

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

A FAILED UNION:
HOW A LACK OF TRIBAL UNITY DOOMED BLACK HAWK FROM THE BEGINNING
OF 1832

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Abstract

This essay examines the relationship between Native Americans and whites in the Michigan Territory during Black Hawk's War in 1832. While a dispute over land in the Illinois caused Black Hawk's band of Sauks, Foxes, and Kickapoos to fight against the military of the United States, other tribes did not support him. This essay reveals how these other tribes in the Michigan Territory behaved during the war. While some tensions existed between white settlers and Michigan Territory tribes, there was little desire to aid Black Hawk due to intertribal conflict and the desire for good relations with the United States. Ultimately, a lack of aid caused Black Hawk's forces to lose the war and allowed further white settlement in the Michigan Territory.

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The Battle of Bad Axe

Militiamen and United States regulars were finally closing in on Black Hawk. It was the morning of August 2, 1832, and the United States military under command of General Henry Atkinson was in close pursuit of Black Hawk's fleeing British Band of Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo Indians. The majority of the British Band was desperate to cross to the western shore of the Mississippi River to escape Atkinson's army and to end the previous months of interminable marching and starvation. The previous night, Black Hawk and a few followers left the main body of the British Band to travel north into Chippewa country to obtain refuge. At sunrise, a young warrior caught up to Black Hawk and informed him that a number of his people already crossed the river, but the majority were still attempting to cross and in danger of being overtaken by the approaching white army. The message came as a surprise to Black Hawk, as he assumed Atkinson's army did not pursue him after the Battle of Wisconsin Heights. Fear overtook him that the whites would kill his people before they had a chance to cross the river. He decided to return and aid them or die trying.¹

As Black Hawk attempted to return south, his group came across Joseph Dickerson's spy company advancing in front of the main body of Atkinson's army. Those with Black Hawk hid behind a thicket and went unnoticed. The passing white volunteers discovered the other group of Black Hawk's followers and a skirmish ensued. Dickerson's men killed all fourteen of that group. Black Hawk and his small party escaped and fled to the Winnebago village at Prairie La Cross. The rest of the British Band was not as fortunate as Black Hawk.²

¹ Donald Jackson, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 138; Patrick Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 168.

² Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 169.

Around nine a.m. in the morning, the main body of Atkinson's army engaged the bulk of the British Band. On makeshift rafts, many attempted to cross the river to the western shore, while others attempted to swim across the main channel to one of two islands located in the middle of the river. As Atkinson's regulars and volunteers moved down the steep bank to the shore, warriors tried in vain to hold off the approaching army. Many warriors, in addition to women and children attempting to escape, were shot and killed, while some drowned in the river. Some even surrendered to the whites, but were slaughtered anyways. One man from Henry Dodge's battalion became so enraged when a bullet shot through his whiskers and the rim of his hat that he shot and killed an Indian woman with a child on her back, and while doing so, shattered the child's arm.³

Five hundred members of the British Band were present at the massacre that day. Only 150 of them were warriors; the rest were women and children. They faced an overwhelming, superior force of over 1,000 men. Although 200 members of the British Band escaped across the river, at least 260 perished that day under the hot August sun. Black Hawk eventually turned himself in and was taken prisoner at Prairie du Chien. Thus, Black Hawk's War ended during a massacre called the Battle of Bad Axe.⁴

So what caused this outcome? Why was Black Hawk defeated and the United States victorious in this three month war? The importance of this question is that it illuminates characteristics of relationships between Native Americans and whites, as well as relationships between Native American nations that ultimately led to the white control of America. While most emphasis has been on exploring the reasons for Black Hawk's War, the events of the war,

³ Ibid., 170, 173.

⁴ Ibid., 172; Jackson, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, 139.

and its consequences, there is a dearth of focus on what other tribes in the Michigan Territory were doing during the war. Black Hawk intended to form a union with other tribes in 1832, particularly the Winnebagos and Potawatomis, but was unable to attract them to his cause. This examination will help readers understand why other tribes in the Michigan Territory did not unite with Black Hawk. Finally, this essay will aid readers in understanding that Wisconsin's formation as a state was dependent on removing Native Americans deemed "hostile" in order for settlers to feel safe in developing the Michigan Territory in the 1800s into the state of Wisconsin in 1848. Therefore, the importance of this research is that it increases comprehension for American frontier students of Native American and white relationships in the Michigan Territory circa 1832, and how they played out during Black Hawk's War.

This essay intends to examine, during Black Hawk's War, the actions of the most significant tribes in the Wisconsin portion of the Michigan Territory: the Winnebagos, Potawatomis, Menominees, Santee Sioux, and Chippewas. While a dispute over land in Illinois caused Black Hawk's band of Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo Indians to wage war against the United States in 1832, other tribes did not fully support him. This was a determining factor in Black Hawk's defeat during the summer of 1832. This paper will prove that while a minority of some of these tribes used the war as an excuse to commit depredations against European-American settlers, intertribal conflict and a desire to remain on friendly terms with the United States were major motivating factors causing tribes to either offer only tacit assistance to Black Hawk or even ally with the United States in pursuing Black Hawk's British Band.

Secondary Source Review

A myriad of literature exists detailing the causes and consequences of Black Hawk's

War. However, since many of them contain the same information concerning the behavior of the tribes of the Michigan Territory, an exhaustive review is unnecessary. The first comprehensive book detailing Black Hawk's War was John Wakefield's *History of the War between the United States and the Sac and Fox Nations of Indians and Parts of Other Disaffected Tribes of Indians, in the Years Eighteen Hundred and Twenty-Seven, Thirty-One, and Thirty-Two* printed in 1834. Wakefield actually served as a scout in the United States military during the war and later wrote about his experiences and the events of the war. One of the best republications of his book is Frank Everett's *Wakefield's History of the Black Hawk War*. Not surprisingly, Wakefield argues that the war was the result of the United States protecting its citizens from the hostile intentions of the invading British Band who violated the Treaty of 1804 (granted the Americans ownership of Sauk land), and thus, Black Hawk's defeat was justified. Wakefield believed that "none but the reckless and abandoned hearted man, would have the hardihood to cast imputations upon our Executive, and cry out, 'poor Indians,' after a thorough perusal of the many outrages these hell-hounds committed on our frontier settlements." Other books concerning the entirety of the war are Orion Clenen's *City of Keokuk in 1856... also a Sketch of the Black Hawk War*, which was published in 1856, and Perry Armstrong's *The Sauks and the Black Hawk War, with Biographical Sketches, etc*, which was published in 1887. Later scholarship tended to be more sympathetic to the Native Americans than Wakefield. Scholarship in the 1900s and 2000s provide all the necessary information for the purpose of this paper, and therefore, these earlier works are not further utilized.⁵

After Wakefield and certainly by the mid 1900s, scholars painted the British Band more as victims than the perpetrators of the war. Cecil Eby's "*That Disgraceful Affair,*" *the Black*

⁵ Frank Stevens, *Wakefield's History of the Black Hawk*, (Madison, Wisconsin: Roger Hunt, 1976), 10, 158.

Hawk War, published in 1973, counters Wakefield's assertion that the war was justified, as he argues no war would have happened if white settlers "had not trespassed on Sauk land and forced Black Hawk to the edge of a precipice where he had no choice but to fight." Eby continues that the white belief that white Americans could utilize the land better than the Indians was a major impetus for the war and justified the taking of Sauk land by force. Eby's work is not cited much in this paper, given other sources provide all the necessary information. In the same vein of scholarship, Patrick Jung's *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, published in 2007, depicts Black Hawk's band more as victims than Wakefield. His work is one of the best secondary sources describing and analyzing Black Hawk's War. Since it is one of the most comprehensive and helpful books concerning how other tribes in the Michigan Territory reacted to Black Hawk's War, it is utilized as the main secondary source of this paper.⁶

Jung details the causes of the war, such as resistance to white expansion and anti-Americanism among Native Americans. He also discusses in length Atkinson's pursuit of Black Hawk's band across northern Illinois and the southern portion of the Michigan Territory that resulted in Black Hawk's capture. He illustrates that intertribal conflict in the Michigan Territory, most notably the Menominee and Santee Sioux alliance with the United States against the British Band, made it impossible for Black Hawk to obtain a significant alliance among the Native Americans in the region. Jung notes that intertribal conflict existed in the region well before Black Hawk's War. He gives an example of intertribal conflict between the Chippewas and the Santee Sioux stretching back to the 1730s in the Michigan Territory. He argues that as the Sauks and Foxes expanded north and west into the territory of other tribes, particularly the Santee Sioux, in the early 1800s, conflict arose between these two tribes over land, making the

⁶ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 174; Cecil Eby, "That Disgraceful Affair," *the Black Hawk War*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973), 19, 23.

Sauks and Foxes natural allies of the Chippewas. Furthermore, Jung shows how there were even intratribal divisions, such as within the Potawatomis and Winnebagos. A small minority of Indians within both tribes aided Black Hawk, but the majority of them were disengaged or helped the United States capture Black Hawk in order to remain in the good graces of the Americans.⁷

Another recent book on Black Hawk's War is Kerry Trask's *Black Hawk: The Battle For the Heart of America*, published in 2007. Trask examines Black Hawk's War in the context of an expanding United States in conflict with the Sauk and Fox peoples attempting to remain in their ancestral lands coveted by white settlers. He explains Black Hawk's War as just another example of white America's pattern of violent Indian removal that ended "with the brutal blood-sacrifice of the native peoples." In terms of how the other tribes in the Michigan Territory reacted to the Black Hawk's War, Trask parallels Jung by illustrating the Winnebagos and Potawatomis were generally reluctant to aid Black Hawk, and the Menominees and Santee Sioux were eager to join the Americans. Therefore, Trask's book is not cited much in this paper.⁸

Peter Shrake's "Justice or Revenge: The Menominee during the Black Hawk War," published in 2006, helps fill in details concerning the assistance the Menominees rendered the Americans during Black Hawk's War. It focuses on Colonel Samuel Stambaugh's Menominee expedition who hunted the remnants of the British Band after the Battle of Bad Axe. Shrake reveals the eagerness of the Menominees to fight the Sauks and Foxes. Thus, Shrake is cited often in the Menominees section of this essay.⁹

⁷ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 46-47.

⁸ Kerry Trask, *Black Hawk: the Battle for the Heart of America*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 6.

⁹ Peter Shrake, "Justice or Revenge: The Menominee during the Black Hawk War," *Voyageur* Summer/Fall (2006): 21-22.

