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Source: *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, SPECIAL ISSUE: THE WAR OF 1812 (Spring 2012), pp. 27-52

Published by: Central Michigan University

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5342/michhistrevi.38.1.0027

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Toward the Black Hawk War: The Sauk and Fox Indians and the War of 1812

by
Patrick J. Jung

The War of 1812 has been called America's "forgotten conflict," and it is easy to see why. Compared with other wars, the battles were generally small and involved lesser numbers of troops. The United States possessed a tiny military establishment on the eve of the war, and the citizen militias that policy makers hoped would bolster the ranks of the regulars were often more of a hindrance than a viable fighting force. In the Old Northwest, the United States faced British forces that were similar in composition. Additionally, the British, unlike the Americans, also employed Indian auxiliaries. This often proved decisive, for by the war's end the British and their Indian allies retained their iron grip over an area that stretched from Mackinac Island to the Mississippi River. These historical events have been well documented;[1] however, an issue

[1] The principal works concerning the military history of the War of 1812, including in the Old Northwest, are Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); J. Mackay Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History* (Toronto, On.: University of Toronto Press, 1965); Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: Knopf, 1969); Robert S. Quimby, *The U.S. Army in the War of 1812: An Operational and Command Study*, 2 vols. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997); Alec R. Gilpin, *The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958); Philip P. Mason, ed., *After Tippecanoe: Some Aspects of the War of 1812* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963); and Reginald Horsman, "Wisconsin and the War of 1812," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 46 (Autumn 1962): 3-15. For works that examine the role of Indians in the war, see George F. G. Stanley, "The Indians in the War of 1812," *Canadian Historical Review* 31 (June 1950): 145-65; and Reginald Horsman, "The Role of the Indian in the War," in *After Tippecanoe*, ed. Mason, 60-77. For works that examine Britain's relationship with the Indians during the postwar era, see J. Mackay Hitsman, *Safeguarding Canada, 1763-1871* (Toronto, On.: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 110-29; and S. F. Wise and Robert C. Brown, *Canada Views the United States: Nineteenth-Century Political Attitudes* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967). For a historiographical assessment of works on the War of 1812, see Donald R. Hickey, "The War of 1812: Still a Forgotten Conflict?" *Journal of Military History* 65 (July 2001): 741-69.

THE MICHIGAN HISTORICAL REVIEW 38:1 (Spring 2012): 27-52
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Sauk and Fox Treaty and Tribal Locations, 1804

[Source: Map by author.]

that has been ignored is how Indian participation in the War of 1812 influenced further resistance by Native communities in the postwar era. From at least the 1790s onward, the Sauk and to a lesser degree the Fox developed a set of anti-American attitudes that ensured their participation on the side of the British during the War of 1812. Moreover, the war reinforced these attitudes and provided both tribes (particularly the Sauk) with a template for future acts of resistance. Indeed, the Sauk war leader Black Hawk hoped to replicate the successes the tribes had enjoyed during the War of 1812 by establishing an alliance with the British and creating a pan-Indian alliance throughout the 1832 Black Hawk War.

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At the dawn of the nineteenth century the Sauk and Fox tribes resided in the upper Mississippi Valley; the Sauk had a population of about 5,300, whereas the Fox had about 1,600 members. The two tribes developed a close alliance; in fact, outside observers often considered them a single tribe. Nevertheless, although they frequently coordinated their policies concerning their relations with other Indian communities and Euro-American powers such as France, Britain, and Spain, the two tribes sometimes pursued separate courses of action as well. Similar to other Indian communities, the Sauk and Fox had a contentious relationship with the United States; unlike the French, British, and Spanish, who generally allowed the Indians to maintain their lands and autonomy in exchange for alliance and trade, the Americans sought to purchase Indian land even if it required chicanery and coercion. During the 1790s this policy resulted in the United States fighting the Ohio Indians in the Northwest Indian War. Although Ohio was distant from their homeland, a small number of Sauk ventured eastward to assist tribes such as the Miami, Shawnee, and Delaware, and this participation produced a nascent distrust of the United States. Of greater concern was the departure of the Spanish from St. Louis on March 9, 1804, when the United States took formal possession of this small hamlet as well as the vast colony of Louisiana. Black Hawk summed up the sentiments of the Sauk and Fox when he noted, the Spanish "appeared to us like brothers—and always gave us good advice . . . we had always heard bad accounts of the Americans from Indians who had lived near them!"[2] This disdain was noted by a resident of Missouri who wrote that a group of Sauk, when presented with a United States flag, "treated [it] with a great deal of disrespect, and went so far as to trail it at the tails of their horses."[3]

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[2] Charles Callender, "Sauk," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 15, *Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1978), 648-49; Charles Callender, "Fox," in ibid., 636; Jeanne Kay, "The Fur Trade and Native American Population Growth," *Ethnohistory* 31 (Autumn 1984): 266, 275-77; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 149-75, 269-314, 398-424, 453-74; Colin G. Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 5-22, 193-239; Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 3-44; John Sugden, *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 103, 134, 144, 186, 227-28; Roger L. Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: H. Davidson, 1992), 13-14, 21-23; Black Hawk, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, ed. Donald Jackson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 56-60, 58 (quotation).

