commandant of Fort Dearborn has sent me to tell the people here. It is believed that the Potawatomi will join them, and kill our people, and you are to have the women and children go to the fort at White Pigeon (Michigan). Defend yourselves as well as you can." Verbal testimony of Mrs. Andrew. It will be observed that the settlers in La Porte chose to defend themselves here—except those who fled east, judging discretion the better part of valor.

¹⁷ Tradition still points out the rotted stump of a pin-oak post as marking the southeast corner of the fort, but Mr. Robert White, who took part in the building of the fort as a boy of fifteen, declared in 1906 that no oak was used in its structure. Stated in a manuscript by R. B. Oglesbee, *A Little Journey in Scipio*.

the War of 1812. It took only three days to complete this defense, which offered the occupants comparative safety.¹⁸

Soon after the fort was finished, two block-houses were built as additional measures of safety, one about a mile northwest of the first block-house at Door Village, and the other in New Durham township between the old Sauk trail and New Durham village.¹⁹

General Joseph Orr, who had purchased land in La Porte county near the site of the chief stockade the year preceding, was present at the building of the fort and stampede, and accordingly by virtue of his rank²⁰ took it upon himself to render a report to the governor, and then went to Chicago to verify the rumors of danger. After an interview with Major Whistler, the commander at Fort Dearborn, he made some recommendations to Governor Ray at Indianapolis, and repaired to the headquarters of General Atkinson. He was promptly ordered to organize a company of volunteer mounted rangers for three months to be employed along the western frontier in order especially, to keep open communication between the Wabash settlements and Chicago.²¹ General Orr accordingly raised a company of eighty-eight men, armed with rifles, tomahawks, and butcher knives. He submitted reports to General Winfield Scott, who was being held at Chicago with his large force of the regular army by an outbreak of cholera. His volunteers rendezvoused at Attica on July 2, and marched then to Hubbard's trading post on the Iroquois river. Leaving an observation corps of fourteen men at this point, he marched the rest of the company to the Kankakee river, which he reached July 7. Here he detached a small body to make a

¹⁸ The above account is based on the manuscript of Mr. C. W. Cathcart, *Pioneer Sketches and Reminiscences*; E. D. Daniels, *History of La Porte County* (La Porte, Ind., 1903), p. 23; Jasper Packard, *History of La Porte County*, p. 54. At the time Packard wrote, 1876, the site of the fort was still plainly discernible, according to the *La Porte Herald*, Sept. 14, 1910. Shortly after the scare subsided the fort was removed so that it has remained scarcely more than a memory among the older settlers of the neighborhood.

¹⁹ These two block-houses were erected only after the scare proper was past, because this part of the county, except the Michigan Road sections, belonged to and was occupied by the original Indian owners, who were favorable to the white advance. Mss. of R. B. Oglesbee, *A Little Journey Into Scipio*.

²⁰ He had been commissioned brigadier-general by Governor Ray of Indiana, in 1827.

²¹ The original order to General Orr is printed in Packard, p. 55-6.

five or six-day tour to Door Prairie via the Kankakee and Iroquois rivers. Scott expected to march against Black Hawk July 26 and wanted General Orr to be ready for the movement.²² But Orr's company was disbanded soon after August 6, shortly after the decisive defeat of Bad Axe.

In contrast with the cowardice of Stillman's Illinois volunteers, it is pleasing to note the sterling manhood of several of the defenders of the stockade at Door Prairie. The resolute spirit which animated them was shown when Peter White remarked, "Me and my two boys make five." Mrs. Heald manifested the same spirit by refusing to go into the stockade, and by barricading herself in her own cabin not far from the fort, declaring that she would kill six Indians before they got possession of her home.²³ Daniel Jessup returned with his ox-team at nightfall to his own home with the remark that "he guessed he didn't need to be more afraid of the Indians than they were of him."²⁴ Henry Clyburn was of the same cool spirit. The liking of the Indians for him and the influence he wielded with them left him quite unafraid so that when the regular mail carrier arrived in La Porte county on his bobtailed horse on his way to Ft. Dearborn, blanched with fear over the bloody work in Illinois, Henry Clyburn exchanged work with him. He feared one place only, the ford of the Calumet river which he must cross in the dark over a narrow bridge with deep waters on each side.²⁵