Concerning economic coercion of the Native Americans in the Michigan Territory, two recent works are very useful. Published in 1991, Ronald Satz's *Chippewa Treaty Rights: The Reserved Rights of Wisconsin's Chippewa Indians in Historical Perspectives* provides information concerning the Chippewas in the northern portion of the Michigan Territory. Although his book focuses on treaties between the United States and various Chippewa tribes, it illuminates the American desire for Chippewa lands and methods, such as economic coercion via Indian debts, which the Americans utilized to obtain Chippewa lands. In 2001, Patty Loew's *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal* was published. It shows the relationship between Indians and whites in the Michigan Territory during the early 1800s centering on American expansionism, and subsequently, the loss of land by Native Americans. As with Satz, Loew emphasizes economic coercion as a method the United States utilized to obtain Indian lands to develop and settle. These works are only cited a few times throughout this paper. Various other books, journal articles, and web articles were consulted, but not necessarily cited in this essay.¹⁰

Background of Black Hawk's War

Before examining the major tribes who resided in the Michigan Territory during Black Hawk's War, an understanding of the origin of the war is necessary. In the early 1800s, white settlers began to populate the Great Lakes region and the Upper Mississippi Valley in greater numbers. The Michigan Territory was formed in the early 1800s, which encompassed all of present day Michigan, Wisconsin, and some of northeastern Minnesota by 1832 (see appendix

¹⁰ Ronald Satz, *Chippewa Treaty Rights: The Reserved Rights of Wisconsin's Chippewa Indians in Historical Perspective*, (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, 1991), 6; Patty Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001),

1). The seed of the conflict began with the signing of an 1804 treaty between the United States and the Sauk and Fox nations. Delegates from the two nations agreed to a land-session (i.e. southwestern Wisconsin, much of western Illinois, and eastern Missouri) in exchange for pardons for four Sauk warriors accused of killing three white settlers who trespassed on their lands. The problem was the delegates were not authorized to sell any land and by doing so, they sold much of their ancestral territory to the United States without the consent of the rest of their tribe.¹¹

The 1804 treaty was a major reason why many Sauks and Foxes, including Black Hawk, joined the pan-Indian alliance headed by the Shawnee chief Te-cum-seh and his brother, the Shawnee Prophet, who united the disparate tribes of the trans-Appalachian West with the British against the United States during the War of 1812. Te-cum-seh preached that intertribal divisions had to be overcome and forged a confederation of Indian nations from the trans-Appalachian region. Indians from the Chippewa, Santee Sioux, Menominee, Potawatomi and Winnebago nations, tribes that would later play a significant role in Black Hawk's War, also joined the pan-Indian alliance. The Winnebagos especially harbored strong anti-American sentiments and offered much support to Te-cum-seh and his brother. The pan-Indian alliance's goals were to halt American expansion into their lands and return Native Americans to their cultural traditions prior to European contact. Te-cum-seh was able to convince other tribes it was in their self-interest to unite with him against the Americans to protect their land and culture. However, the British abandoned their Indian allies and made peace with the Americans during the 1815 Treaty of Ghent. As a result, the United States gained control of the Upper Mississippi Valley from the

90.

¹¹ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 18, 20.

British and the pan-Indian alliance was shattered. Many Native Americans made peace with the United States, as by October 1815, thirteen peace treaties were signed between the United States and various tribes involved in the War of 1812. The Sauks realized the futility of continuing their hostility against the Americans as the Americans built new forts, Fort Edwards by the mouth of the Des Moines River and Fort Armstrong at Rock Island on the Mississippi River, in the heart of Sauk county. The Sauks finally signed a peace treaty with Americans in May of 1816.¹²

The Americans began to exert more control over the Native Americans in the area by extending their political, economic, and military power. Many Indians became increasingly dependent on American rations and goods from Indian agencies and traders. This relationship was in line with Thomas Jefferson's strategy for the acquisition of Indian lands. In a 1803 private letter, he wrote, "We shall push our trading {ho}uses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them run in{to} debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands." In other words, a trade imbalance due to Indian dependency on American goods and food was one means the Americans employed to gain leverage over the Indians to sell much of their land. Even though Thomas Jefferson's letter was dated by 1815, his strategy set a precedent for how the United States could acquire land from Native Americans.¹³

As white settlers began to populate the Upper Mississippi Valley, the United States government purchased land from the Indians in order to create new territories and eventually states. In return, the Native Americans were promised annuity payments by the United States government, which they used to buy rations and goods at American Indian agencies. This

¹² Ibid., 4, 23, 24-27, 30-31; Trask, *Black Hawk: the Battle for the Heart of America*, 109.

¹³ Satz, *Chippewa Treaty Rights: The Reserved Rights of Wisconsin's Chippewa Indians in Historical Perspective*, 6.

allowed the Americans leverage over the Indians in that Indian agents could refuse annuity payments to the Native Americans if they acted against American interests. These factors made many Indians more dependent on the Americans for survival, and thus, less able to resist the American economic and political dominance. The Americans increased their military power as well by building more forts near waterways, such as at Prairie du Chien and Green Bay, in order to control the waterways. This control was paramount for maintaining American sovereignty over the Upper Mississippi Valley, since the waterways transported goods and people.¹⁴

The growing economic, political, and military power of the United States in the Upper Mississippi Valley largely resulted from the increasing numbers of people who migrated to the Upper Mississippi Valley after the war. The “‘old times’ soon passed away throughout most of the trans-Appalachian West, brought to an end by hordes of restless, rootless people who rushed in looking for fresh starts and fast fortunes.” By 1818, Illinois was admitted into the Union, and by 1830, it had a population of 157,000. In the Michigan Territory, the population was over 31,000 by 1830. In contrast, only 29,000 Indians were living the Michigan Territory, and only 5,900 Indians were living in Illinois in 1830. Indian nations, such as the Winnebago or Menominee, were small; they comprised only several thousand individuals. Thus, before Black Hawk’s War, there were six times as many whites as Indians in Illinois and the Michigan Territory. With more white settlers in the region, the United States had the manpower to exert more control over the indigenous population. Consequently, greater American control over the region “restricted, but did not completely stop, the ability of the Indians to resist American hegemony.” Anti-Americanism in Indians living in the Upper Mississippi Valley did not die after the Treaty of Ghent, but remained under the surface and manifested itself again in violent form

¹⁴ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 30-33, 163; Trask, *Black Hawk: the Battle for the Heart of America*, 92, 131, 143.

in 1827 and 1832.¹⁵

To ensure peace between the often warring tribes in the territory, in 1825, the United States under Michigan Territorial Governor Lewis Cass and William Clark (i.e. captain of the 1805 Lewis and Clark expedition) held a peace conference at Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River in the western portion of the Michigan Territory. The goal was to create boundaries between tribes to prevent intertribal warfare, which hurt the Indian trading business and made the territory unsafe for white settlers. Of particular concern was intertribal warfare between the Menominee-Sioux alliance and the Sauk-Fox-Chippewa alliance. The treaty stipulated that the tribes were to remain within the boundaries established by the treaty and that they would not war with each other. Delegates from the Sioux, Ottawa, Menominee, Winnebago, Chippewa, Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, and Iowa nations all attended and signed the treaty delineating tribal boundaries and promising peace.¹⁶

By knowing which tribes occupied what land, it became easier for the United States to buy tribal land and remove tribes in the future. Now the United States knew the exact boundaries of Sauk and Fox nations. In the late 1820s, when the federal government began selling the land obtained in the 1804 Treaty to white settlers, they began to remove the Sauks and Foxes from their ceded territory. Lead found in northwestern Illinois and the southwestern portion of the Michigan Territory caused many miners to move into this area. This precipitated the Winnebago Uprising in 1827, where the Winnebagos attempted to drive settlers out of their mineral rich

¹⁵ For quoted material and Illinois settler population see: Trask, *Black Hawk: the Battle for the Heart of America*, 50-51; For Michigan Territory settler population see: Joe Markovich and Concetta Phillipps, "Census Records," **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** BD3E9DA 4E.html (accessed March 2, 2010); For Michigan Territory and Illinois Indian populations see: "Indian Populations, 1830," <http://www.teachushistory.org/indian-removal/resources/indian-populations-1830> (accessed March 2, 2010); For anti-Americanism see: Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 32.

¹⁶ Trask, *Black Hawk: the Battle for the Heart of America*, 10-11.

lands in the southern part of the Michigan Territory. They tried to form a pan-Indian alliance, but only the Santee Sioux promised any military aid against the Americans. However, the Santee Sioux never joined and only a minority of Winnebagos participated in the attacks against the Americans. On the other hand, the Americans assembled a superior military force. Thus, the Winnebagos turned the leader of the rebellion, chief Red Bird, into the Americans in order to prevent their destruction. The Menominee and Potawatomi tribes also began to develop stronger anti-American tendencies in the late 1820s due to white encroachment upon their lands and subsequent mistreatment of Indians by whites.¹⁷

In 1831, Black Hawk and his band of Sauks, Foxes, and Kickapoos were forced to leave their village, Saukenuk, in northwestern Illinois in order to make way for white settlers who now owned the land on the basis of the 1804 treaty. They relocated to the western side of the Mississippi River in present day Iowa. In the spring of 1832, Black Hawk's band, now called the British Band due to supposed British support of Black Hawk's band remaining at Saukenuk, crossed the Mississippi River into Illinois to reoccupy their former village. The majority of the Sauk and Fox nations (i.e. 4,500 Sauks and Foxes) disagreed with Black Hawk's actions; they wanted to remain on good terms with the Americans, and consequently, remained behind under the leadership of Keokuk, a rival Sauk war chief. Only 1,100 Indians followed Black Hawk of who only 500 were warriors. The rest were women, children, and the elderly. Na-pope, a principal civil chief of Black Hawk's band, assured Black Hawk (the highest ranking war chief of the band) that other tribes, particularly the Potawatomis, Chippewas, and Winnebagos, would join Black Hawk against the Americans and that even the British would lend arms and supplies to Black Hawk. These promises turned out to be fallacious. What Black Hawk could count on

¹⁷ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 23, 41-42, 44-45; Trask, *Black Hawk: the Battle for the Heart of America*, 63, 132.

was that the United States would interpret his crossing the Mississippi River as an act of aggression and declare war on him (see appendix 2).¹⁸