[3] Mackay Wherry to Amos Stoddard, September 15, 1804, in *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 13, *The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1803-1806*, comp. and ed. Clarence

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This contempt deepened when the secretary of war at the behest of President Thomas Jefferson instructed Indiana Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison in June 1804 that, "It may not be improper to procure from the Sacks [*sic*] such cessions on . . . the southern side of the Illinois [River] and a considerable tract on the other side."[4] The opportunity came in September 1804 when four Sauk warriors killed three white settlers about 30 miles northwest of St. Louis on the Cuivre River. A delegation composed of four Sauk and one Fox went to St. Louis to discuss the matter with Harrison. What happened during these talks remains sketchy because Harrison kept no journal. This was not the only irregularity; land-cession treaties normally involved the entire tribal leadership, not a five-man delegation. The delegation's desire to defuse the tensions brought about by the Cuivre River killings gave Harrison a tremendous amount of leverage, and he promised pardons to all the young warriors involved in exchange for the delegates' signatures on a treaty. The available evidence suggests that the delegates believed the treaty ceded only a small tract of land north of St. Louis where no permanent villages stood; they certainly did not believe they had sold any lands north of the Rock River. Black Hawk later claimed that Harrison obtained these signatures by dispensing copious amounts of whiskey and keeping the delegates "drunk the greater part of the time they were in St. Louis."[5] By this treaty, dated November 3, 1804, the Sauk and Fox ceded 15 million acres of land in western Illinois, southwestern Wisconsin, and

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E. Carter and John P. Bloom (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 63, 64 (quotation).

[4] "Henry Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, June 27, 1804," Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800-1824, RG-75, microfilm, M-15, reel 2, vol. B, 7, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[5] Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster: The Course of Indian-White Relations which Led to the Black Hawk War of 1832," in *The Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Ellen C. Whitney (Springfield: Illinois Historical Library, 1970-1978), 1: 16-23; Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 75-92; Warren Cattle to James Bruff, September 9, 1804; James Bruff to James Wilkinson, September 29, 1804; James Bruff to James Wilkinson, November 5, 1804; James Wilkinson to Henry Dearborn, July 27, 1805, all in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, comp. and ed. Carter and Bloom, 13: 62-63, 56-58, 76-77, 168; Thomas Forsyth, "Original Causes of the Troubles with a Party of Sauk and Fox Indians," October 1, 1832, Series T, vol. 9, 55, Thomas Forsyth Papers (hereafter Forsyth Papers), Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection (hereafter Draper Collection), Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 98-99; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 58-60, 61 (quotation).

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eastern Missouri in exchange for $2,234.50 worth of goods and an annual gift of $1,000 in goods in perpetuity.[6]

Harrison's underhanded negotiation of the 1804 treaty became yet another irritant between the Sauk and Fox and the United States. The Spanish departure from St. Louis also meant that the British in Canada became the only other power to which the two tribes could ally themselves to counter American expansion. As early as July 1799 Sauk and Fox parties ranging from 50 to as many as 300 warriors and their families made annual pilgrimages to Malden, a British post directly across the St. Clair River from Detroit, and pledged their fealty to the British and received generous presents in return. Nor were they alone; virtually all the tribes in the Upper Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley paid visits to the British. In the years before the War of 1812, American officials were certain that British Indian agents and fur traders used their influence with the Indians to goad them into committing acts of violence against Americans. However, the tribes were not British pawns. Both the British in Canada and their Indian allies across the border sought to contain American expansion: the Indians to preserve their lands and the British to protect Canada. This became particularly true as tensions between Britain and the United States increased in the wake of the 1807 *Chesapeake* Affair, when a British frigate fired upon an American naval vessel. The British redoubled their diplomatic efforts among the Indians after this event due to the weak military forces they possessed in Upper Canada (present-day Ontario).[7]

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[6] Treaty with the Sauk and Foxes, November 3, 1804, in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, comp. and ed. Charles J. Kappler (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 2: 74-77; Cecil D. Eby, *"That Disgraceful Affair": The Black Hawk War* (New York: Norton, 1973), 46-49; Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster," in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 1: 19-21.

[7] Hector McLean to James Green, July 12, 1799, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Lyman C. Draper et al. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1855-1931), 12: 106-7; Timothy D. Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship: British Policy and the Indians of the Great Lakes, 1783-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 82-83, 291n; William Henry Harrison to William Eustis, July 18, 1810, in *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, ed. Logan Esarey (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 1: 446; Kerry A. Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 134; William Wells to William Henry Harrison, August 20, 1807; William Henry Harrison to Henry Dearborn, February 18, 1808; William Hull to the Secretary of War, July 27, 1810; John Johnson to William Eustis, August 7, 1810; William Henry Harrison to the Secretary of War, September 17, 1811, all in *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, ed. Esarey, 1: 242, 284, 453, 459, 575; James Many to James Wilkinson, May 20, 1806, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, comp. and ed. Carter and Bloom, 13: 513; William Clark to William Eustis, July 20, 1810, in *American State Papers* (hereafter *ASP*), 2, *Indian Affairs*, ed. Walter C.

