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The Illinois River Potawatomi In the War of 1812

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FOR THE INDIAN tribes of the Old Northwest, the two decades preceding the War of 1812 were a period of frustration. Their first attempt to halt the advancing tide of American settlement had ended in failure in 1795 at the Treaty of Greenville by which the Indians relinquished most of their claims to land in Ohio. In the years that followed, American agents were also successful in gaining large cessions in Illinois and Indiana.

Although the Indians of the Old Northwest were officially at peace after 1795, there were still occasional acts of hostility. Not only were American settlers building their cabins on land claimed by the Indians, but Americans from Kentucky were crossing the Ohio River to hunt in Illinois and Indiana. These hunting expeditions, often consisting of large numbers of men, were primarily interested in skins and, to the distress of the Indians, were seriously depleting the game supply of the area.[1] Unscrupulous American traders, lubricating their sales with alcohol, also contributed to Indian resentment and the resulting incidents of

1. Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America during the First Administration of James Madison* (New York, 1909), II: 70.

violence. In 1801, frontier merchants furnished the six hundred warriors in the lower Wabash Valley with over six thousand gallons of whiskey, causing legitimate concern among the responsible leaders of both the Indian and American communities.[2] Another cause of resentment was the handling of criminal cases involving Indians. Those accused of murdering Americans were tried before white juries; and frontier courts, regardless of the circumstances involved, systematically hanged almost all such Indians brought before them.[3]

The Potawatomi shared the hostility of their red neighbors. This tribe (of the Algonquian language group) had originally lived in west-central Michigan[4] but by the first of the eighteenth century had migrated into southwestern Michigan, northwestern Indiana, and northeastern Illinois. Partially intermingled with the Ottawa and Chippewa, some bands of the Potawatomi moved down the Illinois River Valley and by 1774 had established villages on Lake Peoria.[5]

American officials designated the Potawatomi located near Peoria as the Illinois River Band. Other major bands were known as the Potawatomi of the Wabash, of Milwaukee, of the St. Joseph's, and of the Prairie.[6] There was an

2. Harrison to the Secretary of War, July 15, 1801, quoted in Walter Havighurst, ed., *Land of the Long Horizons* (New York, 1960), 102.

3. *Ibid.*, 100.

4. George Irving Quimby, *Indian Culture and European Trade Goods* (Madison, Wis., 1966), 33.

5. J Joe Bauxar, "The Historic Period," *Illinois Archaeology* (*Illinois Archaeological Survey Bulletin No. 1*, Urbana, 1959), 54.

6. Ninian W. Edwards, *History of Illinois from 1778 to 1833; and the Life and Times of Ninian Edwards* (Springfield, 1870), 96, 315-16. On Potawatomi bands, see Frederick W. Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians . . .* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30, Washington, 1907-1910), II: 289-90; Donald J. Berthrong, "An Historical Report on Indian Use of Royce Areas 132, 133, 145, 146, 180, and 181 . . ." (MS prepared for the Indian Claims Commission), 6-18; David Baerris, "The Band Affiliation of Potawatomi Treaty Signatories" (MS prepared for the Indian Claims Commission), 2. Copies of both MS reports are available in the history department of the University of Oklahoma.

Most knowledgeable reporters wrote that the principal chief of the Illinois River Band of Potawatomi was Gomo (also called Masseno or Nasimo), whose village in 1812 was said to have been from 17 to 21 miles above

extensive interchange of Indians within these five groups; and as among the other tribes of the Old Northwest, American officials had difficulty in positively identifying specific individuals with certain bands. An English traveler visiting the area in 1818 pointed out that the Indians

> are continually changing their place of residence; that they divide their tribes into many small societies, and each of these occupy one village. These societies, although of the same tribe, frequently acquire a new name. Different names too, are sometimes given to the same tribe or society.[7]

The Illinois River Band of Potawatomi had remained relatively peaceful during the first decade of the 1800's. Although they occasionally stole horses from the settlers in southern Illinois and Missouri, they refrained from attacking American citizens. By 1811, however, American officials had noticed a marked change in the attitude and activities of this band. The Shawnee leader Tecumseh had traveled to the upper Illinois Valley in the autumn of 1810, and the mystical religion of his brother, the Shawnee Prophet, found many adherents in the Potawatomi villages north

Peoria on the left bank of the river (at the site of present Chillicothe). Gomo had died by April, 1815; he was succeeded by his brother Senachwine (or Petchacho). See Forsyth to the Secretary of War, *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin,* XI (1888): 336-37, 338, 339.

One other 1812 village of the Illinois River Band (located on the River Au Sable, or Sand River, and about "two leagues" below the Kankakee and "fifty leagues" above Peoria) was headed by the Little Chief in 1812; he died some time before 1813 and was succeeded by Pepper; see Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 96, 315.