The Winnebagos

The Winnebagos desired to remain at peace with the United States during Black Hawk's war, which resulted in some giving assistance to the Americans, while others covertly helped Black Hawk. While many of the Rock River Winnebagos supported Black Hawk, they did so clandestinely. These Winnebagos possessed many offspring of Winnebago and Sauk-Fox parents due to their close proximity to the Sauk and Fox nations. For instance, the Winnebago Prophet, who invited Black Hawk to cross the Mississippi River in 1832 to live with his people on the Rock River, was a mixed descent member of the Rock River Winnebago. The Rock River Winnebagos, unlike other bands in 1832, were also scheduled for removal from much of their lands from the 1829 treaty between them and the United States and under pressure to leave from white miners who wanted their remaining land for lead. This caused anti-American sentiments to predominate among the Rock River Winnebagos. This gave them a reason to covertly support the British Band by misleading the American military or offering refuge to the British Band because Black Hawk's band was scaring white settlers and miners away from their land. However, in the spring of 1832, the Rock River Winnebago chiefs in Illinois, who allowed Black Hawk's band in their land, asked him to move farther north up-river due to their worries that the Americans would attack Black Hawk. They did not want the Americans to know they were

¹⁸ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 56, 65-66, 74-76.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78-79, 83.

helping him.¹⁹

The other notable Winnebagos, the Mississippi River and Wisconsin River bands, were not as helpful as the Rock River band. In particular, the Mississippi River band had heavily intermarried with the Santee Sioux, the enemies of the Sauks and Foxes, which made them less prone to help the British Band and more likely to aid the United States or remain neutral. Although the Mississippi River and Wisconsin River bands of Winnebago were also anti-American (i.e. they disliked white encroachment upon their lands as well), they were unwilling to engage the United States in any war. The Mississippi River and Wisconsin River band leaders traveled to Washington D.C. after the failed Winnebago Uprising in 1827 and saw how numerous the whites were and became convinced that warfare with the Americans was futile. The only Rock River band leader to travel to Washington was White Crow, which is why he publicly exclaimed peace throughout the duration of the war, while he and his band covertly supported Black Hawk.²⁰

Throughout the war, the United States military generally wanted the Native Americans to remain disengaged. They accomplished this goal by handing out provisions to the Indians at agencies. This caused many Native Americans to congregate around agencies during the war to obtain food in the spring and summer of 1832. This prevented them from aiding Black Hawk. Many Rock River, Wisconsin River, and Mississippi River Winnebagos went to Fort Winnebago in Portage in the southern portion of the Michigan Territory and to Prairie du Chien during the war to obtain rations.²¹

²⁰ Ibid., 78-79.

²¹ Ibid., 164.

After Black Hawk crossed the Mississippi River into Illinois on April 5th, 1832, General Atkinson instructed Henry Gratiot, subagent for the Winnebagos at Prairie du Chien, to ascertain information concerning the allegiance of the Winnebagos to the United States. Gratiot's goals were to maintain stability and to ensure peace among the Winnebagos. Gratiot left for the Winnebago nation on April 17th from his home at Gratiot's Grove in the southeastern portion of the Michigan Territory. Accompanying him were two white settlers, George Cabbage and Joseph Morrell. Gratiot's small party first arrived at Turtle village, one-hundred miles south of Portage in the Michigan Territory. Gratiot reported that the Rock River Winnebagos received red wampum (i.e. a string or belt of shell beads signifying a call to war) to go to war against the Americans from the Sauk nation three times during the beginning of 1832 and refused it each time, as they desired to remain at peace with the United States.²²

At the same time, the Rock River Winnebagos near Fort Winnebago assured their new agent, John Kinzie, of their desire to remain at peace with the United States. Kinzie's wife, Juliette, wrote in her diary, "'our own Indians came flocking in, to confirm the tidings, and to assure us of their intention to remain faithful friends to the Americans.'" Many of these Winnebagos promised to protect the Kinzies and moved their lodges next to their home. Earlier in the year, these Winnebagos refused red wampum from the Santee Sioux and Menominees who were determined to war against the Sauks and Foxes that spring. Their main reason for their rejection was the Santee Sioux recently killed two Winnebagos, a father and son from the upper Mississippi band, who had family connections to the Winnebagos near Fort Winnebago.²³

²² Ibid., 77; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832; Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal*, 2.

²³ Margaret Bogue, "As She Knew Them: Juliette Kinzie and the Ho-Chunk, 1830-1833," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 85, no. 2 (2001-2002): 53; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75). Letters Received by the

Back at Turtle village, Gratiot's party took on twenty-six Winnebago men, including a prominent Winnebago Chief, White Crow. Cabbage's vaccination of 300 Winnebagos to prevent small pox probably made them more willing to help Gratiot. On April 22nd, Gratiot sent Morrell with a letter to inform white settlers near Portage of the peaceful intentions of the Winnebagos. On the same day, his enlarged party departed for the Winnebago Prophet's village on the Rock River and arrived on April 24th. The expedition found many of the Winnebagos were peaceful, but the Winnebago Prophet was very sullen towards the United States. Gratiot learned that the British Band was camped a short distance below the village. On the morning of the 25th, the Winnebagos hoisted a white flag on top of Gratiot's tent and several members from the British Band took it down and hoisted up a British flag. The Winnebagos later hoisted up the white flag again, which caused the Sauks to hoist up their British flag next to it. The Sauks then commenced a war dance and exhibited hostile behavior, especially towards Cabbage. While no physical harm was done to him, the British Band made their anti-American sentiments clear to the American expedition. The next morning, in replying to a letter sent to them from General Atkinson demanding they return across the Mississippi River, Black Hawk and Na-pope informed Gratiot that they had no intentions of doing so and would fight if troops opposed them.²⁴

Gratiot's party left the Winnebago Prophet's village and on April 27th, arrived at Rock Island on the Mississippi River to report their findings to General Atkinson. The following day, the Winnebago chiefs had a council with General Atkinson reporting their desire to remain at

Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881. Prairie du Chien Agency. National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, March 1, 1832.

²⁴ Stevens, *Wakefield's History of the Black Hawk War*, 39; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832.

peace with the United States. On April 29th, the Winnebago chiefs were given provisions by Gratiot and the general. Gratiot instructed the chiefs to travel up the Rock River to obtain as many of the Winnebago Prophet's band as possible. Despite his journal not mentioning how many of his party remained with him, it seems his party disbanded after the 29th. On May 7th, Gratiot arrived at Galena in northwestern Illinois. The following day he arrived at Gratiot's Grove in the southwestern portion of the Michigan Territory.²⁵

On the 14th, after receiving intelligence concerning possible hostile intentions of the Winnebagos at the Four Lakes (i.e. Madison, Wisconsin), Gratiot departed to ascertain the feelings of the Winnebagos in that area. The next day, he arrived at Blue Mounds, where upon the request of General Henry Dodge, he gave thirty Winnebagos at the settlement presents and provisions. Gratiot then sent Oliver Emmell and an Indian to Turtle Village to ascertain Atkinson's position in order to open communications with him. He also sent out Indians to inform the Winnebago chiefs from his agency band by the head of the Rock River to meet General Dodge and him at the Four Lakes for talks about the Winnebagos remaining peaceful. The two left Blue Mounds and commenced talks with Old Turtle, Spotted Arm, Little Black Silver, and Man Eater (represented by his sister, daughter, and warriors due to being sick). Broken Arm's son came to the talks to inform them that the Winnebago leaders White Crow and Little Priest were unable to attend due to the British Band being in their country. It was necessary for the leaders to watch Black Hawk's movements with 200 warriors from their band.²⁶

It was during this time on May 21st that a seven man war party, probably comprised of

²⁵ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832.

²⁶ Ibid., Journal of 1832.

Rock River Winnebagos, attacked a settlement house at the confluence of the Plum River and Mississippi River. They were easily repelled by the white settlers inside. The Rock River Winnebagos were more successful on the 24th, when a thirteen man war party, accompanied by the Winnebago Prophet and five Sauks from the British Band, attacked seven whites near Kellogg's Grove in northwestern Illinois. They killed four of them, including the Sauk and Fox Indian agent Felix St. Vrain.²⁷

Besides Kellogg's Grove, a minority of other Winnebagos took advantage of the war during the spring and summer of 1832 and killed a number of Americans. It should be noted that none of these attacks, including the ones previously mentioned, were neither sanctioned by the Winnebago nation nor were they committed under the direction of Black Hawk. Through independent attacks, these Winnebagos exhibited their anti-American feelings, unlike many Winnebagos who subdued them for the sake of peaceful relations with the United States. Consequently, the Winnebago murderers of American citizens were turned in by the Winnebagos through John Kinzie on October 28th and 29th in 1832. Koo-zee-nay-kaw and Wau-zee-nay-kee-koo-kaw were accused of killing two militia men, George Force and Emerson Green. These two men died during an attack by forty Rock River Winnebagos on Fort Winnebago on June 20th. Wau-kee-yun-skaw's son, Skik-o-kee-mann, and Ak-hun-see-kaw were accused of killing a miner, William Aubrey, also near Blue Mounds in June. The murder was precipitated by an argument between Aubrey's wife and one of the Winnebagos. Hoawk-wee-nun-kaw was accused of shooting a soldier on the Rock River. Soag-ee-nan-koo-o-nay-see-nay-kaw and Nau-say-nay-kee-kaw were accused of killing American citizens at either Kellogg's Grove or Stillman's Run. Finally, Moy-ee-tshah-tshee-nuk-kaw and Hay-skay-nay-kay-kaw were accused of murder

²⁷ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 97.

during the spring and summer of 1832 in unspecified locations. The majority of these violent attacks took place in the spring, when it was not certain Black Hawk would be subdued.²⁸

Americans were not just being murdered, but kidnapped in the spring of 1832. On May 27th, Gratiot returned to Blue Mounds where he was informed by a Winnebago that the British Band held two white women captive. He then sent a runner to White Crow and Little Priest to obtain the women unharmed in return for a reward. On the 31st, Gratiot traveled back to Gratiot's Grove. On June 2, word from General Dodge arrived informing Gratiot that the Winnebagos had succeeded in ransoming from the British Band the two captive women and that his presence at Blue Mounds was necessary. Gratiot immediately left for Blue Mounds, and when he arrived, he found that the Winnebagos who brought in the ransomed females into Fort Winnebago were being held as prisoners, as the whites there distrusted the Winnebagos. Gratiot and General Dodge appeased the Winnebagos by promising them horses and other presents in return for the indignity done to them. Upon having talks with the Winnebagos, General Dodge and Gratiot agreed to release the rest of the party and hold four chiefs and one warrior as hostages. Whirling Thunder, Spotted Arm, White Crow, Broken Arm, and Big Man were taken hostage by Gratiot to Gratiot's Grove on June 5th.²⁹

On the same day the Winnebago hostages arrived at Gratiot's Grove, twenty Mississippi River Winnebagos from Prairie La Crosse answered the call by Atkinson for Indian auxiliaries and arrived at Prairie du Chien. An additional eighty warriors from the Mississippi River band

²⁸ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, November 4, 1832; Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 107, 112.