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Also important were cultural changes within Indian societies that imbued them with a new sense of identity and purpose. From the late 1730s onward, Native Peoples in the trans-Appalachian West developed a sense of racial solidarity, or an "awakening" of nativist spirit that emerged from increased intertribal contacts. Indian religious leaders whom whites called "prophets" preached that Euro-Americans were a separate and often diabolical creation which differed from that of Indians. Indian political leaders used this newfound sense of racial solidarity to build pan-tribal alliances that could resist those Euro-Americans who posed the greatest threat at any given time. Pontiac was one of the first nativist leaders to craft a militant pan-Indian movement in the 1760s with the assistance of Neolin, also called the Delaware Prophet, by asserting that the French rather than the British were the true allies of the Indians. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, pan-Indian solidarity became decidedly anti-American in tone as white Americans began pouring into the trans-Appalachian West. Tenskwatawa, better known as the Shawnee Prophet, preached this message in Ohio. He had lived a drunken, dissolute life until 1805 when he claimed to have received a vision from the Master of Life and exhorted his followers to live virtuous lives and, except for firearms, to eschew the white man's goods, particularly alcohol. Soon, his message was carried to Indian communities throughout the trans-Appalachian West, including the Sauk and Fox.[8]

In 1808 the Shawnee Prophet established a new village in Indiana named Prophetstown where as many as 3,000 Indians from various tribes resided. A party of 240 Sauk and Fox passed through Prophetstown on its way to Malden in May 1810; in June of that year 1,100 Sauk, Fox, and Winnebago (also known as Ho-Chunk) visited the Shawnee Prophet. His brother, Tecumseh, forged the prophet's religious message into a plan for pan-Indian political and military unity and by 1811 emerged as a critic of "government chiefs" who sold Indian land to the United States. Among the Sauk and Fox (as well as other Indians

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Lowrie and M. St. Clair Clarke (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 1: 799; Extract of a Letter to the War Department, September 17, 1811, in ibid., 1: 801; Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774-1815* (Toronto, On.: Dundurn Press, 1992), 54-56, 83-84, 110-15; Horsman, *War of 1812*, 11-16; Hitsman, *Safeguarding Canada,* 62-78.

[8] Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 23-201; Alfred A. Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 1-139; R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 28-37, 78.

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in Illinois), the principal promulgator of the Shawnee brothers' message was a Potawatomi named Main Poc, who fought in the Northwest Indian War and was staunchly opposed to American expansion.[9]

The religious and political messages of the Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and their lieutenants such as Main Poc instilled in an entire generation of Indians a collection of anti-American beliefs that is best defined as an ideology: a systematic set of ideas that support a specific policy or policies.[10] In this case, it advocated resisting the expansion of the United States through pan-tribal cooperation and fighting alongside the British in a common cause. Like any ideology, it was disseminated and received in a variety of forms and often not in its entirety. In Main Poc's case, he continued to drink whiskey despite the Shawnee Prophet's prohibition and joined the Sauk and Fox in their forays against their Indian enemies (particularly the Osage), despite Tecumseh's admonition to the tribes to put aside their differences and fight the Americans. Moreover, like every ideology, it was not universally accepted. In the case of the Sauk, roughly one-quarter of the tribe's members rejected this anti-American ideology and migrated to the Missouri River during the War of 1812 in order to separate themselves from the faction that desired war against the United States.[11] Thus, these similar values permeated the Sauk who remained in the upper Mississippi Valley during the war years.

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[9] R. David Edmunds, "Tecumseh's Native Allies: Warriors Who Fought for the Crown," in *War on the Great Lakes: Essays Commemorating the 175th Anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie*, ed. William J. Welsh and David C. Skaggs (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 60-63; Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 42-93; Timothy Willig, "Prophetstown on the Wabash: The Native Spiritual Defense of the Old Northwest," *The Michigan Historical Review* 23 (Fall 1997): 115-58; William Henry Harrison to William Eustis, June 15; August 7, 1810, both in *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, ed. Esarey, 1: 427, 456; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 66; R. David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), 32-44, 94-95, 120-25; idem, "Main Poc: Potawatomi Wabeno," *American Indian Quarterly* 9 (Summer 1985): 259-72; James A. Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 193-94.

[10] Malcolm B. Hamilton, "The Elements of the Concept of Ideology," *Political Studies* 35 (March 1987): 18-38; David E. Apter, "Ideology and Discontent," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. idem (New York: Free Press, 1964), 15-46; Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in ibid., 206-61; George F. E. Rudé, *Ideology and Popular Protest* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 27-38.

[11] William T. Hagan, *The Sac and Fox Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 80-81; William Clark to John Armstrong, September 12, 1813, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 14, *The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814*, comp and ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), 697-98.

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This anti-American ideology was not solely due to the teachings of the Shawnee Prophet and Tecumseh; in fact, Black Hawk's autobiography and other sources suggest that those Sauk and Fox drawn to the religious teachings of the Shawnee Prophet were minorities in both tribes. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many Sauk and Fox were followers of the Shawnee Prophet and the depth of their loyalty, but there are sources that provide some evidence. The 240 Sauk and Fox who visited Prophetstown in May 1810 were about 3.5 percent of the two tribes. These sources also indicate that anti-American ideology was far more pronounced among the Sauk than among the Fox. This was probably because the majority of the Fox, unlike the Sauk, lived on unceded land west of the Mississippi rather than the eastern bank that was part of the 1804 treaty cession. During the first year of the War of 1812, about 200 Sauk (nearly 15 percent of the tribe's adult-male population) fought alongside the British compared to only 18 Fox warriors (approximately 4.5 percent of the adult men). After visiting the two tribes, U.S. Army officer Lt. Zebulon Pike commented on this disparity when he noted that "there appears to be a schism between the two nations, the latter [the Fox] not approving of the insolence and ill-will which has marked the conduct of the former [the Sauk] toward the United States on many late occurrences."[12] Even Black Hawk himself was not drawn to the Shawnee Prophet's religious teachings.