Some episodes have only the merit of being amusing. In the confusion of the first alarm, a man named McCarty, fear-

²² Much correspondence passed between Generals Orr and Scott. See Packard, pp. 54-9. Scott's letter to Orr of July 20 shows clearly the state of apprehension and insecurity of even military minds: "General Atkinson, on the seventeenth, was preparing to march again upon the enemy with some hope of bringing him to action about the twenty-first. If the Black Hawk succeed in avoiding a battle he may retreat from Milwaukee along the lake Michigan in this direction. In that event we might meet him, and though our force would be small, we might, nevertheless, effect something." Packard, pp. 57-8. Orr led the troops to the lake shore six miles from Chicago to lessen the tedium of the camp.

²³ Packard, 54-5.

²⁴ On the authority of Mrs. Jennie Jessup, a granddaughter.

²⁵ Daniels, *History of La Porte County*, 24. Even some of the pioneers who had chanced to be absent from La Porte county when the wave of terror reached them, had a chance to have some part in it. C. W. Cathcart is a case in point. He was in Niles, Michigan, and took a load of ammunition from that place through La Porte county along the lake to Fort Dearborn.

ful that the Indians might capture his wife, hid her in the tall grass with strict admonitions not to move until his return. But he failed to mark the spot and in his bewilderment he hunted three days before she could be relieved of her cramped position. A Mrs. Thomas, after working all night to pack her scanty household belongings, stubbornly refused to budge when her husband declined to make room for her spinning-wheel, and calmly began to unpack the household goods.²⁶

There are indications of no less than three stockades begun in different parts of St. Joseph county, which adjoins La Porte county on the east. Runners came, panting that the Indians had risen, and the dismayed settlers fled from Portage prairie to Terre Coupee prairie, where a large number of them congregated in the cabin of a settler until the excitement subsided. Another alarm sent the settlers scurrying again to the same prairie, about forty taking refuge in a school-house where they spent the night. The sight of a company of soldiers moving westward on a reconnaissance the next day restored courage so that many returned home in the rear of the command. There is some reason to believe that a stockade was erected near Hamilton on this prairie,²⁷ a second near Mt. Pleasant on Portage prairie, and the third in South Bend.

Almost the first intimation of the Indian outbreak came to the little community settled at the south bend of the St. Joseph river,²⁸ which has since grown into the considerable city of South Bend, from the fugitives from the west, many so frightened that they hastened through without even stopping to

²⁶ On the personal testimony of Mrs. G. L. Andrew. The little pony Musquog which bore the messenger from Ft. Dearborn later became Mrs. Andrews' riding horse.

²⁷ There is some confusion as to whether a block-house was actually built on Terre Coupee prairie or not, which the writer has been unable to clear up. Howard records that there was: Daniels that there was not. Daniels, *History of La Porte County*, 29-30. But see T. E. Howard, *A History of St. Joseph County* (Chicago, 1889), 712.

²⁸ Jean Boudoin, a young Frenchman, who had come to South Bend with the very first pioneers, chanced to be in Wisconsin in the early months of 1832 and stopped in an Indian wigwam with a tribe friendly to Black Hawk. When he learned of the war, he ran one hundred and sixty miles, the trip rendered more difficult by a broken arm. When he reached the Kankakee marsh, he realized he had not the strength to go around it and so he boldly made his way through it in the night, probably the first white man to do so. His run cost him his life and was unnecessary. E. G. Brown, *Story of South Bend*, p. 42. (A small pamphlet published locally.)