²⁹ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832.

arrived on the 7th. Along with Menominees and Santee Sioux who arrived at Prairie du Chien, this force under an Illinois militia man, William Hamilton, attempted to intercept small war parties of the British Band during June. By the middle of the month, however, this Indian force was dwindling since they did not intercept any enemy war parties. By July 24th, all the Winnebagos and Santee Sioux had left.³⁰

On June 14th, General Dodge arrived at Gratiot's Grove and dismissed the hostages in exchange for their employment under Oliver Emmell as spies to obtain the position of the British Band. Thus, White Crow and his fellow Winnebagos were forced into service under the United States military. Five guns, five horses, and other presents were given to the Winnebagos in return for their detention and to ensure their future fidelity. After the group left Gratiot's Grove on the 15th, a Winnebago chief, Waw-con-du-carry, arrived with thirty Winnebagos to ascertain the fate of the Winnebago chiefs and warriors who had been held hostage at Fort Winnebago. Gratiot told them no harm was intended by the whites on them or was inflicted upon them. After telling the chief of the presents he gave the former hostages, the chief appeared satisfied. By this time, the British Band was at Lake Koshkonong in the southern portion of the Michigan Territory living with the Rock River Winnebagos who invited them there. These Winnebagos supplied Black Hawk's band with food and other goods.³¹

The spies returned to Gratiot's Grove on June 24th with the addition of White Breast and several other men, increasing their number to eleven. Five days later, the spies left Gratiot's Grove again to obtain Black Hawk's position, and later on, joined Atkinson on the Rock River to

³⁰ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 104-105.

³¹ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832; Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 107.

serve as guides. On July 2nd, Gratiot left Gratiot's Grove to join General Dodge's army at Fort Hamilton (built during Black Hawk's war and named after William Hamilton) located in the southern portion of the Michigan Territory. Dodge's army then embarked to the Four Lakes and arrived there two days later. Atkinson was still on the Rock River, when on July 3rd, his Potawatomi scouts located Black Hawk's band at Lake Koshkonong in the southern part of the Michigan Territory. The next day, Atkinson marched his men to the southwestern side of the lake and found an abandoned camp. During the end of June and the beginning of July, White Crow left the Winnebago spies and obtained thirty-one Winnebagos to act as guides for the United States military. On July 5th, his group joined Dodge's army and together they marched to Lake Koshkonong.³²

White Crow proceeded to convince Atkinson that Black Hawk was still near Lake Koshkonong. He insisted that the British Band was right across the Bark River, east of Lake Koshkonong, on an inaccessible island. However, he knew Black Hawk was farther north since his own Rock River Winnebagos were living with the British Band while they camped at Lake Koshkonong. Black Hawk left the lake well before the American military arrived. White Crow was deliberately misleading Atkinson. The morning of July 7th was foggy, and it was then that five Rock River Winnebago guides crossed the Bark River and fired upon and wounded a soldier who was fishing. It was later believed by the soldiers that they were trying to trick the army by feigning an attack by the British Band. This makes sense given the family ties of the River Rock Winnebagos to the British Band and their knowledge of Black Hawk being farther north. Later in the day, Atkinson's men attempted to storm the island, but they were prevented from doing so

³² Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832; Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 128-129.

due to the extensive swamps that impeded movement. The next day, White Crow continued his duplicity by insisting that Black Hawk was still on the island and even suggesting that he may have marched east toward Milwaukee. Atkinson decided to search the area north and northwest of the confluence of the Bark River and White Water Creek. On the 9th, one of Atkinson's companies and a group of scouts made their way across the Bark River, scoured the entire area, and found nothing. Trails indicated the British Band was farther north, but nothing else. However, because supplies were running low, Atkinson could not immediately pursue.³³

General Atkinson dismissed all of the Winnebagos on July 10th, due to a scarcity of provisions, keeping only White Crow and his son on as guides for Dodge. Other Native Americans were dismissed as well. Atkinson's army was also forced to abandon their pursuit of Black Hawk until they obtained supplies from Fort Winnebago. White Crow accompanied the commands of Dodge and two other officers, Milton Alexander and James Henry, to Fort Winnebago to procure supplies. It was during this lull in the pursuit of Black Hawk that Atkinson built Fort Koshkonong near the lake on the Rock River. On July 14th, a party of Rock River Winnebagos led by Bad Alligator from White Crow's band arrived at Fort Koshkonong in want of provisions and were given flour by Atkinson. He requested the use of their canoes, which they granted.³⁴

On July 15th, White Crow departed for Fort Koshonong with Alexander's command and arrived on the 17th. From the fort, he led sixteen Rock River Winnebagos around the Bark River searching for Black Hawk's trail (Atkinson could now afford to employ more Indian allies after

³³ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 132-133, 136; Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 93, 105.

³⁴ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832; Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 134; Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 183.

procuring rations from Fort Winnebago). During Dodge's time at Fort Winnebago, his command was bolstered by Pierre Paquette, a mixed French/Winnebago fur trader, along with a few Rock River and Wisconsin River Winnebagos. Paquette convinced Dodge and Henry to march to the Rock River Winnebagos near Rock River Rapids, where Dodge was informed by the Winnebagos there that Black Hawk was north in the swamps of Cranberry Lake (i.e. the Horicon Marsh). Again, the Rock River Winnebagos were trying to distract the United States military from Black Hawk's true location in that several of Dodge's men, including Wisconsin River and Rock River Winnebagos, later discovered the trail of the British Band heading southwest towards the Wisconsin River and Mississippi River. On July 20th, Dodge sent Atkinson a letter informing him of the trail and Atkinson resumed the pursuit of Black Hawk.³⁵

As mentioned earlier, Black Hawk left Lake Koshkonong once he discovered Atkinson was closing in on him in late June, and so his band fled north at or near the Rock River Winnebago village at Rock River Rapids. When Dodge approached the village at Rock River Rapids, Black Hawk again fled to the Wisconsin River and later the Mississippi River. Since his people were unfamiliar with this territory, they received guides from chief Winn-e-shiek, a Mississippi River Winnebago, to lead them to the Wisconsin River and the Mississippi River. Chief Winn-e-shiek was originally a Winnebago from the Rock River region, which probably made him sympathetic to Black Hawk. Furthermore, after the Battle of Wisconsin Heights near the Wisconsin River in the southern portion of the Michigan Territory on July 21st, a number of Wisconsin River Winnebagos provided the British Band with canoes to flee down the river towards the Mississippi River. Interestingly, at this battle, the Wisconsin River and Rock River

³⁵ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 142-145.

Winnebagos under Dodge killed and scalped several members of the British Band.³⁶

Once the United States military knew Black Hawk was attempting to cross the Mississippi River back into Iowa, they employed the help of the Mississippi River and Wisconsin River Winnebagos. The majority of the Mississippi River band, as well as a number of those from the Wisconsin River band, were called to the Prairie du Chien agency in late July. The Mississippi River band was told to leave their canoes there in order to prevent them from helping Black Hawk's band cross the river. They were coerced into obeying, as they were told that annuities would not be given to them if they disobeyed. Many did not want to go to war against Black Hawk, as evident from the Mississippi River Winnebago Walk Cloud's testimony:

Our people, who were named in this call, did not want to go to war. But the messenger, after we arrived in Prairie du Chien picked out Winnebago Black Hawk (my father), and my brother, and they went up the Wisconsin River with a party of white soldiers and officers from Fort Crawford. They met a number of Sacs coming down on a raft made of canoes tide together. The Winnebagoes and the whites killed most of the Sacs in this party.

What Walking Cloud described was typical of search parties of Mississippi River and Wisconsin River Winnebagos that were formed by the Americans to aid in capturing stray members of the British Band. By late August, these Winnebagos had caught seventy-seven prisoners and brought in at least fifty scalps of dead Sauks. It should be noted that scalps in Midwestern Native American societies were taken "as war trophies." When a warrior took a scalp, it signified the transfer of the slain opponent's manhood to the warrior; thus, increasing his masculinity.³⁷

While Atkinson was pursuing Black Hawk towards the Mississippi River, Gratiot returned home on July 27th. The following day, Spotted Arm's son and twenty men came to

³⁶ Ibid., 146, 178; Jackson, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, 134-135.

³⁷ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 96, 151, 163-164, 177; Walking Cloud, "Narrative of Walking Cloud," *Vol. 13 of Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, (2009): 463-464, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=35> (accessed December 7, 2009).

Gratiot asking for provisions for their families. Gratiot gave them flour. White Crow, Little Priest, Bull Head, and twenty other Winnebagos also came to ask for provisions for their families on the 31st. After the Battle of Bad Axe, when Black Hawk was trying to escape to Chippewa country, a party of Mississippi River Winnebagos came across his path and forced him to turn himself in at Prairie du Chien on August 27th.³⁸

After the Battle of Bad Axe, some members of the British Band were still hiding among the Rock River Winnebagos near Lake Koshkonong and the Four Lakes. These members of the British Band departed from the main body after Black Hawk left for the Wisconsin River and remained among the Rock River Winnebagos. Some secretly made their way back across the Mississippi River, while others were hunted down and turned into the United States military by Rock River Winnebagos. As previously shown, many of the Rock River Winnebagos were desperate for food, as on August 10th, a group of River Rock Winnebagos brought three Sauk scalps and a Sauk girl to Fort Koshkonong to show their fidelity to the United States in order to obtain provisions. These Winnebagos apparently attacked and killed everyone, except a girl, in a small Sauk war party.³⁹

The consequences of Black Hawk's war were especially harsh on the Winnebagos. Many abandoned their hunting grounds and gardens in the summer to move north in order to avoid being accused of aiding Black Hawk. This was why many of the Winnebagos were starving later in the summer. As previously mentioned, many traveled to Indian agencies in the Michigan Territory to receive rations and protection, and thus, abandoned their normal hunting grounds

³⁸ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Prairie du Chien Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 696, Journal of 1832; Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 181-182.