However, numbers tell only part of the story; even Indians who evinced little interest in the Shawnee Prophet's religious teachings were able to absorb the rhetoric of the Shawnee brothers and their predecessors such as Pontiac. Moreover, Tecumseh's notion of a pan-Indian alliance as a means of checking American expansion struck a chord among many Indians, even those who may have rejected his brother's religious message. In a speech he delivered in 1815, Black Hawk used language that was strikingly similar to that of the Shawnee brothers when he stated that the British governor at Québec had told "all his Red Children, to form but one body, to preserve our lands, and to make war

[12] For the Sauk and Fox who visited Malden in 1810, see Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 83. For the Sauk and Fox who fought with the British during the first year of the war, see Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 69, 73. Also see Robert Dickson, List of Indian Warriors Going to Detroit, June 21, 1813, in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* (hereafter *MPHC*) (Lansing: Darius D. Thorp, 1889), 15: 323. The number of men among the Sauk and Fox was derived by taking the known populations of the two tribes and assuming that one in four persons was an adult male. See Kay, "Fur Trade and Native American Population Growth," 275-77; Tanner, *Atlas*, 98-99; and Zebulon Pike, *Exploratory Travels through the Western Territories of North America* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1811), 122 (quotation).

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MA-KA-TAI-ME-SHE-KIA-KIAH,
A Saukie Brave

Portrait of Black Hawk (1767-1838)

[Source: Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (Philadelphia: Frederick W. Greenough, 1842), 2: 28, plate follows this page.]

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against the Big Knives [the Americans]. . . . If the Master of Life favors us, you shall again find your lands as they formerly were. This, my Father, is the reason why we Sauks hold the war club tight in our hands. . . . I have fought the Big Knives, and will continue to fight them until they retire from our lands."[13] Black Hawk's words demonstrate that the movement led by the Shawnee Prophet and Tecumseh contributed to the development of an ideology of anti-Americanism and resistance among the Sauk and to a lesser extent the Fox. Just as important were earlier events such as the Northwest Indian War and Harrison's underhanded negotiation of the 1804 treaty. The War of 1812, particularly in its final year, became another important factor in the evolution of that ideology.

The surge in anti-Americanism in the years prior to the war is evidenced by the increased number of depredations the Sauk and Fox committed against white settlers almost as soon as the Shawnee Prophet began his preaching. In autumn 1805 Sauk and Fox warriors killed three whites working at salt mines in Missouri and Iowa. In autumn 1806 Sauk and Fox warriors attacked an instructional farm established by the federal government and killed all the cattle and horses. Many young Winnebago, Kickapoo, Iowa, and Potawatomi committed similar acts and descended upon white settlements and stole horses, slaughtered livestock, and even killed settlers. The Winnebago, more so than any other tribe, were the most zealous supporters of the Shawnee Prophet; William Clark, the superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis, estimated after the War of 1812 that two-thirds of the Winnebago tribe had anti-American leanings. One old Winnebago chief lamented in 1810 that his young men "breathed nothing but war against the United States."[14] A federal Indian agent expressed similar sentiments when he

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[13] Speech of Black Hawk, April 18, 1815, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Draper et al., 9: 278.

[14] Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path*, 31-34; Donald Jackson, "William Ewing, Agricultural Agent to the Indians," *Agricultural History* 31 (April 1957): 3-7; James Wilkinson to the Sauk Chiefs, December 10, 1805, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, comp. and ed. Carter and Bloom, 13: 300-302; Meriwether Lewis to Henry Dearborn, July 1, 1808; William Clark to William Eustis, September 12, 1810, both in ibid., 14, 202-3, 412-14; William Clark to William Eustis, July 3, 1811; William Henry Harrison to William Eustis, July 25, 1810; William Henry Harrison to the Secretary of War, August 28, 1810, all in *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, ed. Esarey, 1: 529, 449, 471 (quotation); Extract of a Letter to the War Department, July 2, 6, 1811; Extract of a Letter to the War Department, October 6, 1811, all in *ASP*, 2, *Indian Affairs*, ed. Lowrie and St. Clair Clarke, 1: 800, 801; *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore), March 7, 1812; *Louisiana Gazette* (St. Louis), February 15, 1812; Jacob Van der Zee, ed., "Old Fort Madison: Some Source Materials," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 11 (October

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wrote that "the Indians . . . believe in what the Prophet tells them which is that the great spirit will in a few years destroy every white man in america [*sic*] [and] that every Indian has made himself a *war club*."[15] Black Hawk heartily embraced the idea of attacking the Americans, particularly after the U.S. Army built Fort Madison in the heart of the Sauk homeland in 1808. He joined a party of Sauk in spring 1809 that attempted to gain entry into the fort under the pretext of performing a dance for the soldiers when their real plan was to kill the entire garrison. However, the commander was tipped off to the scheme and refused to let the Sauk enter.[16]