Generally included as part of the Illinois River Band was a mixed village of about sixty warriors headed by Le Bourse Sulky on the Little Mackinaw. In one report (*ibid.,* 96) Edwards included Main Poc's village with the Illinois River Potawatomi; but generally Main Poc is identified with the Prairie Band.

Black Partridge (or Mucketepoke) was also an Illinois River Band chief; see Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (*Senate Documents,* Vol. 39, 58 Cong., 2 Sess., Washington, 1904), II: 133. Another important band chief was Shequenebec; see Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 71.

7. Estwick Evans, *A Pedestrious Tour of Four Thousand Miles, through the Western States and Territories, during the Winter and Spring of 1818 . . .,* in Vol. VIII of *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846,* edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, 1904-1907), 285.

of Peoria.[8] In May, 1811, the Americans learned that a great Indian council was to be held at the mouth of the Kankakee River, where chiefs and warriors of the Shawnee, Kickapoo, and Potawatomi were to assemble and then journey to the headquarters of the British Indian Department at Malden (now Amherstberg, Ontario).[9]

The deterioration of the American position among the Illinois River Potawatomi was also accelerated by the arrival of the Potawatomi war chief Main Poc. This chief, who had been residing upon the headwaters of the Kankakee, moved to a new camp at Crow Prairie, approximately twenty miles upstream from Peoria. Main Poc's close ties with the Prophet encouraged him to foment hostility in the Illinois Valley,[10] and American messengers traveling from St. Louis to Fort Dearborn blamed his followers for most of the depredations which began to occur in central and southern Illinois.[11]

As the summer progressed, Governor Ninian Edwards of Illinois Territory became increasingly concerned about the continuing Indian depredations, for which he blamed the Potawatomi. In writing to the Secretary of War, he said:

> I consider peace as totally out of the question; we need not expect it till the Prophet's party is dispersed and the bands of Pottawatomies about the Illinois river are cut off. Hostilities . . . [have] grown into a habit [for them]. There is no reason to believe that they will make sufficient satisfaction for the murders they committed and the goods and horses which they stole last year, or for the very aggravated and increased instances of similar hostilities in the present year.[12]

8. N. Matson, *Memories of Shaubena* . . . (Chicago, 1878), 19-20.

9. Matthew Irwin to the Secretary of War, May 13, 1811, in Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington, 1934-1962), XVI (*The Territory of Illinois, 1809-1814*): 159-60.

10. Draper's Notes, 26S87, Draper MSS, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison (microfilm in MSS Division, Bizzell Memorial Library, University of Oklahoma).

11. Lalime to Clark, May 26, 1811, in Logan Esarey, ed., *Governors Messages and Letters, Volume I* (*Indiana Historical Collections, VII,* Indianapolis, 1922), 511.

12. Edwards to the Secretary of War, July 6, 1811, quoted in Frank E.

Tecumseh, Shawnee chief and friend of the British.

These dire predictions were to be fulfilled. During the following three years the members of the Prairie Band remained hostile, as did Main Poc of the Illinois River Potawatomi, and many bands near Chicago. They joined other Indians in raids against the Illinois frontier, and it eventually took American military power to curtail their hostile activities.

In July, 1811, Tecumseh crossed the Ohio River to solicit the support of the southern tribes for his growing confederacy. Edwards took advantage of the Shawnee chief's absence to press his demands upon the Illinois River Potawatomi. On July 24 he commissioned Captain Samuel Levering of the regular militia to visit the Indians near Peoria and demand that they give up certain warriors responsible for the depredations of the preceding two years.[13]

Levering reached Peoria on August 3. There he was informed by Thomas Forsyth, the Indian agent at that post, that the Potawatomi had ignored almost all previous messages from Edwards. Forsyth agreed, however, to arrange a meeting between Levering and Gomo, the chief of the village of Potawatomi twenty-four miles upstream from Pe-

Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812-1814," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society,* IX (1904): 73.

13. Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 38; Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812," 173.

oria. Before Forsyth's messenger reached the village, Gomo had news of Levering's arrival and went at once to Peoria. In the next few days Levering and Gomo exchanged several visits. The Indian stated that he was sympathetic to the Americans but that the other chiefs in the area had fallen under the Prophet's influence. He assured Levering that the Indians the Americans wished to arrest were not members of his village, but were from bands living near Lake Michigan.[14] Levering thereupon asked Gomo to send runners to other villages of his tribesmen, calling them to assemble at Peoria for a council.[15]

Gomo complied with the request; and by August 15, 1811, several of the chiefs, with some of their warriors, were assembled at Peoria. The council with Levering lasted four days. The Indians complained that the Americans had tried to make fools of them and had illegally seized their lands. They stated that they had no stolen property and that such accusations astonished them.[16] Levering answered with a warning against British influence and promised that further depredations would be punished.[17] The conference ended with the Indians promising to return all stolen horses "as soon as they could be found."[18]