warn South Benders of their danger. Others from a greater distance, obliged to stop for food and rest, circulated blood-curdling stories of savage brutality, always, however, of some point just west of where the fugitives had resided.²⁹ Members of the new community especially the newcomers who were unfamiliar with frontier life, were infected in their turn with the mania of fear. As South Bend understood that it was to be occupied by a military force of some sort, that village regarded itself as a first line of defense against any surprise attack. Notices of the disturbance appeared in the only newspaper in this region, *The St. Joseph Beacon; and Indiana and Michigan Intelligencer*,³⁰ which announced that the militia in that county and in adjacent counties of Michigan were organizing for defense. The first notice appeared in the issue of May 23:

Information has been brought into this part of the country by express from Chicago, that a considerable body of Indians consisting principally of Sacs, Fox, and Kickapoo tribes, are not far distant from that place apparently with hostile intentions, and that they have committed some depredations on the Illinois frontier. The object of the express, we understand, is to obtain a reenforcement to march to Chicago, and to put the people in this part of the country, and Michigan Territory on their guard; and for these purposes have passed on to Detroit.

The reprinting from the *Illinois Advocate* under glaring headlines of Governor Reynold's call to arms and of the military orders of Adjutant-General Schwartz at Detroit for the raising of volunteers was hardly calculated to allay the excitement.³¹

²⁹ Probably the most reliable account of the scare here is that of Judge T. S. Stanfield, as related in *History of St. Joseph County* (Chapman, Chicago, 1880), 449.

³⁰ This first newspaper in northern Indiana began to appear as a weekly under the name, the *Northwestern Pioneer and St. Joseph's Intelligencer*, on November 16, 1831, published by two brothers, Mr. John D. and Joseph H. Defrees. But with the issue of May 23 the name was changed to that cited above, though it seems to have been referred to simply as the *St. Joseph Beacon*. It was printed in the second story of a house which had formerly been used as a tavern. The only files for 1831-2 in existence—and they are, unfortunately, incomplete—are in the possession of Mr. J. B. Beitner, of South Bend, who kindly gave the writer access to them.

³¹ The call of Major-General Williams at Detroit was quoted in full: The peace and security of the frontier settlements of the Territory is menaced by

Colonel Hiram Dayton organized a company of volunteers in the village, drilled them,³² and then dismissed them to meet again upon one minute's notice, whence their pseudonym of minute men.

But a considerable number of the villagers insisted on the necessity of a fort, and so the triangular piece of ground just west of the present standpipe on the Lincoln Highway was selected for the location, even though some fears were voiced that the Indians might conceal themselves in the brush under the hill and pick off the picket guard at night. And here a three-cornered fort was begun. The ground was to be inclosed by a wall of timbers of split logs or puncheons to be sunk in the ground three feet deep, rising nine or ten feet above ground in order to prevent the Indians from looking over to spy out the weakness of the defense. The wall was to be pierced at intervals with port-holes. The work was begun in a fever of excitement; the settlers egged each other on with the wildest of tales, while, when other stories failed, some insisted on the secret hostility of the Indians of the locality.³³ After a time, as the inhabitants began to recover their balance, and as the federal government gave evidence of activity, the work began to lag. However, to quiet all apprehension, the village sent out a reconnaissance party of its own people, which after a sixty or seventy mile ride west reported

hostile bands of Indians in arms against the United States. The blood of our neighbors and brethren of Indiana has been shed by ferocious and barbarous invaders. The constituted authorities of the Territory have summoned and the Major-General now calls upon the patriot-citizen soldiers under his command, to volunteer their immediate services, to defend the frontier settlements and the Territory. Quoted in the issue of June 6. But while the early issues after the outbreak of war carried a goodly number of excerpts and dispatches, we are very far from sensational journalism.

³² A good story is told of the guard at this time. One old frontiersman who valued the reports and excitement at their proper worth had been placed on night guard duty. When the night began to wane, he rested his gun against a tree and went comfortably to sleep. The officer in charge was properly appalled and indignant when he caught the old rascal snoring, but the officers soon found themselves so perplexed by questions of proper procedure in a court martial that they preferred to let a culprit escape punishment rather than to murder a man without due process of law. T. E. Howard, *History of St. Joseph County*, 713.