³⁹ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 178; Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 292.

and crops. Many Winnebagos starved that winter due to a lack of food. For instance, at Fort Winnebago, the annuity arrived late, for which the Indians depended on for buying goods and sustenance, and the agency was very short of rations. “The Indians came straggling in all winter long to Fort Winnebago, badly emaciated and in search of food from the commander of the garrison and from the Kinzies, both experiencing extremely short rations. The Kinzies heard reports of dying Indians stretched in the road to portage.”⁴⁰

From these accounts, in most cases, the Winnebagos desired to remain peaceful with the United States. Even though many were sympathetic to Black Hawk, they realized they could not win a war against the United States, which is why they did not join Black Hawk and even aided the Americans as scouts, guides, and spies. A Wisconsin River band chief, Spoon Decorah, summarized the general Winnebago attitude towards Black Hawk, stating, “there was still among us a strong feeling of friendliness toward the Sacs. This feeling was of friendly pity, not a desire to help them fight.” When called to service by the United States, some Winnebagos responded, as they desired to remain on friendly terms, while others (i.e. the Mississippi River band) were motivated by their familial relations to the Santee Sioux who were enemies of the Sauk and Fox nations. These Winnebagos mostly acted as guides tracking Black Hawk’s band. Some protected American settlers, such as the Rock River Winnebagos protecting the Kinzies or White Crow saving the two white woman captured by the British Band. Others even killed and scalped members of the British Band. Some had to do so out of necessity in order to prove their loyalty to the United States and obtain rations, such as the Rock River Winnebagos near Fort Koshkonong, while others were coerced, such as Walking Cloud’s father and brother.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Margaret Bogue, “As She Knew Them: Juliette Kinzie and the Ho-Chunk, 1830-1833,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 85, no. 2 (2001-2002): 53, 55.

⁴¹ Spoon Decorah, “Narrative of Decorah Spoon,” *Vol. 13 of Collections of the State Historical Society of*

Of all the Winnebagos, the River Rock Winnebagos were the most supportive of Black Hawk, but generally did so covertly. As a whole, they never directly opposed the United States in arms. A small minority of Rock River Winnebagos attacked Americans at opportune times; thus, showing their anti-American sentiments. In fact, only fifty Winnebagos, mostly Rock River Winnebagos, joined Black Hawk in fighting the Americans. However, they did not fight alongside the British Band, but generally fought independently and “used the conflict as an excuse to settle old scores with whites in their respective localities.” As a result, their attacks did little to stop the American military from pursuing Black Hawk. The Rock River Winnebagos also sheltered Black Hawk’s people, and along with several Wisconsin River Winnebagos, helped guide them through the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi River. Even though White Crow and other Rock River Winnebagos acted as a guides, scouts, and spies for Atkinson, some were forced into service and their attempts to covertly mislead Atkinson at Lake Koshkonong away from Black Hawk’s trail were suggestive of the Rock River Winnebago’s sympathy for Black Hawk’s band.⁴²

Nevertheless, the Winnebagos were pragmatic and realized they had become increasingly dependent on annuities from the United States to purchase goods and food. Since many of the Winnebagos abandoned their hunting grounds and as well as crops during the war, they required assistance from United States to survive in 1832. Therefore, survival was a major reason for them to remain friendly with the United States. By joining Black Hawk, not only would they have to fight against the United States military, but leave behind annuities and rations from the Indian agencies in the Michigan Territory that became necessities in 1832.

Wisconsin. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, (2009): 453, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=34> (accessed December 3, 2009).

⁴² For quote see: Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 174.

The Potawatomis

Like the Winnebagos, the Potawatomis desired to remain peaceful with the United States. While a minority took advantage of the war to commit depredations against white settlers, the majority of them strived for peace and stayed out of the war. When asked by Black Hawk for support, the Potawatomis refused. As with the Winnebagos, the United States called the Potawatomis in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin to assemble near the Chicago and Ottawa Indian agencies to prevent them from aiding Black Hawk. Other Potawatomis fled east toward Lake Michigan to escape the conflict. Some Potawatomis went even further in their appeasement of America and joined the United States military as scouts and guides to search for Black Hawk or to help protect white settlers.⁴³

Between 1812 and 1829, the Potawatomis sold seventy percent of their land base to the Americans; no tribes in the Wisconsin section of the Michigan Territory by 1832 had sold so much of their land to the United States. This caused them to be more dependent on the Americans than the Winnebagos, Chippewas, Menominees, and Santee Sioux. Since the War of 1812, the Potawatomis became increasingly dependent upon trade goods from the Americans, which caused them to go into debt. Poverty necessitated them to sell their lands, which meant they had fewer resources to survive on, and thus, they had to rely on the Americans even more. Consequently, their “shrinking land base...made hunting less productive. The Potawatomi[s] accumulated massive debts, which the Americans were only too happy to allow them to pay off in land.” By 1832, the Potawatomis were in a disadvantageous position to aid Black Hawk and to resist the Americans because they were rather dependent on American goods and had less

⁴³ Ibid., 164.

hunting land to supply them with food, which meant they were more prone to starvation and more likely to require rations from Indian agencies.⁴⁴

On the morning of May 12th, after rumors reached the Potawatomis that the British Band crossed the Mississippi River with the intent to reoccupy Saukenuk, the Potawatomis sent a delegation to the Chicago agency, along with the Ottawas and Chippewas, to declare their fidelity to their Great Father, the president of the United States. They told their Indian agent, Thomas Owen, they intended to commit no wrongs against the United States. However, according to Owen, they also claimed in the “strongest terms within to aid and protect the Sacs in their present movements.” Despite this claim to aid Black Hawk, their trepidation of provoking the American military seemed to trump any support for Black Hawk. The Indians mentioned to Owen that they were frightened that Black Hawk would blend his people into their peaceful villages when pursued by Illinois Governor John Reynold’s militia. In order to show their good intentions towards the United States, the Potawatomis also informed Owen that the British Band was thirty miles above Dixon’s Ferry on the Rock River, in northern Illinois. In order to avoid the British Band dissolving among the Potawatomis and being attacked by the militia, Owen ordered them to remove themselves east of the Fox River. Subagent, Mr. Kerchival, and interpreter, Mr. Caldwell (a Potawatomi), were dispatched to the Potawatomis by the Rock River to inform them of Owen’s plan to which they obeyed. Owen earlier had traveled to the Potawatomis by the Peoria sub-agency and persuaded them to move east to their lands by Lake Michigan in order to avoid the coming conflict.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal*, 90.

⁴⁵ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Chicago Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 132, May 12, 1832; Ellen Whitney, ed., *Letters and Papers, Vol. 2, Part 1 of The Black Hawk War: 1831-1832* (Springfield, IL: The Illinois State Historical Library, 1975), 365.

The Potawatomis were very hesitant to aid the British Band, as Black Hawk was refused help by the two most prominent Potawatomi chiefs in northern Illinois on May 13th. Shab-on-na, one of the chiefs, commented that he “remained committed to peace with the Americans and therefore, ‘could not think of raising the tomahawk against their people.’” What he was likely referring to was a peace treaty signed after the War of 1812 that ended hostilities between the United States and the Potawatomis who signed the treaty. The next day, after another meeting with other Potawatomi chiefs, Black Hawk was again refused help.⁴⁶

Several days later, at eleven p.m. on May 17th, a group of friendly Potawatomis brought news to Owen’s agency that a skirmish (i.e. Stillman’s Run) between the Illinois militia and the British Band had taken place in north central Illinois near the Rock River. The Potawatomis stated they tried to dissuade the British Band from destroying the white settlements between the Fox River and Du Page River, but to no avail. The Indians by the Chicago agency convinced Owen that they would not aid Black Hawk and prepared to remove their families from the Des Plaines River near the agency. Upon investigation, Owen found it necessary to send for provisions to prevent hunger and suffering in the Indian women and children moving near the agency, as they were abandoning their hunting grounds and crops. Issuing provisions for the Indians at the Chicago agency was one way in which the Americans could keep the Potawatomis disengaged from the war and under their guidance. This allowed some Potawatomis to demonstrate their fidelity to the Americans by protecting American civilians. On May 22nd, Mr. Lawton, a white settler, accompanying a group of seven friendly Potawatomis (they were part of an American military detachment to rescue white settlers in Plainfield, Illinois) were surprised and taken prisoner by a hostile party of eighty warriors from the British Band near the Fox River.

⁴⁶ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 86-87; Lee Sultzman, “Potawatomi History,” <http://tolatsga.org/pota.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).

Some in the war party knew Mr. Lawton. Consequently, the group was released after two hours of captivity.⁴⁷

A minority of Potawatomis took advantage of the war and used it as an excuse to attack white settlers they had scores to settle with or to achieve personal objectives. One such incident occurred on May 21st, where a war party of fifty Potawatomis, as well as three Sauk warriors, attacked a white settlement at Big Indian Creek in northeastern Illinois. In fifteen minutes, the party dismembered and killed fifteen children, women, and men. In addition, a child and two white women were taken captive by the Sauk warriors in the attack (these two women were the ones that White Crow and Little Priest returned to Fort Blue Mounds later in June). The principal target of this attack was William Davis, a white settler, who previously in the spring flogged a Potawatomi man attempting to tear down his dam on a creek that prevented fish from reaching a Potawatomi village six miles downstream. The advent of war allowed this Potawatomi warrior to obtain his bloody revenge on Davis and his family. Several weeks later, on June 18th, a war party of Potawatomis killed a white settler, Elijah Philips, as he left the house of John Ament by Bureau Creek in northern Illinois. The Potawatomis were hoping to kill Ament because he claimed land that the Potawatomis had harvested maple sugar on for many years. Ament prevented them from harvesting, and unfortunately, caused the death of Elijah Philips. Thus, a few Potawatomis used the cover of war as an excuse to seek revenge against white settlers.⁴⁸

By May 29th, many Potawatomis with their families had moved away from their villages in order to avoid conflict. They left their villages between the Chicago agency, the Rock River,

⁴⁷ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Chicago Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 132, May 18, 1832, May 24, 1832.