During the autumn of 1811 the Illinois River frontier remained relatively quiet. Many of the more warlike Indians left the valley for Prophetstown in Indiana; and the others, remembering Levering's warnings, were evidently cowed into a cessation of hostilities. After the Battle of Tippecanoe (November 7, 1811), however, some of the Indians who had been living with the Shawnee Prophet scattered westward into Illinois. Bands of Miami and Kickapoo moved to the Peoria region, and their influence rekindled Potawatomi resentment of Americans.[19]

14. *Ibid.*, 77.
15. Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 41.
16. Speech of Little Chief, quoted in *ibid.*, 43, 50.
17. *Ibid.*, 51-54.
18. *Ibid.*, 54.
19. On the Indians in the Battle of Tippecanoe, see Col. M. Elliott to

Tens-kwau-ta-waw, the Shawnee Prophet and brother of Tecumseh, who was very influential with the Illinois River Potawatomi.

The plight of the Indians throughout northern Illinois led most Americans to expect an onslaught of depredations. The area had suffered a severe drought during the previous two years, and the Indians' crops had been insufficient to sustain them through the winters; there was also a growing scarcity of game. American traders, fearing that hostilities were imminent, had either stopped supplying ammunition to the Indians or greatly reduced the quantity. Meanwhile, Robert Dickson and other British agents from Wisconsin, well stocked with British trade goods and promises, were continuing to solidify their position with influential chiefs and warriors.[20]

Dickson's activities seemed to confirm the Americans' suspicions that their current Indian problems were the result of a British conspiracy. There is adequate evidence to suggest that it was the official policy of the British at this

Maj. Gen. Isaac Brock, Jan. 12, 1812, in "Copies of Papers on File in the Dominion Archives at Ottawa, Canada, Pertaining to the Relations of the British Goverment with the United States during the Period of the War of 1812," *Collections and Researches Made by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society,* XV (1890): 68. On the Miami and Kickapoo move to the Illinois River area, see Forsyth to Edwards, June 8, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 229.

20. E. Cruikshank, "The Employment of Indians in the War of 1812," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1895* (Washington, 1896), 325.

time to cultivate the allegiance of the Indians but to discourage hostilities.[21] Edwards believed, however, that the coming season would inundate the Illinois frontier with a flood of unfriendly warriors, and that these Indians were the pawns of British aggression.[22] The promises of the Illinois River Band to return stolen horses had not been honored, and further messages to Gomo had been useless; the result of his evasive answers was a heightening of American apprehension. Express riders in the region reported increasing hostility among all the Indians of the Illinois River Valley.[23]

American apprehensions were well founded. Main Poc had returned to northern Illinois after visiting Malden; and assisted by White Pigeon, a Potawatomi chief from southern Michigan, he held a council with the Potawatomi and Kickapoo of the Peoria region. His purpose was to form the scattered villages of Potawatomi and Kickapoo into an effective military force, and he exhorted the warriors to violence, assuring them that he would "play a new game with the Americans."[24]

Main Poc's advice was followed. The area surrounding Fort Madison, an American post on the Mississippi, became infested with hostile warriors. Friendly Indians warned the commander of the fort that he could soon expect an attack by a combined force of Winnebago, Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Potawatomi.[25] An army messenger was fired on in the region, and the fort was subjected to periodic sniper fire.[26] Farther south, another party of raiders crossed into

21. Brock to Prevost, Dec. 12, 1811, quoted in *ibid.*, 323.

22. Edwards to Eustis, Jan. 1, 1812, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

23. Letter by Heald, Feb. 7, 1812, quoted in Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812," 98.

24. William Clark to Eustis, March 22, 1812, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

25. Edwards to the Secretary of War, March 17, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 203.

26. Edwards to Eustis, Feb. 18, 1812, quoted in Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 305. On March 3 a soldier was murdered near the fort, *ibid.*, 311.

Missouri, where they killed ten members of the O'Neal family.[27]

Still hoping for a peaceful solution, Governor Edwards again planned a conference with the chiefs of the tribes on the Illinois River. Invitations were dispatched in March, 1812; and in April representatives of the Kickapoo, Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi assembled at Cahokia. On their journey down the Illinois River the Indians flew American flags in their canoes to assure the settlers of their peaceful intentions.[28] Unfortunately, on April 11, near the mouth of the Illinois River, they were fired upon by a group of whites, who killed an Ottawa and captured two of his fellow tribesmen.[29]

This attack frustrated Edwards's attempts to regain the friendship of the Indians. After assuring the warriors, in council on April 16, 1812, that the Americans desired peace, he warned them against British influence and asked them to remain neutral in any war between the British and the Americans. Edwards ended his speech by declaring that Americans did not want Indian lands. He informed the Indians that "we have more land already than we can use, and I shall neither propose to buy it, nor does your Great Father, or myself, wish to take a foot of it from you."[30] Gomo, speaking for the Indians, replied in council the following day that the Indians, too, wished for peace. He promised not to aid the British, but refused to give up certain tribesmen whom Edwards had accused of murder.[31]

Edwards was pessimistic when he reported the conference to Secretary of War William Eustis. He mistrusted the

27. Howard to Eustis, March 19, 1812, and June 14, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XIV (*The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814*): 531-32, 566-67. Edwards to the Secretary of War, March 3, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 194; Forsyth to Edwards, June 9, 1812, *ibid.,* 228-31.