The depredations carried out by the Indians were a precursor to the War of 1812. In fact, it can be argued that the Indians' war began not when Congress declared war on June 18, 1812, but about seven months earlier on November 7, 1811, when William Henry Harrison led an army composed of regular troops and militia to a camp a few miles from Prophetstown in order to provoke a battle during Tecumseh's absence. Winnebago warriors resident in Prophetstown fired first and initiated what became known as the battle of Tippecanoe. Harrison claimed to have won, but the encounter was far less conclusive than he wanted to believe. The Indians at Prophetstown dispersed throughout the Old Northwest with an even more intense desire to attack Americans; not surprisingly, the number of depredations rose dramatically afterward. William Clark maintained records of Indian ravages in the upper Mississippi Valley, and although the documents are incomplete they nevertheless record at least 21 depredations committed by the Indians between April 1805 when the Shawnee Prophet claimed to have received his first visions and the battle of Tippecanoe in November 1811. From the battle of Tippecanoe until the end of the War of 1812, the number increased to at least 65 depredations, 45 of which were committed by the Sauk and Fox.[17]

1913): 530-33, 542-43; Hagan, *Sac and Fox Indians*, 40; Frank Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812-1814," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year 1904* (Springfield, Ill.: Phillips Bros., 1904), 66-69, 83, 95-101; Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship*, 231-41; "William Clark to James Barbour, July 11, 1827," 1824-1881, RG 75, microfilm, M-234, reel 748, frame 89, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives.

[15] Wells to Harrison, August 20, 1807, 239 (emphasis in original).

[16] Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 64-65; Donald Jackson, "Old Fort Madison–1808-1813," *Palimpsest* 47 (January 1966): 11-18.

[17] Of course, part of the increase in attacks may also be attributed to Native alliances with the British during a time of war. See Gilpin, *War of 1812 in the Old Northwest*, 3-22; Willig, "Prophetstown," 152-58; William Henry Harrison to William

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After the battle of Tippecanoe and the official declaration of war, the need for subterfuge evaporated. A group of Winnebago carrying fresh scalps taken from white settlers appeared at Saukenuk, the main village of the Sauk, and invited Sauk warriors, including Black Hawk, to join them in the attack on Fort Madison that began on September 5, 1812. At the time the fort held only 44 men. The Indians initiated battle by killing a soldier who was outside the fort's walls. By September 8, their ammunition expended, the Indians began to leave. They had killed only one soldier and wounded another; the Indians' casualties were identical. Although the siege may not have been successful, it was evidence that the tiny fort, which was the northernmost manifestation of American military power on the Mississippi, was vulnerable. Fort Michilimackinac (which contained a mere 88 regulars) on Mackinac Island fell to a British force composed of 46 regulars, about 200 militia, and almost 400 Indians on July 17, 1812. Because Fort Dearborn at Chicago could no longer be adequately supplied due to this loss, Gen. William Hull at Detroit ordered the garrison to withdraw. On August 15, two miles from the fort, about 400 Potawatomi, encouraged by Main Poc, descended upon the 93 people who fled Fort Dearborn. This included 54 regulars as well as women, children, and militia; 61 persons lost their lives. Hull fared little better, for on the following day, August 16, he surrendered Detroit to the British without firing a shot. Hull had 1,100 men, while the British force was almost 1,800 including 400 Indians under Tecumseh's command.[18]

By the summer of 1813 neither the Sauk nor the Fox had officially committed themselves to the Indian-British alliance even though warriors from both tribes had committed depredations against residents of the United States. Many Sauk in particular retained an intense distrust of the Americans, for as Black Hawk noted, he had not "*discovered one good trait in the character of the Americans*. . . . They made *fair*

Eustis, November 18, 1811; Matthew Elliott to Isaac Brock, January 12, 1812, both in *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, ed. Esarey, 1: 618-31, 616-18; and Marsha H. Rising, "White Claims for Indian Depredations: Illinois-Missouri-Arkansas Frontier, 1804-32," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 84 (December 1996): 281-304.

[18] A. Y. Nicol, Return of the Number of Troops, June 6, 1812, *ASP*, 5, *Military Affairs*, ed. Lowrie and Clarke, 1: 320; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 66-68; Jackson, "Old Fort Madison—1808-1813," 49-53; Van der Zee, ed., "Old Fort Madison," 544-45; Gilpin, *War of 1812 in the Old Northwest*, 89-91, 116-28; A. B. Woodward to Henry Procter, October 8, 1812, *MPHC*, 15: 159-60; Louise P. Kellogg, *The British Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1935), 285-87; Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership*, 179-81.

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promises but *never fulfilled them*! Whilst the *British* made but few—but we could always *rely upon their word!*[19] Still, the Sauk and Fox chiefs were cautious about lending official support to the British-Indian alliance; such a decision could not be made lightly, for while many Sauk and Fox may have had little love for the United States, the two tribes' proximity to American settlements and military forces and their distance from the British in Canada meant that a war against the United States could be disastrous. In fact, most tribes in the upper Mississippi Valley were split over whether to fight against the United States; only the Winnebago tribe was overwhelmingly in favor of war. The Sauk and Fox chiefs officially declared neutrality at the conflict's commencement, but the younger tribal members in particular possessed strong anti-American attitudes. Because Indian tribal governments lacked coercive mechanisms, younger warriors who embraced the ideology of anti-Americanism could not be restrained by the older, more cautious chiefs.[20]

American officials were not completely without influence; ever since the end of the French regime, the Indians had needed to acquire trade goods for their survival from another source. As long as the United States could ensure that the Indians had access to American trade goods rather than British wares, the Indians—even those who were stridently anti-American—would likely stay neutral. However, American mismanagement frustrated these plans and added additional fuel to the ideological fire of anti-Americanism. President James Madison met with a group of Sauk chiefs who traveled to Washington, D.C., in November 1812 and asked them to remain neutral in the Anglo-American conflict. According to the chiefs, Madison promised that the government factor at Fort Madison would allow the two tribes to purchase goods on credit, a practice common in the North American fur trade. If true, Madison made a promise he could not keep, for by law government factors could not extend credit. Thus, when the Sauk attempted to purchase goods on credit, the government agent refused. Black Hawk, who was initially

[19] Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 68 (emphases in original).