³³ Stanfield tells a story of how, while the fort was being erected, at Potawatomi sauntered by, looking through the cracks between the puncheons. He was promptly suspected as a spy whose summary arrest and death was demanded. Howard, pp. 712-5.

on their return to the people collected in front of Johnson's tavern their conviction that there was not a hostile Indian within one hundred and fifty miles and that Pokagon the local chief of the Potawatomi, was clearly friendly, citing as proof the fact that he had the American flag flying over his cabin.³⁴

The ripples of the storm did not expend themselves in South Bend, but spread on east to Elkhart county. Despite the best efforts of the level-headed, sane men, to allay the excitement, it proved no time for clear reasoning. People mustered into the service of a Colonel Jackson, prepared to march to the defense of Niles, which nearby point in Michigan was reported to be threatened.

A *dog-feast*, or thirst dance, then in progress in the Sauk village near Niles, did not contribute to allay the fears of the

³⁴ An amusing episode which occurred at South Bend reveals something of the farcial character of the war gestures in Indiana. The governor of the State had called out a battalion of three hundred cavalry, the pick of Marion, Johnson, and Hendricks counties, and started them for the front, though their nearest approach was not more than a hundred miles within the scene of action. While they were dallying between Lafayette and Chicago, the editor of the *St. Joseph Beacon*, scarcely expecting them to return via South Bend, called them a "holiday" battalion and made a number of disparaging remarks. But on their return they came around the south bend of Lake Michigan, and via St. Joseph county, and to duly punish the author of such defaming, threatened to kill the editor and put his press in the river. The editor's own account of the attack upon him makes interesting reading:

On the day previous to their arrival, our paper was issued, containing an editorial article which, from its "home thrusts", set too heavy on the *feelings* of some of the officers of said regiment. * * * In speaking of the troops, I do not wish to be understood to mean *all*, for there were *some* honorable exceptions—*some* who had too much honor to countenance the procedure. A short time after their arrival in town, I was surrounded in the street by this *military* mob, who, marching up to me with more than Spartan *courage*, said they intended revenging themselves on me for having insinuated that they were on a money-making expedition, and were destitute of the essential qualifications of soldiers, and by way of demonstrating that they were men of genuine *metal*, many dirks and butcher knives leaped, with fearful clatter, from their scabbards, and were flourished in dread array around me. Then they let slip a volley of imprecations and abuse, which would have disgraced a mob of street scavengers, and it was with much difficulty that the *few* officers who exerted themselves and several other gentlemen who had influence with the rabble prevented them from wreaking their vengeance on me in a bloody manner. After being kept in *dures vi et armis* for some time I was liberated. * * *

Defrees did agree to insert in his next issue a statement to the effect that his remarks were unmerited, but he nullified the effect by other caustic comments and criticisms of the action of the officers in marching their men over a hundred miles through a country where provisions were very scarce and in a direction where they were certain no danger existed.

I have discarded the account given by Howard, p. 715, in the light of this primary source from the mouth of the chief actor.

whites. Indian bands had encamped for several weeks in preparation for this festival, which was partly penitential, partly propitiatory. One requirement was that the dancers should not eat, drink, or sleep during the entire feast, which covered a period of from two to four days. The first step was the erection of a structure which did duty for a temple to the accompaniment of much rude ceremony, the beating of tin pans and the recital of incantations by the medicine men.³⁵ Then followed dances for many long hours by young people, both men and women, who had in a moment of vital danger vowed to render this service, to the music of their own wild songs piped through a goose-bone whistle and to the beating of deer-skin drums. This was followed, in its turn, by many exhibitions by the young bucks of their powers of endurance,³⁶ the whole finding its rather gruesome climax in the dog-feast, when, because a dog's liver made the partaker strong-hearted, the warriors tore from a dog's carcass his liver which each brave tasted while still warm.³⁷

As the hunters and travelers began to bring the tales of Black Hawk's outbreak to the village of Elkhart, scouts were sent in every direction. As elsewhere, people deserted their farms and homes; some fled back to eastern settlements, while

³⁵ Led by a medicine-man, at this time usually in a ragged United States military coat, his head surmounted by a mass of porcupine skin and swan feathers, forty or fifty braves set forth on horseback for the woods to procure the center-pole. They approached the tree selected with whoops and firing of guns, felled it and drew it into camp where a few chosen men raised it into position to the accompaniment of incantations. A circular tent was erected around the pole, about fifty feet in diameter, with walls six feet high, the apex of the roof perhaps thirty feet from the ground, the sides and roof composed of Buffalo skins. Inside four low compartments were made, two for the male, and two for the female dancers.