28. *Louisiana Gazette,* April 18, 1812, in Draper Notes, 26S37.

29. Clark to Eustis, April 12, 1812, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

30. Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 56-60; quotation from 60.

31. *Ibid.,* 61-63.

Indians' professions of peace and believed that they would follow the example of the British-allied Indians of northern Illinois and Wisconsin.[32]

Throughout the summer of 1812, American influence among the Illinois River Potawatomi diminished still further. The Winnebago killed two men at a farmhouse four miles from Chicago, and the whites in the region reacted by mistreating some friendly Potawatomi and threatening to kill other Indians.[33] Tecumseh and the Prophet were able to lure warriors away from the few chiefs who remained friendly to the Americans,[34] and British traders began to operate openly as far south as Peoria.[35] Gomo's band purchased ammunition from British traders, and Gomo once again began to hedge on his promises to the United States. When asked to reaffirm his peaceful intentions toward the settlers, he replied evasively that he would first have to consult with the other bands of his nation.[36]

Faced with increasing indications of Indian hostility, Governor Edwards mobilized three companies of volunteer rangers in addition to Captain William B. Whiteside's company of United States Rangers, which had been authorized by Congress but was not yet organized. These mounted volunteers were assigned to patrol the Sangamon and Illinois River areas and to intercept any hostile forces descending upon the settlements.[37]

32. Edwards to the Secretary of War, April 24, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 215.

33. Irwin to Eustis, April 16, 1812, in *ibid.,* 212-13.

34. Harrison to the Secretary of War, April 14, 1812, in Logan Esarey, ed., *Governors Messages and Letters, Volume II* (*Indiana Historical Collections,* IX, Indianapolis, 1922), 33.

35. Irwin to Eustis, May 15, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 220.

36 Forsyth to Edwards, June 8, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 229-30.

37. Edwards to Eustis, May 6, 1812, in National Archives, Record Group 107; printed in Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 312-15. See also Edwards to Whiteside, March 2, 1812, *ibid.,* 311-12; Edwards to Eustis, June 30, 1812, *ibid.,* 328-29. The three volunteer companies were those of Capts. James B. Moore, Jacob Short, and Willis Hargrave. On these companies, see also Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 223, 226-28, 232-38.

During the third week of July, Illinois territorial authorities received official notification of the declaration of war against Great Britain. In addition to the few companies of volunteer Illinois Rangers, the only forces available for service in the state consisted of the garrisons at the following United States posts: Fort Dearborn, 53 men; Fort Madison, 44 men; Fort Massac, 36 men; and Vincennes, 117 men.[38]

Facing these forces was an assemblage of warriors which had been rapidly increasing. Forsyth, in writing to Edwards from Peoria on June 8, 1812, stated:

> I am sure that the number of Indians now at the end of this lake consisting of Putowatomies, Kickapoos, Miamies and Ottoways must exceed six hundred warriors and should they be inclined for war, they can in the course of eight or ten days draw from Kiankakee river, from the upper parts of this river, from Fox river, and from Roche river at least 600 warriors more which would make an Indian Army of at least 1200 warriors, exclusive of the Prophet's band.[39]

These figures included the scattered bands of the Illinois River Potawatomi and the Ottawa and Chippewa living in these bands.[40] These Indians, Forsyth reported, were only awaiting a large shipment of British arms and ammunition before descending the Illinois River. He commented further that they seemed to be able to receive messages and materials from the Detroit area with considerably more success than he did.[41]

Fortunately for the settlements in southern Illinois, the attention of the Indians shifted to Fort Dearborn. By early summer that ill-fated post on the site of modern Chicago had become an isolated island of American influence surrounded by hostile Indians. General William Hull, the

38. Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812," 115.

39. Forsyth to Edwards, June 8, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 229.

40. Cf. Edwards to the Secretary of War, May ——, 1812, quoted in Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 318.

41. Forsyth to Howard, June 9, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XIV: 570-71.

American commander in the West, believed the fort to be indefensible and ordered its evacuation. His orders were delivered on August 9, 1812, by Winnimeg, a friendly Potawatomi from the Wabash.[42] Captain Nathan Heald, the commander of the fort, prepared for evacuation, and following Hull's orders, destroyed his surplus supplies of ammunition and whiskey.[43]

On August 15, Heald, leading a force of 54 regulars, 12 militia, 9 women, 18 children, and a guard of friendly Miami, set out for Fort Wayne.[44] They had traveled less than two miles when they met four hundred Potawatomi under the command of the Prairie Potawatomi chiefs Blackbird and Mad Sturgeon.[45] These Indians, inspired by a message received that day from Main Poc (back at Malden by this time), opened fire upon the Americans.[46] Heald described his reaction as follows:

> I immediately marched up the company to the top of the bank, when the action commenced; after firing one round, recharged and the Indians gave way in front and joined those on our flanks. In about fifteen minutes, they got possession of all our horses, provision and baggage of every description, and, finding the Miamis did not assist us, I drew off the few men I had left, and took possession of a small elevation in the open prairie out of shot of the bank or any other cover.[47]

After losing 26 regulars, 12 militia, 12 children, and 2 women, Heald surrendered to the Indians. The survivors were divided among the various bands of Potawatomi.[48]

42. Mrs. John H. Kinzie, *Wau-Bun: The Early Day in the Northwest* (Louise Phelps Kellogg, ed., Menasha, Wis., 1930), 163.

43. Hull to Heald, July 9, 1812, Heald Papers, 8U52, Frontier Wars MSS in Draper MSS.

44. Alec Gilpin, *The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest* (East Lansing, Mich., 1958), 127.

45. Louise Phelps Kellogg, *The British Régime in Wisconsin and the Old Northwest* (*Publications of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin,* II, Madison, 1935), 286.

46. Gilpin, *War of 1812,* 127.

47. Official report of Captain Heald, quoted in Charles Richard Tuttle, *History of the Border Wars of Two Centuries* . . . (Chicago, 1874), 277.

48. *Ibid.*

Ninian Edwards who served governor of Illinois Territory during the War of 1812.

Although some warriors from the Illinois River Band undoubtedly participated in the massacre,[49] their chiefs were almost unanimous in opposing the attack and were instrumental in saving the survivors. Gomo was not present, but Black Partridge, also a chief of the Illinois River Band, was able to help save the lives of the Kinzie family.[50]

Tecumseh's master plan for victory also included a Potawatomi assault upon Fort Wayne,[51] which took place on September 5, 1812. Only a few warriors from the Illinois River Band participated in the action. In August, Tecumseh's messengers had been unsuccessful in their attempts to recruit warriors from most of the Illinois River Band villages. At Shabbona's village on the lower Fox River, the messengers resorted to trickery and falsely proclaimed that the other Illinois River chiefs had pledged their support to this action and that Forsyth had deserted the Americans and was raising a company of Creoles to support the British; as a result, a few of Shabbona's warriors were finally persuaded to accompany Tecumseh's men to Fort Wayne.[52]

49. Hiram W. Beckwith, *The Illinois and Indiana Indians* (*Fergus' Historical Series,* No. 27, Chicago, 1884), 173.

50. Matson, *Memories of Shaubena,* 21-25.

51. A. M. Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border* (Norman, Okla., 1963), 67.

52. Matson, *Memories of Shaubena,* 25-26.

Obviously the reports about Forsyth and the Illinois River chiefs were untrue. .On Septmber 7 Forsyth was still living at Peoria, and from that place wrote Governor Benjamin Howard at St. Louis that Gomo and Shequenebec, with three hundred warriors, had left their villages and were moving toward southern Illinois.[53] No large-scale general attack materialized, however, and the Indians scattered over the countryside; the smaller parties killed some isolated settlers and attacked blockhouses on Shoal Creek,[54] before returning to northern Illinois in October.[55]

American officials soon realized that they would be unable to defend the frontier settlements from attack and decided, therefore, to destroy the source of hostilities: the Indian villages near Peoria. The Americans planned a two-pronged assault. General Samuel Hopkins was to recruit two thousand mounted Kentucky volunteers and march up the Wabash Valley destroying any hostile villages that he encountered. He was then to turn westward across the prairies toward the Sangamon. The second part of the assault was to be led by Governor Edwards. With a force of 312 militia and 50 U.S. Rangers from Vincennes, he was to leave Camp Russell, near Edwardsville; march north to the Kickapoo villages on the Sangamon, where he would join Hopkins's force; and then head for the Indian villages near Peoria.[56]

53. Forsyth to Howard, Sept. 7, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 263.

54. Robert Lindley, "The Cannon-Stark Indian Massacre and Captivity," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society,* XI (1915): 587-90.

Three members of the Cannon family were killed on the Okaw River; three others – the elder Mrs. Cannon; her son-in-law, a Mr. Stork; and her granddaughter – were held prisoner until the war was over. *Ibid.*

On August 5, 1812, near Shoal Creek a son of Henry Cox was killed and another son was taken prisoner. Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812," 165.

55. Edwards to Eustis, Oct. 4, 1812, quoted in Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 343.

56. George G. McVicker, "A Chapter in the Warfare against the Indians in Illinois during the Year 1812," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society,* XXIV (1939): 342; Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812," 127-31.