[20] Ibid., 68-71; Hagan, *Sac and Fox Indians*, 49, 80-81, 233; Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812-1814," 86, 97, 107-8; Clark to Armstrong, September 12, 1813; "Thomas Forsyth to William Clark," July 20, 1813, vol. 2, 4-12, William Clark Papers (hereafter Clark Papers), Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka; "Nicolas Boilvin to William Clark, July 25, 1813"; "John Johnson to William Clark, July 25, 1813"; "Maurice Blondeau to William Clark, July 20, 1813," vol. 2, 13-17, 17-18, 19-20, in ibid.; R. David Edmunds, "The Illinois River Potawatomi in the War of 1812," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 62 (Winter 1969): 341-62; Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster," in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 1: 5-9, 24.

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willing to remain neutral as Madison asked, seethed with discontent, as did other Sauk who had to find another source for trade goods.[21]

That source was a Scottish trader from Prairie du Chien named Robert Dickson; he was also a British Indian agent. Dickson's mission was to recruit as many Indians as possible for the British cause. In the autumn of 1812 he had two boatloads of merchandise delivered to the Sauk. British successes during the first year of the war prevented American trade goods from reaching the upper Mississippi, and the wares delivered by Dickson had the effect of attracting many Sauk to the British standard. Black Hawk noted that the arrival of the two boats arranged by Dickson "ended all hopes of our remaining at peace."[22] It was at this point that Black Hawk became committed to the British-Indian alliance, along with 200 other Sauk under his leadership. They departed for Green Bay where they met Dickson and about 300 other Indians from the Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Odawa, and Winnebago tribes; 18 Fox joined Dickson later that summer. This eclectic Indian force participated in the battle of Frenchtown south of Detroit, which ended when Kentucky militiamen surrendered on January 21, 1813, to a combined force of 1,100 British soldiers and Indians. Black Hawk and his party stayed with Dickson into the summer and participated in the sieges of Fort Meigs and Fort Stephenson in Ohio; Tecumseh was present at both battles. The British assembled a force of 900 regulars and militia and 1,200 Indians in their assault against Fort Meigs in May 1813 but failed to take the fortification; the British and their Indian allies were similarly repulsed in August 1813 when they failed to take nearby Fort Stephenson. By this time, Black Hawk and about 20 other Sauk became restless; the sieges against Forts Meigs and Stephenson had not resulted in victories or opportunities for plunder, and thus they departed.[23]

Events in the Mississippi River valley during Black Hawk's absence threatened the tenuous neutrality of the Sauk who remained there. In September 1813, Brig. Gen. Benjamin Howard led a 1,300-man

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[21] Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path*, 44-45; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 71-72.

[22] Gilpin, *War of 1812 in the Old Northwest*, 195-96; Hagan, *Sac and Fox Indians*, 49-51; Louis A. Tohill, "Robert Dickson, British Fur Trader on the Upper Mississippi, Part II," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 3 (January 1929): 91-92; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 71, 72 (quotation).

[23] Hickey, *War of 1812*, 83-84, 130-36; Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership*, 189-99; Dickson, List of Indian Warriors Going to Detroit, June 21, 1813; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 73-80.

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expedition up the Illinois River and erected Fort Clark at Peoria in order to end Potawatomi raids into southern Illinois. He also sent a 100-man mounted patrol toward the Rock River. The Sauk chiefs feared Saukenuk might become an inviting target for these troops, particularly since the absence of Black Hawk and the other warriors left the village vulnerable. The chiefs prepared to evacuate Saukenuk but relented when a young man named Keokuk convinced them he could organize an effective defense. The expected attack never came, but Keokuk's leadership heralded his rise to prominence. Oliver Hazard Perry's naval triumph on Lake Erie on September 10, 1813, cut the British lines of communication to Mackinac Island, and on October 5, 1813, the United States defeated the British at the battle of the Thames; Tecumseh's death at the conflict was a demoralizing blow to the Indians. Because these setbacks restricted Dickson's access to the abundant stores required to maintain the Indians' loyalty, his influence waned. Still, the military position of the United States in the upper Mississippi Valley was far from secure, for the U.S. Army finally abandoned Fort Madison in September 1813 due to incessant attacks by the Winnebago and Sauk. This loss meant that the region from Mackinac Island to the Mississippi remained firmly in Britain's grasp. Benjamin Howard, commanding the Eighth Military Department at St. Louis, admitted as much when he asserted that "our difficulties with the Indians will not terminate without an imposing campaign carried as far . . . as the Oisconcen [Wisconsin River]."[24]

However, throughout 1813 the United States managed to quell the Sauk and Fox largely through diplomacy rather than war, a task made easier by the absence of the more staunchly anti-American warriors