³⁶ A single illustration will suffice: A muscular warrior permitted a couple of chiefs to thrust long skewers through the flesh of his shoulders, to the ends of which were attached the reins of a horse. The candidate for honors was then told to lead the animal around until the flesh gave way. With the blood streaming down over the paint of his body, he strutted around for several hours without a murmur. Though the flesh upon his shoulders tore toward the neck, it did not give way and the medicine-men with much ceremony freed the victim and acclaimed another hero.

³⁷ For further details as to these ceremonies, see *History of Elkhart County* (Charles C. Chapman and Co., Chicago, 1881), pp. 432-5.

This work describes a *sog-feast*, which is clearly a misprint for *dog-feast*. The writer has found old settlers, like Mrs. Andrew, who have heard of the former, but never of a *dog-feast*.

others congregated at the chief villages of the vicinity, South Bend and Goshen. Fort Beane, so-called in honor of the captain of the company which was promptly organized, was erected on Elkhart prairie and stood for some time after the war.³⁸ Colonel Jackson was dispatched to Indianapolis for aid, and the citizens showed much energy. Steps were taken to erect a fort on the island in the Elkhart formed by the two branches of the St. Joseph river, now known as Island Park, but the project was abandoned upon the assurance of Chief Moran that the tribes would not revolt.³⁹

Meanwhile the *St. Joseph Beacon* was sending out its weekly issue, advising against alarm and flight. Already on June 6 it was declaring the war over. In a few weeks the settlers knew there was no genuine danger in northern Indiana.⁴⁰

The "Farce" is at an end—the Indian mania has subsided—all now are well assured that there is no danger, and wonder at themselves that they were so much alarmed with so little cause. The Indian Agent at Chicago seems to have been the principal agent in unnecessarily alarming the people throughout the whole frontier borders. * * *

From all the correct information which we have been able to collect, we do not hesitate in saying that there is not now, nor ever has been, any cause of fear in any other place than in the neighborhood of Rock River. The prompt and decisive measures adopted by the Governor of Illinois and General Atkinson have been such as not to leave "a loop whereon to hang a doubt" but that the few Indians who had determined to raise men in the vicinity of Rock Island, or so alarm the whites as to cause them to give up a year's provisions, are, long before this, driven far beyond the Mississippi, and scattered to the "four winds". We regret very much that so many false rumors have been put into circulation—not only on account of the injury done some of our farmers who left their fields before putting in their corn crops, but it may have a tendency to check the tide of emigration which had commenced flowing early into this promising region. We insure persons at a distance, who are anxious to emigrate to the St. Joseph there is no danger—no more probability

³⁸ This fact was stated in a public address in 1858, made by Joseph H. Defrees.

³⁹ On the authority of E. R. Beardsley, who was eight years old at the time of the Black Hawk War. See the *Elkhart Daily Review* of June 27, 1906.

⁴⁰ The account of the excitement in Elkhart is based upon Anthony Deahl, *History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County* (Chicago, 1905), pp. 17-8; *History of Elkhart County* (Chapman, Chicago, 1881), pp. 432-5; and A. E. Weaver, *Standard History of Elkhart County* (Chicago, 1881).