Hopkins left Kentucky filled with optimism. But he was not to meet the success he anticipated.[57] Plagued by desertions, his command marched up the Wabash Valley and turned west onto the prairies, as planned. But there they faced a sea of prairie fires set by the Kickapoo; the troops became lost and finally made their way back to the Wabash.[58]

Edwards enjoyed greater success. Leaving Camp Russell on October 18, 1812, he marched to the Sangamon River and destroyed two Kickapoo villages on the "saline fork" of that river. When Hopkins failed to appear, Edwards marched to the head of Lake Peoria. There he attacked and destroyed a large Kickapoo-Miami village (headed by Pemwatome) and a smaller Potawatomi village (that of Shequenebec). Fearing that the Indians might be assembling for a counterattack, Edwards quickly destroyed all the Indian crops in the area and returned to southern Illinois.[59]

The Peoria raid temporarily lifted American morale and proved to the Potawatomi that they were not immune from American retaliation. But it did not put an end to the Indian troubles. Furthermore, in November the actions of an Illinois militia officer deprived the Americans of their sole listening post among the Illinois River Potawatomi. Because of past friendship, these tribesmen had allowed Forsyth and a few French-Canadians to remain at Peoria. In November, 1812, a force of militia, led by Captain Thomas Craig of Shawneetown, moved by boat up the Illinois to Peoria. Since Forsyth and a number of French-Canadians

57. Extract of a letter from General Hopkins to Gov. Isaac Shelby, Sept. 29, 1812, in *Niles' Weekly Register,* Nov. 14, 1812, pp. 170-71.

58. Gibson, *The Kickapoos,* 69-70.

59. Edwards to Eustis, Nov. 18, 1812, quoted in Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 71-72.

The name of the Kickapoo chief whose village was at the foot of the bluff is given as Pamawatan by Edwards, in *ibid.*, 96, and as Pemertam by Lt. Col. William Russell, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 269. Edwards identifies the Potawatomi village on the bank of the river in his Nov. 18 letter to Eustis and spells the name of that village chief as Chequeneboc; *History of Illinois,* 71. He reported further that a detachment of his command also burned a new Miami village that had been "lately built within half a mile of Peoria"; *ibid.,* 72.

were still living there, Craig and his men assumed that they were accomplices of the Potawatomi; the militiamen therefore burned the village, seized the property of the citizens, and forced the American agent and his neighbors to evacuate Peoria and leave for southern Illinois.[60] In reporting his actions, Craig remarked that Forsyth "and the rest of the dam'd rascals may think themselves well off that they were not scalped." Forsyth described the plight of the Peorians as follows:

> Never shall I forget the disasters of the poor and unfortunate people of Peoria. . . . After their property was taken by the Indians, and a banditti of ruffians from Shawanoe town under the command of Captain Thomas E. Craig, we were taken down (as malefactors) prisoners, and set adrift on the shore of the Mississippi, at Savage's ferry.[61]

Although Edwards's raid lessened the probability of a general Indian invasion of central and southern Illinois, sporadic raiding continued. While the territorial legislature was frantically requesting more funds to finance additional ranger units,[62] Potawatomi raiders struck the settlements along the Big Muddy River in southern Illinois.[63] Five people were massacred near the mouth of the Ohio River,[64] and by April, 1813, Indian raiding east of Kaskaskia was so heavy that Edwards was forced to concentrate all of his rangers in the area in a futile attempt to intercept the hostiles.[65]

60. Clarence Walworth Alvord, *The Illinois Country, 1673-1818* (*The Centennial History of Illinois,* I, Springfield, 1920), 444-45.

61. Thomas Forsyth, "Journal of a Voyage from St. Louis to the Falls of St. Anthony, in 1819," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin,* VI (1869-1872): 196-97.

62. Petition of Nov. 30, 1812, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 271.

63. Edwards's letter, Feb. 16, 1813, in National Archives, Record Group 107. Two men named Moore were killed on the Big Muddy; Edwards to the Secretary of War, March 13, 1813, *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 303.

64. "Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Kaskaskia," in *Niles' Weekly Register,* April 24, 1813, p. 135.

65. Gilpin, *War of 1812,* 199. At this time Edwards had eight volunteer militia companies in service; see his letter to the Secretary of War, March 27, 1813, in his *History of Illinois,* 346-47.

In February, 1813, Edwards had learned that the Illinois River Potawatomi had left their former villages and moved to the mouth of the Bureau River,[66] where, later information disclosed, they were taking elaborate precautions against further American expeditions. Two of Edwards's informants reported that the Potawatomi had

> erected a strong fortification, consisting of five long block houses — around which trees are cut down and thick puncheons so arranged as to make a complete breastwork with port holes judiciously disposed — It is situated at the point of a hill — a large Marsh in front — the river in the rear of it and approachable only with any kind of facility on one side where the passage is narrow.[67]

From this fortified village the Potawatomi sent envoys seeking allies among the Sioux and Iowa, and in April they were calling in all their warriors, with the intention, Edwards believed, of striking "some blow before they separate."[68]

British agents had sent word to the Bureau River area that arms and ammunition were available to them at the mouth of the St. Joseph River.[69] And in early March, one of the agents, Robert Dickson, was at Chicago recruiting Indian forces. He reported that the buildings near the fort were in good condition, and he had warned the Indians, he said, against destroying them. The cannon left behind at the time of the Fort Dearborn massacre he hoped to be able to send to Michilimackinac.[70]

News of Dickson's activities reached St. Louis in the summer of 1813. By that time, the new governor of Louisiana Territory, Benjamin Howard, had assumed command of the

In May, Edwards organized three Illinois companies of U.S. Rangers, *ibid.*, 347. These were under James B. Moore, Samuel Whiteside, and Jacob Short; see Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812," 189.