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[24] Gilpin, *War of 1812 in the Old Northwest*, 245-46; Edmunds, "Illinois River Potawatomi," 354-60; Kate Gregg, "The War of 1812 on the Missouri Frontier, Part II," *Missouri Historical Review* 33 (January 1939): 197-98; Thomas B. Colbert, "'The Hinge on Which All Affairs of the Sauk and Fox Indians Turn': Keokuk and the United States Government," in *Enduring Nations: Native Americans in the Midwest*, ed. R. David Edmunds (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 55; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 81-83, 86; Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path*, 51-52; Ninian Edwards to John Armstrong, April 12, 1813, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 16, *The Territory of Illinois, 1809-1814*, comp. and ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 312-14; Horsman, *War of 1812*, 105-15; idem, "Wisconsin and the War of 1812," 7; Robert Dickson to John Lawe, February 14, 1814, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Draper et al., 11: 289-91; Jackson, "Old Fort Madison—1808-1813," 47-62; Benjamin Howard to Daniel Bissell, April 4, 1813, in "Fort Madison," ed. Charles Aldrich, *Annals of Iowa* 3 (April 1897): 106 (quotation). Black Hawk mentions nothing about being at the battle of the Thames in his 1833 autobiography but made such claims later in his life. The available evidence suggests that these claims were spurious. See Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 86; and Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path*, 49.

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such as Black Hawk. Nicolas Boilvin, the American Indian agent at Prairie du Chien, handled the diplomatic offensive. For example, Boilvin defused a potentially dangerous situation after American militia wantonly killed an innocent Sauk, the brother of the Sauk chief Quashquame, in 1813; he gave the dead man's family a considerable amount of merchandise in order to "put out the blood" (also known as "covering the dead"), a practice common among the Indians for redressing blood crimes.[25] Boilvin's diplomatic efforts resulted in about 1,500 Sauk detaching themselves from their tribe in September 1813 in order to remain at peace; they established a new village on the Missouri River. Even Black Hawk upon his return was resigned to staying at peace. The American victories of 1813 cooled the ardor of many Indians for the British-Indian alliance, and it appeared as though the Americans had finally gained the upper hand militarily. In the case of the Potawatomi, neighbors of the Sauk, the establishment of Fort Clark blunted their attacks, and they sued for peace. By the winter of 1813-1814, the majority of the Sauk and virtually all of the Fox were quiescent. Nevertheless, the situation was not as pacific as federal policy makers supposed; the absence of the Missouri River band gave those anti-American Sauk who advocated war (virtually all of whom were at Saukenuk) as well as their ideological comrades among the Fox a stronger position. All they needed was a provocation.[26]

Howard's plan to establish a post at Prairie du Chien was realized when William Clark departed St. Louis on May 1, 1814, with five barges (two of which were outfitted as gunboats) and 200 men. Clark stopped at Saukenuk where the Sauk quickly yielded. The rapid capitulation of the Sauk was due to the fact that the powerful flotilla arrived unexpectedly and any attack would have been foolhardy. Clark offered them peace; he delivered a similar message at the principal Fox village at

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[25] Peter L. Scanlan, "Nicolas Boilvin, Indian Agent," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 27 (December 1943): 145-53; Boilvin, "Council with the Sacs, January 22, 1813," vol. 1, 30-31, box 3, Nicholas Boilvin Letters, 1811-1823 (hereafter Boilvin Letters), Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin Papers, University of Wisconsin-Platteville Area Research Center, Platteville; "Nicolas Boilvin to William Clark, January 23, 1813," vol. 1, 32-33 (first quotation), box 3, in ibid; Martin Zanger, "Conflicting Concepts of Justice: A Winnebago Murder Trial on the Illinois Frontier," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 37 (Winter 1980): 263 (second quotation).

[26] "Baroney Vasquez to Nicolas Boilvin, February 27, 1813," vol. 1, 39a, box 3, Boilvin Letters; "Nicolas Boilvin to John Armstrong, May 22, 1813," vol. 1, 50, box 3, in ibid.; "Nicolas Boilvin to William Clark, July 25, 1813"; "Maurice Blondeau to William Clark," July 20, 1813, vol. 2, 13-16, 19-20, both in Clark Papers; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 86-88.

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Dubuque's Mines. Clark's troops reached Prairie du Chien on June 2, 1814, and began building Fort Shelby, which garrisoned 61 regulars within the next month. The post also possessed an imposing gunboat, the 70-foot *Governor Clark*, with two cannons and ten howitzers. News of the American occupation reached Lt. Col. Robert McDouall, the British commander on Mackinac Island, on June 21, 1814, and he moved quickly to address this sudden reversal of British fortunes. McDouall assembled a force under the command of Maj. William McKay that had 75 militia, 12 semiregular soldiers known as fencibles, 136 Indians, and three regulars, one of whom was a bombardier skilled at using the three-pound cannon the force transported with it. McKay and his men departed the island on June 28 and on July 4 arrived at Green Bay where local fur traders, Winnebago, and Menominee joined them. McKay's army had 650 men, more than 500 of whom were Indians, when he arrived at Prairie du Chien on July 17, 1814. His men conducted a three-day siege; McKay's bombardier landed two-thirds of his 86 rounds on the *Governor Clark*, which, despite its advantage in firepower, was forced to make its escape to St. Louis. By July 20 the Americans, outmanned and outgunned, surrendered Fort Shelby, which the British renamed Fort McKay.[27] (See image of Fort McKay on page 101.)