of an invasion by Black Hawk's party than there is from the Emperor of Russia.⁴¹

Goshen, about fifteen miles east of Elkhart town, seems to mark the eastern limit of the waves of excitement in northern Indiana. A letter seems to have been sent by an express rider first to Colonel John Jackson, presumably because of the valiant part he had played in the War of 1812 under General Andrew Jackson, to the effect that his Indians were near Niles, Michigan, and urging him to call out the militia. That officer at once set forth to summon his neighbors to bring guns and ammunition to Goshen at eleven o'clock that same morning. One cool-headed neighbor, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of the record in this part of the country, quietly made ready for a campaign by half-soling his shoes while his wife prepared provisions and moulded bullets. He then got out a knapsack which had already seen service in border-warfare, and started across country afoot. Many of the settlers were entering Goshen armed with the usual variety of effective weapons—with shot-guns, muskets, rifles, old-fashioned horse pistols and butcher-knives. Men, women, and children came flocking into the village hourly, crying, swearing, praying. The Indian war dances near Niles were interpreted as preparation for war on that prairie.

The first step taken was to send to Niles for more particular information. And then it was decided to build a fort for the protection of the women and children. Before long, however, the messengers dispatched to Niles reported that the danger was, at most, remote. But to verify the reports of outrages in Kosciusko county, which adjoins Elkhart county on the south, a De Witt Mullinex and John Elsea went out into the wilderness alone over an old Indian trail, to cover the ter-

⁴¹ Evidently the editorial calm of the *Beacon* in the face of danger did not satisfy the more excitable of its patrons, for we read in the issue of July 4: "Some of our friends have blamed us for not giving all the rumors that have been in circulation concerning the Frontier War. Our reason for not doing this is founded on the best motives. We consider it wrong to grasp every vague tale and make it have some semblance of truth by publishing. We know that our patrons all feel interested in hearing from the seat of War, and whenever we get anything Official and Authentic we have, and intend giving it to them."

True to this promise each issue printed some war news and the official reports of the various officers up to September 15 when it published a long account of Black Hawk's final defeat.

ritory between Elkhart river and Big Turkey Creek prairie in which there was no habitation. Their appearance in the Indian village, Waubea Papoose, where knowledge of the uprising had apparently penetrated, aroused great excitement and suspicion, allayed by the explanation that the visitors were in search of seed-corn. The same pretext, offered through an interpreter, sufficed in a second Indian village, where Oswego now stands, to melt the savages from hostile silence into an approach to welcome. Although the report of these scouts contributed to quiet the apprehensions at Goshen, the settlers, still bent on the fort, got the foundation laid, but, when they disagreed over its name, they abandoned the work.

Somewhat further south than the northernmost tier of counties of the state some ripples made themselves felt. Some settlements had been made in White county, and so some alarmed families left their homes when the rumors of Black Hawk's revolt reached them.⁴³ And into what later became Newton county, south of Lake county, about five hundred Kickapoo Indians came from Illinois during the war to stay for some little time, but they gave no trouble except when whiskey was furnished them.⁴⁴

And yet though the reign of terror passed in a few weeks and it seemed quite unnecessary when no hostile Indians had come nearer the Indiana border than seventy-five miles, yet the fear was entirely justified, as the pioneers faced the danger of extinction. In the first place, they knew quite well that the Potawatomi were closely related to the Sauk and naturally feared that they would ally themselves with the latter in any movement against the whites, since they had regularly been opposed to the United States in each war which had arisen. And due credit should be given to Chief Moran⁴⁵ of the Elkhart region for his powerful influence in restraining the Potawatomi, for he was fully convinced of the inability of the Indians to cope with the whites in diplomacy or in war and felt that their safety depended upon the maintenance of peaceful relations with their powerful neighbors. They knew that

⁴³ T. H. Ball, *Northwestern Indiana* (Chicago, 1895), pp. 79-80.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁴⁵ This statement rests on the authority of E. R. Beardsley, in an article published in the *Elkhart Daily Review*, June 27, 1906.

the Potawatomi still cherished resentment over the sale by their chiefs, while under the influence of liquor, of one million acres for three cents an acre by treaty arrangement in 1809, although they had yielded to necessity after the bloody defeat of Tippecanoe. And the few scattered whites without military protection would have been without the shadow of a doubt quite helpless against any band of Indians. In the second place, it was supposed that the Sauk Indians would retreat to their British friends in Canada instead of going beyond the Mississippi, and all of the chief settlements of northern Indiana here discussed lay along the route of the old Sauk trail. Furthermore, a large body of Sauk warriors had crossed northern Indiana just at the beginning of the war,⁴⁶ and so had deepened the settlers' conviction that the objective was Malden.