66. Edwards to the Secretary of War, April 12, 1813, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers*, XVI: 312-14.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*

69. Report of Auguste La Roche and Louis Chevalier, April 4, 1813, in *ibid.*, XIV: 652-54.

70. Letter by Dickson, March 22, 1813, in "Papers on File in Dominion Archives," 262.

military forces in Illinois. Obviously alarmed, Howard decided that the erection of a fortress at Peoria was necessary for the protection of southern Illinois. Such a plan had been recommended earlier by Edwards,[71] and Howard was determined to carry out the recommendation.

On September 19, 1813, therefore, he moved, with approximately fourteen hundred men up the Illinois River Valley. Although some of their horses were stolen, the expedition arrived at Peoria on September 28. Howard's force saw no hostiles; but a small command under Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Nicholas (First Regiment, United States Infantry) which ascended the Illinois in a gunboat, encountered a few Indians in canoes. Nicholas gave the warriors "a taste of grape" and they fled.[72]

Since Howard found no Indians at Peoria, he decided to march to the site of Gomo's village, located some twenty miles upstream. A description of this march is related in a letter by one of Howard's men:

> The general immediately made the necessary arrangements, and leaving the sick and a few who had lost their horses, we marched the next morning for Gomo's town. Here we found the enemy had taken water and ascended the Illinois. We burnt their village and two others in the neighborhood, and encamped on the ground two nights. The general, finding they had declined giving us a fight, marched back to Peoria.[73]

Howard immediately began to erect a fort. Since he did not have adequate harnesses with which to haul the lumber needed for construction, he and his men were forced to float many of the logs across Lake Peoria. By October 15 the fort was completed and garrisoned, and Howard returned to St. Louis.[74]

71. Edwards to the President of the United States, Oct. 16, 1811, quoted in Edwards, *History of Illinois,* 288.

72. Extract of a letter from a "Gentleman in the Army to a friend at St. Louis," Oct. 22, 1813, in Draper Notes, 26S126-27.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Howard to the Secretary of War, Oct. 28, 1813, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 370-73.

The new post, called Fort Clark, became an effective barrier against Indian raids from northern Illinois. Although a few small war parties managed to infiltrate the area south of the Sangamon, mounted patrols from Fort Clark made such actions dangerous and were believed to have greatly reduced their scope and number. The fortress was also a symbol of American military strength. By manning the fort instead of remaining in their towns and villages in southern Illinois, the Americans proved to the Potawatomi that they had no intention of relinquishing their control of the Illinois River Valley. Meanwhile, the death of Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames (October 5, 1813) had greatly demoralized the Indians; and the Potawatomi who had fought with the Shawnee leader agreed to an armistice with the Americans.[75] Some of these Potawatomi were from the Illinois River Band, and the return of the defeated warriors to north-central Illinois also contributed to the Potawatomi desire for peace.[76]

The Illinois River Band began to lose faith in the British about this time, too. Forsyth returned to Peoria and used all of his influence in attempting to hold the Potawatomi to the armistice agreement. He was once again faced with the active schemes of Robert Dickson, and the two men sparred for the allegiance of the Potawatomi throughout the first six months of 1814.

Dickson eventually lost. His supply of trade goods was greatly depleted, and his accusations of treachery offended the Indians. He reported to his superiors that the Potawatomi could no longer be trusted because they had begun to visit the Americans at St. Louis.[77] He also accused them of delivering British traders to American officials and of

75. "Extract of a letter from gen. McArthur to the Secretary of War," Oct. 6, 1813, in *Niles' Weekly Register,* Oct. 23, 1813, pp. 129-30.