⁴⁸ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 95, 113; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Chicago Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 132, May 29, 1832, June 3, 1832.

and the Fox River and situated themselves twelve miles from the Chicago agency under the direction of Thomas Owen. The white residents of Chicago, who stayed within the walls of the garrison at the agency for protection, had confidence that the Potawatomis would not harm them. On the same day, the principle Potawatomi chief, Big Foot, sent a runner to the British Band with white wampum (i.e. a string or belt of white shell beads signifying peace), asking them (for the second time) to leave their country in the southeastern section of the Michigan Territory so they could return in safety to their villages and plant corn for the upcoming summer. The British Band replied that they were preparing to march west in order to cross over to the western shore of the Mississippi River. The runner saw two white women and a child held as captives from the massacre at Big Indian Creek. Four principal Potawatomi chiefs were later sent by Owen to obtain the release of the captives. Owen also requested for more provisions for the Potawatomis, such as tobacco and one-hundred dollars for presents.⁴⁹

In late May/early June, Atkinson sent an order to Chicago asking for the Potawatomis to serve as scouts and guides to locate Black Hawk. By late June, ninety-five Potawatomis joined Atkinson in the field against the British Band (i.e. Shab-bo-na volunteered his men). At this time, many Potawatomis were not faring well. White hostility against Indians was so great at this point that even many friendly Potawatomis were forced to flee near the agency and abandon their villages, fields, and hunting grounds, leaving them with no sustenance. Owen took it upon himself to purchase them provisions to prevent them from starving.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Chicago Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 132, May 29, 1832, June 3, 1832; Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal*, 2.

⁵⁰ Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 114; Lee Sultzman, "Potawatomi History," <http://tolatsga.org/pota.html> (accessed December 7, 2009); Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Chicago Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 132, June 3, 1832, June 21, 1832.

On July 3, the Potawatomi scouts located Black Hawk's trail near Lake Koshkonong. However, Atkinson was low on provisions by July 10th and had to dismiss seventy of his ninety-five Potawatomi scouts and guides. According to Atkinson, they ate too much, which likely resulted from all the energy they expended during the fruitless searches around Lake Koshkonong for Black Hawk. Atkinson kept more Potawatomis because he believed they were more reliable than the Rock River Winnebagos, as "they seemed sincere, and...unlike the Rock River Winnebagos, none of them appeared to be disaffected." Atkinson was also realistic enough to know the Potawatomis did not strongly supported the United States, as they seemed "more disposed to be neutral than taking part with us." On the same day that Atkinson dismissed many of his Indian allies, General Winfield Scott, who was Atkinson's superior, arrived with troops infected with cholera at Chicago. This prevented Scott from engaging Black Hawk and forced him to remain at Chicago. Owen was forced to give provisions to the principal man of the Potawatomis residing near the agency and disperse them into the woods to prevent an outbreak among the Indians. None returned until July 22nd. Fortunately for Owen, he received seventy barrels of pork and seventy barrels of flour to feed the Potawatomis until the annuities arrived. Also around this time, as mentioned earlier, a number of people from the British Band remained behind after Black Hawk left Lake Koshkonong. Not only did they hide among the Rock River Winnebagos, but they also likely hid among the Potawatomis in the southern part of the Michigan Territory. Given the long distance from Chicago to these Potawatomis, Owen was oblivious to the whereabouts of these members of the British Band. Thus, these British Band members were safe.⁵¹

⁵¹ For quote see: Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 152; Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 137, 178; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Chicago Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 132, June 29, 1832.

Just over a week after the Potawatomis returned to the Chicago agency, Owen sent them home to their villages, as General Scott thought that further provision issues were no longer necessary. Owen disagreed with Scott. He wrote in a letter, “these wretched creatures are miserably poor and will greatly need the liberal aid from the Government during the summer and fall.” Owen was unable to give them aid unless specifically authorized to do so, such as from the Secretary of War. Since the Potawatomis were unable to plant much corn and there was a scarcity of game, they were in need of assistance. On August 9th, several emaciated Potawatomis came to Owen’s agency asking for provisions, upon which he gave them enough bread to sufficiently feed themselves until they could arrive at their hunting grounds.⁵²

Peace with America was paramount for the Potawatomis during Black Hawk’s War. As evident by the Potawatomi chiefs refusing to join Black Hawk, the Potawatomis did not want to engage in war with the United States. They desired peace and generally wanted to remain neutral, as illustrated by many of them leaving their villages to remove themselves from the theater of war. Many adhered to Owen’s request of removal to avoid the British Band mixing in with their people and necessitating the militia to attack the Potawatomis as well. Some Potawatomis showed their loyalty to the United States by joining as scouts and guides. They proved to be invaluable as they located Black Hawk’s trail near Lake Koshkonong, which without doing, Black Hawk probably would have escaped. However, the Potawatomis seemed to join only to appear supportive of America. As Atkinson noted, they preferred to remain neutral. In all, only fifty Potawatomis joined Black Hawk in fighting the Americans, but as with the Winnebagos, they mostly used the outbreak of war to meet their own ends in seeking revenge against white

⁵² Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Chicago Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 132, June 31, 1832, August 9, 1832.

settlers in their own localities. Finally, similar to the Winnebagos, many Potawatomis were forced out of necessity to remain on good terms with the United States, as they relied on the federal government for food during 1832. Since a significant number of Potawatomis left their hunting grounds and crops during the summer of 1832 to avoid the war, they had little to eat, and thereby, required rations from Owen. Furthermore, prior to 1832, many Potawatomis were already dependent on American food and goods due to their loss of land to the United States. Remaining in the good graces of Thomas Owen was vital for the stomachs of these Potawatomis in 1832.⁵³

The Menominees

The Menominees were enemies of the Sauk and Fox nations in 1832, and therefore, the British Band. They were very eager to assist the United States in capturing and killing members of the British Band in order to seek revenge for past wrongs committed by the Sauks and Foxes. The Menominees were allied with the Santee Sioux, who were the traditional enemy of the Chippewas. As the Sauk and Fox nations expanded north and west into Santee Sioux territory in the western portions of the Upper Mississippi Valley after 1805, fighting between these nations erupted. Since the Santee Sioux were already enemies of the Chippewas, the Sauk and Fox nations united with the Chippewas against the Santee Sioux. Murders of Menominees by Chippewas made them enemies of the Chippewa and forced them to ally with the Santee Sioux, and later murders of Menominees by Sauks and Foxes reinforced their alliance.⁵⁴

In early May of 1830, the Fox sent a peace delegation to meet with the Santee Sioux and

⁵³ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 174.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

Menominees near the Fever River area in the southwestern portion of the Michigan Territory. Instead of holding a council, fifteen to sixteen Foxes were slain by a war party of Santee Sioux and Menominees. During the following summer of 1831, the Sauk and Fox nations retaliated. On July 31st, early in the morning, a war party of one-hundred Foxes and several Sauks descended upon an encampment of twenty-six sleeping Menomonees and massacred them. While Indian agents convinced the Menomonees to remain at peace (1825 Treaty of Prairie du Chien was still in affect), they demanded justice by the United States, which the federal government promised. Black Hawk's War was fortuitous for the Menominees; it provided them with an opportunity to seek revenge upon the Sauks and Foxes.⁵⁵

As mentioned earlier, the Menominees and the Santee Sioux sent red wampum to the Winnebagos to go to war with them against the Sauk and Fox nations during the beginning of 1832. Thus, when Black Hawk crossed the Mississippi River on April 5th, the Menominees were presented with a band of Sauks and Foxes the United States would allow them to attack. Fortunately for the Menominees, many of the Fox perpetrators from the July 31st massacre were with Black Hawk. After Stillman's Run in May, many Menominees decided to join the Americans against the British Band as opposed to going to war against the entirety of the Sauk and Fox nations and face the fury of the United States. On May 26, Atkinson had Hamilton deliver a letter to the Prairie du Chien Indian agent, Joseph Street, calling him to collect as many Santee Sioux and Menominees as possible to go to war against the British Band. Forty-one Menominees answered the call under the war chief Ne-ton-e-kak. As previously stated, Mississippi River Winnebagos also joined the Santee Sioux and Menominee auxiliaries, who were unable to find any enemy war parties which resulted in many deserting later in June. As a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 49.

testament to their desire to fight the British Band, the only Indians who remained with Hamilton by June 24th were twenty-five Menomonees who stayed on as guards for Fort Hamilton. On July 4th, they joined Atkinson near Lake Koshkonong acting as scouts and spies under Dodge. They participated in the fruitless searches around the lake for Black Hawk.⁵⁶

During late June, the Menominees by Green Bay in the Michigan Territory were stirring for war. On June 22nd, Chief Grizzly Bear in a council speech to Green Bay Indian agent George Boyd declared, “our enemies [Sauks and Foxes] have taken the heads of our men, women, and children--carried them to their lodges and danced the war dance over them. We ask revenge.” Boyd refused the chief, replying that only the president of the United States could authorize the tribe to seek revenge. Several weeks earlier, the Menominees by Green Bay were given a glimpse of the war by the United States. On June 13th, the Green Bay Indian agent, Colonel Samuel Stambaugh, called in 150 Menomonees for the defense of Green Bay because the territorial militia was ordered out of the settlement to pursue Black Hawk. 230 Menomonees including men, women, and children showed up at the Green Bay agency a few days later. The men were sent to protect Green Bay. These Menominees saw no action, which likely spurred their desire to enter into the chase with the Americans, as evidenced by Chief Grizzly Bear’s speech. As the Menominees were protecting Green Bay, Boyd transferred from Mackinaw Island to replace Stambaugh at Green Bay.⁵⁷

On July 10th, when Atkinson dismissed many of his Indian allies, he dismissed all the Menominees except We-kan-sha-ah and Wah-nach-co. We-kan-sha-ah was shot later and killed

⁵⁶ Ibid., 103-105; Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 67, 132, 154.