And slight as was the visible effects of the war on Indiana, it was not without results. It led immediately to the removal of the Potawatomi from this state, for, although they had kept perfectly quiet, the settlers were still restive under their presence. After repeated efforts, they were finally forcibly expelled in the summer of 1838 not without some accompanying hardships to the natives,⁴⁷ though the last lingering bands did not leave this part of the state until 1840.

In the second place, it put an end to government allowances for Indians this side of the Mississippi and so entailed some loss for Indiana pioneers who were unable to recover for thefts by Indians as had been the practice hitherto.

⁴⁶ Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 332.

⁴⁷ It is no part of the purpose of the writer to enter into the story of the removal of the tribes from Indiana, as the tale has already been told by Esarey (pp. 332-9). But it will not be amiss to tell a few episodes connected with their removal from the northern part of the state which have not yet found their way into print. Mrs. Andrew Johnson, daughter of the pioneer to whom reference has been made several times, tells how a group of Indians filed into her father's cabin sometime after the war until it was filled with silent figures. After remaining for what they deemed a proper length of time, they departed likewise in silence. They had called to pay their respects to a neighbor whom they honored before taking their departure from the country.

Mrs. Theodore Armitage of Westville, a daughter of Henly Clyburn, the first settler of New Durham township, relates that her father once cared for several hundred Indians in a grove just west of the present town of Westville, at the time that they were withdrawing from the country. Daniels, *History of La Porte County*, pp. 13-4.

In the third place it virtually closed immigration to this section for that year,⁴⁸ turning settlers to other localities who would in the natural course of events have located in this part of the west.

In the last place, it probably brought some minor local disturbances in each community affected. For instance, it frightened the commissioners appointed to locate the county seat for La Porte county and prevented them from performing their duty within the time limit set by the state legislature. It ruined the Michigan Road land sales set for the month of June in South Bend.⁴⁹ And it interfered seriously for a few weeks with the construction work on that road.⁵⁰ Though the matter of interference with farm work and delay in the development of land and forest areas scheduled for cultivation has not found comment in the records of early historians, it is unreasonable not to suppose that many plans were laid aside until all danger of Indian attack was forgotten and the homesteader assured that he would reap the profits of his labor.

But it is an ill wind indeed that does not bring some good and so we must not fail to note the soldiers in the army of General Scott who, noting the rich virgin soil and the opportunities for ultimate large profits, elected to stay or returned in due time to stake out claims.⁵¹

Like any storm at sea, the disturbance which Black Hawk set up in Illinois sent out circles of waves which grew less and less violent until they quite faded away near the eastern border of Indiana.

⁴⁸ Except for a little colony of forty-four who had previously arranged to move to St. Joseph county in the fall of 1832 and who arrived despite the scare.

⁴⁹ The *St. Joseph Beacon* says on July 18: "From him (Judge Polk, commissioner on the Michigan Road) we learn that 13,709 acres of Road lands were sold for the sum of \$18,134.39, making an average price of \$1.32½ per acre. The average price paid was \$7.00. We are gratified, however, to learn that land enough was sold to redeem the script and reimburse the state treasury for the amount advanced on account of surveys."

It is probably remarkable that sales were effected at any price.

⁵⁰ Mss. by R. B. Oglesbee, *A Little Trip into Scipio*.

⁵¹ A case in point is that of S. T. Miller, a Tennessean, who, after service in the Black Hawk War, stopped in Elkhart county in 1834 to buy land, to which he returned to settle in 1842.

Not to drop from the story the humorous element always present in Indian wars, the reader may well be reminded that a crop of colonels survived the threatened wave in every hamlet of this section, as indeed throughout the northwest.