76. The armistice agreement of Oct. 14, 1813, signed at Detroit, is in Esarey, ed., *Harrison Letters,* II: 577-79.

77. Dickson to Lawe, Feb. 4, 1814, in "Dickson and Grignon Papers – 1812-1815," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin,* XI (1888): 289-92.

supplying the Americans with intelligence of British actions. Although the Potawatomi journeyed to Green Bay to meet with him,[78] Dickson believed that they were plotting against his life. He treated them coldly and planned to send the Winnebago on raids in the Peoria area, hoping that the Potawatomi would be blamed.[79]

Dickson's accusations greatly aided Forsyth, who supplied the Potawatomi with ammunition and worked for the release of certain Indian hostages held by his government in St. Louis. He also informed the Potawatomi that the British had made peace overtures to the United States and warned them that any who were still hostile would soon be left without British support. He urged them to attack the British in Wisconsin.[80] He also attempted to persuade them to attend the proposed peace conference to be held in Indiana. The Illinois River Band refused to go since they feared that attendance at the conference would result in an attack upon them by Indians still under British control.[81]

During the summer of 1814 the Illinois River Potawatomi all returned to American jurisdiction. Although a few acts of Indian hostility were perpetrated south of Peoria,[82] the Illinois River Potawatomi evidently were not responsible for them. Gomo, Black Partridge, and others moved back to the Peoria area, and tried to convince the Americans of their loyalty. They supplied the garrison of Fort Clark with fish and game and actively traded with the settlers.[83]

78. Edwards to Harrison, March 17, 1814, in *Niles' Weekly Register,* April 16, 1814, p. 113.

79. Dickson to Lawe, Feb. 14, 1814, in "Dickson and Grignon Papers," 293-94.

80. Edwards to Forsyth, May 16, 1814, in "Letter-Book of Thomas Forsyth – 1814-1818," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin,* XI (1888): 316-18.

81. Harrison and Cass to Armstrong, July 17, 1814, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

82. Forsyth to Howard, April 6, 1814, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 446-48; Posey to the Secretary of War, Sept. 16 and Nov. 12, 1814, in Esarey, ed., *Governors Messages and Letters,* II: 661, 665.

83. Forsyth to Howard, July 6, 1814, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers,* XVI: 446-47.

Other tribesmen, suffering from a shortage of supplies which the British were no longer able to provide, also became disenchanted. These Potawatomi supplied Gomo with information about British activities that the old chief relayed to the Americans.[84] By November, 1814, Gomo had so ingratiated himself at Fort Clark that Forsyth, in writing to the Secretary of War, stated:

> The commanding officer at Fort Clark is much pleased with the conduct of the Potawatomies of the Illinois River . . . the information that Gomo the chief gives to the garrison when any war parties are about, have no doubt saved some lives. I found near thirty lodges about twenty miles below Fort Clark, all Potawatomies, and under the following chiefs, Gomo, Blackpartridge, and Pepper . . . the whole of these Indians profess the greatest friendship to the U.-States.[85]

Statements such as this and the continued good conduct of the Illinois River Potawatomi caused the Americans to abandon plans for future military expeditions into northern Illinois.[86]

The extent of the new commitment to peace on the part of the Illinois River Potawatomi can be seen in their reaction to certain events occurring in the autumn of 1814. In November a group of Illinois rangers who were driving a herd of cattle to Peoria fired upon a group of friendly Potawatomi. In the resulting skirmish four Indians and one American were killed.[87] Instead of immediately attempting to avenge their dead comrades, the Indians calmly accepted goods and apologies from Forsyth and reavowed their friendship to the United States.[88]

84. "Lawe and Grignon Papers, 1794-1821," . . . *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin,* X (1888): 102-11.

85. Forsyth to the Secretary of War, Nov. 15, 1814, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

86. Gayle Thornbrough, ed., *Letter Book of the Indian Agency at Fort Wayne, 1809-1815* (*Indiana Historical Society Publications,* XXI, Indianapolis, 1961), 217 n.

87. Russell to Monroe, Dec. 4, 1814, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

88. Forsyth to the Secretary of War, April 13, 1815, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

News of the Treaty of Ghent reached Illinois during the first week of March, 1815. This information was immediately sent to Forsyth at Peoria,[89] who dispatched Potawatomi messengers to the hostiles on the Rock River.[90] The messengers also carried invitations to a peace conference which was to be held at St. Louis in July, 1815.[91]

At that conference the Illinois River Band of the Potawatomi was anxious to conclude a formal peace. On July 18, 1815, a treaty of peace was signed with the United States in which both parties agreed that they would resume relations "on the same footing upon which they stood before the war." The treaty also stated that all injuries between the two parties would be forgiven, that both parties would give up their prisoners, and that there would be "perpetual peace and friendship" between these Potawatomi and the United States.[92]

There were no provisions concerning land cessions from the Potawatomi, and as they returned to Peoria, they had every reason to assume that they would live in the Illinois River Valley forever. Instead, within thirty years all of the Potawatomi land in Illinois would belong to the United States.

89. Clark to Monroe, March 20, 1815, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

90. Forsyth to the Secretary of War, April 30, 1815, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

91. Forsyth to the commissioners appointed to treat with the Indian Nations, May 30, 1815, in National Archives, Record Group 107.

92. "A treaty of peace and friendship, made and concluded . . . between William Clark, Ninian Edwards, and Auguste Chouteau, commissioners Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, . . . of the one part; and the undersigned Chiefs and Warriors of Poutawatamie Tribe or Nation, residing on the river Illinois, on the part and behalf of the said Tribe or Nation, of the other part"; Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties,* II: 110-11.