⁵⁷ Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 36-37; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Green Bay Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 315, June 13, 1832; Peter Shrake, “Justice or Revenge: The Menominee during the Black Hawk War,” *Voyageur* Summer/Fall (2006): 21-22.

at the Battle of Bad Axe as he was mistaken by one of the militia men as a member of the British Band. Two days later, Atkinson accepted Chief Grizzly Bear's offer and ordered Boyd to assemble "two hundred Menomonee Indians to move and cooperate with the Army against the hostile Sacs who are now moving up [the] Rock River." Atkinson suggested Hamilton be placed in command of the Menomonees, but the Menomonees disliked Hamilton, and Stambaugh was placed in command, as he had earned their trust.⁵⁸

After outfitting his company of probably 200 warriors, Stambaugh departed Green Bay on June 26th. Accompanying Stambaugh were several white company leaders. Augustin Grignon led one company of Menomonees, accompanied by his son, Charles Grignon, and his nephew, Robert Grignon, who both served as his lieutenants. George Johnston was in charge of the second company, which included William Powell and James Boyd, son of George Boyd, serving as lieutenants. Alexander Irwin, a Green Bay trader, acted as quartermaster and commissary. Chief Grizzly Bear also traveled along with Stambaugh's expedition. Stambaugh reached Fort Winnebago on August 3rd, and received word of the Battle of Bad Axe. Stambaugh sent Powell ahead as a messenger to discover Atkinson's orders on what to do next. In the meantime, he marched his force to Prairie du Chien. Before he reached Prairie du Chien, on August 8th, Powell returned with orders that Stambaugh's force was no longer needed and should return to Green Bay and look for any remnants of the British Band en route. However, Stambaugh marched his warriors straight to Prairie du Chien.⁵⁹

Stambaugh arrived at Prairie du Chien at the same time as General Scott. At this time, a

⁵⁸ Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 154, 172; Peter Shrake, "Justice or Revenge: The Menominee during the Black Hawk War," *Voyageur* Summer/Fall (2006): 22.

⁵⁹ Peter Shrake, "Justice or Revenge: The Menominee during the Black Hawk War," *Voyageur* Summer/Fall (2006): 23.

trail of fifty to sixty members of the British Band heading south on the Mississippi River towards Cassville in the southwestern portion of the Michigan Territory was discovered. To Stambaugh's delight, Scott directed him to pursue them. Stambaugh decided to take the fittest warriors with him, and the rest were ordered to Prairie du Chien. He now commanded a war party of 106 Menominee warriors. His force eventually caught the trail of the fleeing Sauks, although they numbered ten and not fifty to sixty as previously reported.⁶⁰

In the middle of August, during the evening, Stambaugh's expedition attacked the small party six miles from Cassville. Stambaugh knew the Menominees were eager for revenge, and before the attack, he admonished them to take prisoners and only kill armed men. The colonel divided his force into four units and placed them into positions surrounding the encampment. Upon a whistle blow, the four parties yelled a war whoop and descended upon the unsuspecting Sauks. The Menominees killed the only two Sauk warriors present and scalped them. Robert Grignon impetuously rushed to the other eight Sauks to take them prisoner before the Menominees ceased firing and was wounded. In the confusion, stray buckshot hit a Sauk child who subsequently died the next morning. As the prisoners were being taken to Stambaugh, a local militia detachment rode in who had also been trailing the Sauk party. That night, Stambaugh interrogated his prisoners and obtained information from an old Sauk woman that the two Winnebagos (i.e. Koo-zee-nay-kaw and Wau-zee-nay-kee-koo-kaw) who killed George Force and Emerson Green by Blue Mounds were from the Winnebago Prophet's band. She also mentioned that these two Winnebagos led Black Hawk from Koshkonong Lake to the Wisconsin River. The next morning, Stambaugh and the militia triumphantly rode into Cassville with the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 23-24; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Green Bay Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 315, August 28, 1832.

prisoners. In Cassville, Stambaugh received a letter from Atkinson stating the services of the Menominees were no longer needed.⁶¹

Before returning to Green Bay, Stambaugh marched to Prairie du Chien to obtain provisions and to hand over the prisoners. Prior to reaching the settlement, Stambaugh met Powell who took the prisoners to Prairie du Chien. The prisoners were eventually taken to Rock Island in Illinois. From Prairie du Chien, Stambaugh's force started their journey home to Green Bay. The group split up; some followed the Wisconsin River and others followed the road leading to Blue Mounds. They rejoined at Fort Winnebago five days later. The old Sauk woman Stambaugh previously interrogated also had informed him that after the Battle of Wisconsin Heights, some Sauks (i.e. old men and the wounded) took refuge with the Winnebagoes living near the Four Lakes and near the Wisconsin Portage between the Fox River and Wisconsin River. Stambaugh took a small detachment to a village on the first of the Four Lakes. He discovered the village was deserted, which meant the Indians probably fled with the Sauk refugees. There was a fresh trail leading away from the village. He suspected the fugitives were probably harbored in other Winnebago villages near the Rock River. Stambaugh then marched to Portage, where he learned the Winnebagoes there were eager to collect the prize (i.e. thirty horses and one-hundred dollars) for capturing Black Hawk. However, the Portage Winnebagoes did not provide any conclusive information about Black Hawk's whereabouts. Stambaugh commented sarcastically that the Winnebagoes would "now take him prisoner if in their country on account of the award. Their good feeling towards our government would never prompt them to do so." Stambaugh dispatched Boyd and Powell to another Winnebago village, where they found the

⁶¹ Peter Shrake, "Justice or Revenge: The Menominee during the Black Hawk War," *Voyageur* Summer/Fall (2006): 24; Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Green Bay Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 315, August 28, 1832.

Winnebagos knew of no principal Sauk chiefs or warriors hiding among their people; although, they claimed they had two Sauk prisoners who they would deliver to the Americans.⁶²

Stambaugh's expedition finally arrived at Butte des Morts, near Lake Winnebago, on the evening of August 22nd. During the summer of 1832, Butte des Morts was the Menominee headquarters for the war. It was here the Menominees disbanded and returned to their villages nearby. Stambaugh later commented that the Menominees had proven themselves sincere friends of the whites. The Menomonees felt satisfied in obtaining first-hand revenge and that the American government delivered on its promise to punish the Sauks and Foxes.⁶³

The Menominees were clearly enemies of the Sauk and Fox nations in 1832. Intertribal warfare resulting in massacres, such as the Menominee massacre on July 31st, 1831, created hostility between the Menominees and the Sauk and Fox peoples. Murders such as these strengthened the Menominee alliance with the Santee Sioux who were enemies of the Sauks and Foxes, and thus, solidified Menominee enmity for the Sauks and Foxes. The Menominees wanted to seek revenge for the July 31st massacre and were allowed vengeance by the United States via enlisting with the Americans to hunt the British Band. Chief Grizzly Bear's desire to seek violent retribution and Stambaugh's Menominees who were eager to kill members of the British Band demonstrated the virulent divide between the Menominees and Sauk and Fox nations. Even after Atkinson ordered Stambaugh to return to Green Bay after he captured the small Sauk party near Cassville, Stambaugh and his Menominee warriors continued to search for remnants of the British Band on their journey home. The Menominees clearly wanted more opportunities to kill or capture members of the British Band, and thereby, further exact their

⁶² Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Green Bay Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 315, August 28, 1832.

⁶³ Ibid., August 28, 1832.

vengeance upon the Sauks and Foxes. Given the history of intertribal warfare, Black Hawk could not count on the Menominees as allies against the Americans, but on the contrary, faced them as enemies assisting the United States in capturing and killing his people.

The Santee Sioux

In the 1800s, the Santee Sioux mainly lived west of the Mississippi River in what is today Minnesota. They also occupied territory extending into the western portion of the Michigan Territory. Since 1805, the Santee Sioux were enemies of the Sauks and Foxes because of territorial expansion of these two nations into their land. Prior to 1832, the Sauks and Foxes had sent war parties against the Santee Sioux and vice-versa. Even after the 1825 Treaty of Prairie du Chien, which stipulated the cessation of intertribal warfare, isolated incidents occurred. By 1829, Sauk and Fox war parties were raiding the Santee Sioux again. These small war parties consisted of young braves, eager to gain honor. Therefore, when the United States called for Indian allies against the British Band, the Santee Sioux were eager to assist in order to avenge the Santee Sioux murdered by the Sauk and Fox nations.⁶⁴

When Joseph Street called for Indian auxiliaries at Prairie du Chien in early June, eighty Santee Sioux arrived on June 5th and were placed under William Hamilton. However, the Santee Sioux abandoned him later in the month due to a lack of action. The Santee Sioux did not significantly participate again in the war until late July, when Captain Gustavus Loomis ordered the steamboat, the *Warrior*, to sail up the Mississippi River to meet with the Santee Sioux. Loomis had Lieutenant James Kingsbury meet Chief Wab-ash-a of the Santee Sioux to warn him that the British Band would soon cross the Mississippi River. The chief eagerly supplied 150

⁶⁴ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 48-49.

Santee Sioux warriors. As the *Warrior* descended the Mississippi River, a party of Santee Sioux informed the steamboat's crew that they had seen the British Band near the mouth of the Bad Axe River. By four p.m., the *Warrior* arrived near the mouth of the Bad Axe River and found the British Band still there. Black Hawk intended to surrender, but his band was fired upon by the steamboat. After a two hour battle, the steamboat returned to Prairie du Chien.⁶⁵

Chief Wa-bash-a's 150 warriors arrived too late for the Battle of Bad Axe, but were ordered by Atkinson to pursue the remnants of the British Band who escaped across the Mississippi River. General Scott was confident the Santee Sioux would kill many of the remaining members of the British Band, as he wrote to the Winnebago nation, "Only a small body [of the British Band] escaped across the Mississippi, all of whom will, in a few days, be destroyed by our friends the, Sioux, or brought in and surrendered by the friendly bands of Sacs and Foxes." Scott was right. The Santee Sioux warriors eventually caught up to the camp of the British Band along the Cedar River in present day Iowa and killed most of the party, while taking the rest captive. Only thirty to forty managed to escape the Santee Sioux. The Santee Sioux returned to Prairie du Chien by August 22nd, bringing sixty-eight scalps and twenty-two prisoners.⁶⁶

As with the Menominees, the Santee Sioux used the war as an opportunity to seek revenge upon the Sauk and Fox nations. Even though they did not participate much in the war, the Santee Sioux were able to kill and capture remnants of the British Band after the Battle of Bad Axe. This relieved the United States from the cost from pursuing the remnants of Black Hawk's band over the Mississippi River. Moreover, the Santee Sioux informing the *Warrior* of

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-105, 164-166.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 175; Thayer, *Hunting a Shadow: The Search for Black Hawk*, 310.

the exact location of the British Band illustrates they were eager to see the United States subdue Black Hawk. Therefore, like the Menominees, the Santee Sioux were not possible allies for Black Hawk, but rather, allies of the Americans.

The Chippewas

The Chippewas of the Michigan Territory resided in the northern portion of the region. They were the allies of the Sauk and Fox nations by virtue of their common enemies, the Santee Sioux and the Menominees. Prior to 1832, the Chippewas were warring with the Menominees and Santee Sioux. Many Chippewas signed the 1825 Treaty of Prairie du Chien and two subsequent peace and boundary treaties in 1826. From these treaties, the Chippewas realized the superior military strength of America via the United States military drilling and parading in front of the Chippewas. The Chippewas also realized their decentralized tribal structure placed them at a disadvantage in that they could not easily organize for unified action as the United States was able to do so. At the 1826 Treaty of Fond du Lac, a federal negotiator told the Chippewas, ““You have never seen your great father’s arm [i.e. the American military], only a bit, and very little bit, of his litter finger.”” The negotiator was clearly implying the Chippewas must obey the United States or face the wrath of a superior military. Despite these treaties meant to ensure peace, fighting resumed between the Chippewas and Santee Sioux. In August of 1828, six Chippewas were killed by Santee Sioux, which reignited the fighting in the Upper Mississippi Valley. However, during Black Hawk’s War, the Chippewas did not significantly involve themselves with the Americans or Black Hawk’s band.⁶⁷

The Chippewas were not mentioned in any of the research as allying themselves with the

⁶⁷ Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, 48; Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal*, 59; Lee Sultzman, “Chippewa History,” <http://www.tolatsga.org/ojib.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).

Americans or the British Band. This means they remained neutral, even though their sympathies were likely with Black Hawk. The Chippewas likely remained neutral because of the superiority of the United States military, and by 1830, the Chippewas were deeply in debt to American fur traders. In the early 1800s, the Chippewas became increasingly dependent on American goods. This gave the United States leverage over the Chippewas and made them less able to resist the Americans because resistance would equal the termination of American goods.⁶⁸

The La Pointe agency letters show that the Chippewas continued to war with the Santee Sioux during 1832. During the spring of 1832, the Chippewas living above Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River in the far western portion of the Michigan Territory would leave their lands for Fort Snelling, a military post at the confluence of the Minnesota River and the Mississippi River, in order to trade. This brought the Chippewas in contact with the Santee Sioux who also traded there, which resulted in conflict. The continuing conflicts prompted the Fort Snelling Indian agent, Lawrence Taliaferro, to suggest placing a trusty sub-agent at or near Crow Island on the Mississippi River to mediate disputes between the Santee Sioux and the Chippewas.⁶⁹

Conflicts between the Santee Sioux and the Chippewas continued into the summer of 1832, as evident by the Lieutenant Cross incident. On the morning of August 6, 1832, a war party of thirty-five Chippewas led by Wees-ko-pe-meen descended from Ottawa Lake down the Menomonee River and Chippewa River to Lake Pepin to search for Santee Sioux in order to ambush them. While waiting for the Santee Sioux on the lakeshore, the Chippewas saw Lieutenant Cross with a small military party in a canoe on the lake. The lieutenant and his men

⁶⁸ Satz, *Chippewa Treaty Rights: The Reserved Rights of Wisconsin's Chippewa Indians in Historical Perspective*, 10.

⁶⁹ Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (Record Group 75), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, La Pointe Agency, National Archive Records Administration Microfilm, M-234, Roll 315, March 4, 1832.

were traveling from Fort Snelling to Prairie du Chien. The Chippewas believed he would inform the Santee Sioux of their presence, and so, they chased after him. Twelve canoes full of Chippewa warriors split into two war parties and chased the lieutenant. The first war party who came towards the lieutenant signaled him to pull ashore, but he ignored the signal. He greeted them as friends and advised his men to do the same. Then several canoes pulled along side the lieutenant's canoe and twelve to fifteen Chippewas boarded his canoe. They desired him to stop. By this time, the other war party reached him, and one of their canoes pulled alongside his canoe. One of the warriors offered the lieutenant a pipe to smoke and asked for tobacco. After smoking it, the lieutenant directed his sergeant to give them two small pieces of tobacco and some provisions. While this was occurring, the Chippewas also took a small quantity of bread from him and a piece of meat. Then they left the lieutenant's party. A while later when the lieutenant's party reached an encampment, the sergeant noticed that his jacket was missing; he did not know if the Chippewa warriors took it or if he left it somewhere at the head of Lake Pepin. Upon reflecting on the event, the lieutenant believed the Chippewa warriors were not hostile and "were more friendly than it is usual for them to be."⁷⁰

After the Chippewa war party left the lieutenant, they canoed two miles up the eastern bank of the Mississippi River and discovered a Santee Sioux camp on an island near the western shore. The Chippewas disembarked onto the eastern shore. Two Santee Sioux women then canoed across to the eastern shore. One of them came within one-hundred yards of the waiting Chippewas and was shot by them. She was subsequently scalped by one of the Chippewas, who left his tomahawk behind. The other woman canoed back to their camp. The Chippewas immediately fled home. On their journey towards Ottawa Lake, they met a white man, and one

⁷⁰ Ibid., October 16, 1833.

of the Chippewas gave him two letters taken from Lieutenant Cross. The letters were from Fort Snelling, and were supposed to be sent to Prairie du Chien. The tomahawk was later identified by W. Brown, a trader, as belonging to the Chippewas on Lake Ottawa.⁷¹

The Chippewas were clearly in armed conflict with the Santee Sioux during Black Hawk's War. Even though the 1825 Treaty of Prairie du Chien forbid them from raiding the Santee Sioux, the Chippewas continued to do so during the spring and summer of 1832. The lack of significant hostility noted by Lieutenant Cross suggests that the Chippewas did want to aggravate the United States and wanted to remain at peace with them. From the previous treaties in the 1820s, the Chippewas realized the American military was a superior force that they did not want to engage in battle. In addition, the Chippewas had become increasingly dependent on American goods and were in debt to American traders by 1830, which probably created an incentive to remain in the good graces of the United States. Since the Chippewas were far removed from the theater of war in the southern portion of the Michigan Territory, it was easy for them to remain neutral and disengaged. This allowed them to focus more on raiding the Santee Sioux. The Chippewas probably reasoned that the United States was too busy with Black Hawk to be concerned with small raids. However, given their alliance with the Sauk and Fox nations, they likely were sympathetic to Black Hawk's cause. Black Hawk even tried to escape north into Chippewa country before and after the Battle of Bad Axe, as he assumed they would help his people. Given their lack of direct aid to Black Hawk, the Chippewas were not willing to incur the wrath of the United States for the sake of their alliance. Their warriors certainly knew enough about American military strength not to assault Lieutenant Cross.

⁷¹ Ibid., January 30, 1833.

Why Black Hawk Failed

Black Hawk's desired alliance with the Potawatomi, Winnebago, and Chippewa tribes in the Michigan Territory never materialized. These tribes realized the futility in going to war against an America that increased its military presence in the Upper Mississippi Valley after the War of 1812 and demonstrated its dominance during the brief Winnebago Uprising of 1827. Some of the Potawatomis and Winnebagos joined the United States in pursuit of Black Hawk in order to remain in the good graces of the Americans. Many were dependent upon the Indian agencies for rations to prevent starvation. The Chippewas were far removed from the conflict and were likely dissuaded from aiding Black Hawk due to their knowledge of superior American military strength. It should be noted that given the lack of a significant amount of information concerning the actions of the Chippewas during Black Hawk's War, more research in this area is needed to gain greater understanding of their behavior. All the Native Americans sympathetic to Black Hawk could do was remain neutral, shelter members of the British Band, or feign support for the United States, as White Crow exemplified. A small minority of Potawatomis and Winnebagos used the war as an excuse to independently attack Americans in their own regions, but none of their actions significantly benefited the British Band. Black Hawk was also doomed because the British never supplied him with the necessary arms and provisions needed to fight a bellicose, frontier-oriented United States under the direction the famed Indian fighter, Andrew Jackson. President Jackson's 1830 Indian Removal Act called for the removal of all Native American west of the Mississippi River; Black Hawk's actions defied Jackson, and therefore, he incurred the fury of the United States.

Intertribal warfare also damaged Black Hawk's chances of success. The years of intertribal warfare caused a visceral hatred in the Santee Sioux and Menominees for the Sauks

and Foxes. However, the 1825 Treaty of Prairie du Chien seemed to have prevented an Indian war from arising in 1832, as the tribes of the Michigan Territory remained at peace with each other, even though the Menominees and Santee Sioux wanted to declare war against the Sauk and Fox nations. It is not surprising then that when the Americans asked for Indian assistance against the British Band, the Santee Sioux and Menominees were all eager to serve. With virtually no allies, and the United States military and Native American enemies surrounding him, all Black Hawk could do was attempt to return home across the Mississippi River.

There was no chance of Black Hawk's success. As Black Hawk's War demonstrates, major reasons for American success in Indian warfare were possessing a superior military force, Indian dependency on Americans for survival, and the absence of a pan-Indian alliance uniting against the United States. During Black Hawk's War, previous intertribal warfare had created divisions between Indian nations that prevented them from unifying against America, and in fact, were exploited by the Americans to gain Native Americans allies. The Americans also ensured Native American fidelity by issuing them rations, which were required by many of the starving Native Americans in the Michigan Territory in 1832.

The last time there was a pan-Indian alliance against the Americans was during the War of 1812. During this time, many Indian nations from the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys united under Te-cum-seh with the British against the Americans in order resist American expansion and protect traditional Native American mores. However, when Black Hawk's band attempted to resist American expansionism in 1832, other tribes as well as the majority of Black Hawk's own tribe did not unite behind Black Hawk. The difference between 1812 and 1832 is that unlike Te-cum-seh, Black Hawk was unable to convince other tribes that it was in their self-interest to unite behind him in order to protect their land and culture. Black Hawk's struggle was

representative of the broader struggle of Native American resistance to American domination. However, in order for tribes to unite against the Americans, intertribal divisions had to be overcome, tribes needed to be independent of the Americans and believe they could successfully resist them, and most importantly, tribes needed to view resistance in their self-interest. As proven in this paper, these conditions were not met during 1832. By this time, the Chippewa, Potawatomi, Winnebago, Menominee, and Santee Sioux tribes recognized American hegemony over the Upper Mississippi Valley. Those tribes sympathetic to Black Hawk's cause simply would not risk their own welfare by openly defying the United States and joining Black Hawk.

Appendix 1



Map. Michigan Territory in 1823.

Source: "Michigan (MI) Territory by Field Lucas 1823 Map." Historical Maps Restored. http://69.94.26.39/media/maps/statemapsj-r/ss_size1/michigan_territory_1823_b.jpg (accessed April 23, 2010).

Appendix 2



Map. Black Hawk's Route.

Source: "Black Hawk's Route." Travel and History. <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h336.html> (accessed April 28, 2010).

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