Subsequent events illustrated how little Clark had accomplished when he attempted to intimidate the Sauk and Fox almost three months earlier. McKay plundered the stores at Fort Shelby and sent runners with kegs of gunpowder to the Sauk in the hope they could intercept the *Governor Clark*. The runners arrived in Saukenuk on July 21; their timing was impeccable, for at that moment three flatboats and two barges with about 100 American regulars and militia were moored in the vicinity on their way to Prairie du Chien. The commander, Maj. John Campbell, had not learned of Fort Shelby's fall. Relations between the Americans and the Sauk were initially cordial. Then, during the night, McKay's runners arrived; the news of the British conquest of Fort Shelby animated the Sauk as well as the Fox and Kickapoo who were present. The next

[27] Lyman C. Draper, "Governor Clark's Prairie du Chien Expedition," vol. 26, 150-51, Draper's Notes, series S, Draper Collection; *Missouri Gazette & Illinois Advertiser* (St. Louis), June 18, 1814; Kellogg, *British Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest*, 313-20; Robert McDouall to Gordon Drummond, July 16, 1814; William McKay to Robert McDouall, July 27, 1814, both in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Draper et al., 11: 260-63, 263-69; Horsman, "Wisconsin and the War of 1812," 10-11; Peter L. Scanlan, *Prairie du Chien: French, British, American* (Menasha, Wis.: George Banta, 1937), 118-19.

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morning, these tribes attacked Campbell and his men. Campbell's flatboat ran aground due to a strong headwind, and it immediately became the Indians' principal target. The men Campbell sent ashore were killed or wounded when the Indians fired their first volley. The Indians continued to fire and boarded the vessel. According to McKay "the women even jumped on with their hoes, &c., some breaking heads, others breaking casks." Campbell lost 16 people and was forced to retreat to St. Louis.[28]

The estimated number of Indians involved in the attack on Campbell's force ranges from 400 to 700. Even if the lower estimate is correct, it was almost double the number of Sauk and Fox who fought during the first year of the conflict. Certainly, the British victory at Prairie du Chien was a motivating factor, as was the presence of an American relief column moving through the heart of the Sauk and Fox country. It was a precursor of even greater Native participation. Brigadier General Howard ordered Maj. Zachary Taylor, the future president, to take an even larger force and ascend the Mississippi. Taylor's objective was to obliterate Saukenuk, to destroy its cornfields, and then to establish a fort at the mouth of the Des Moines River; he accomplished only the third goal. Taylor's force was larger than Campbell's and had 334 men on eight gunboats when it departed St. Louis on August 2, 1814. However, by August 20 word of Taylor's departure reached Capt. Thomas Anderson, the British commander at Fort McKay, well before Taylor arrived at Saukenuk. Anderson had adequate time to organize his defenses and sent supplies and 30 men from Fort McKay to Saukenuk with instructions to the Indians to engage Taylor's expedition. An overwhelming force of about 1,000 (and possibly as many as 1,200) warriors—Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Santee Sioux, and Winnebago—was ready for Taylor when he arrived on September 4. The Indians attacked Taylor's vessels the next morning with devastating musket and artillery fire. Taylor was unable to destroy either Saukenuk or its cornfields. He was outnumbered at least three to one, and thus he withdrew after about an hour of fighting.[29]

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[28] Robert S. Allen, "Canadians on the Upper Mississippi: The Capture and Occupation of Prairie du Chien during the War of 1812," *Military Collector and Historian* 31 (Fall 1979): 120; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 88; *Missouri Gazette* (St. Louis), July 30, 1814; McKay to McDouall, July 27, 1814, 11: 269, 270 (quotation); Horsman, "Wisconsin and the War of 1812," 12.

[29] Benjamin Howard to John Armstrong, August 1, 1814, in *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 17, *The Territory of Illinois, 1814-1818*, comp. and ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1950), 3-8; *Missouri Gazette* (St. Louis), July 30, 1814; Zachary Taylor, "Zachary Taylor in Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State*

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Taylor's expedition limped south and established a small fort at the mouth of the Des Moines River; everything north of the Rock River remained in the grip of the rejuvenated British-Indian alliance. Nor was this the only American reversal, for a month earlier, on August 4, 1814, an American expedition to Mackinac Island failed to dislodge the combined British-Indian force that held the island. The area west of Lake Michigan remained unassailable, and British officers naturally assumed Great Britain would retain these lands. There was even talk of carving an Indian barrier state out of the region to serve as a bulwark against American expansion, but alas, this grand scheme would not come to fruition. Continued instability in Europe led British commissioners to drop this demand, and the Treaty of Ghent that ended the war, signed on December 24, 1814, only required the United States to return to the *status quo antebellum* and make peace with the tribes. News of the treaty's provisions came as a shock to British officers and Indians alike. McDouall, who had worked to keep both Prairie du Chien and Mackinac Island in British hands, stated that he was "penetrated with grief" and "mortified" upon hearing that both would be returned to the Americans.[30] One Winnebago chief was more blunt in his remarks and told the British in an ominous tone that, "The peace made between you and the Big Knives may be a lasting one; but it cannot be for us, for we hate them."[31]

These words were prescient. In the years after the conflict, local disputes often were the source of clashes between Native Peoples and white Americans, but the experiences of the Indians during the War of 1812—particularly pan-tribal unity and alliance with the British—served as a repository of knowledge that shaped Indian resistance. This was true not only of the Sauk and to a lesser degree the Fox, but also the Winnebago. In the immediate postwar era, it was obvious that the

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Historical Society 34 (March 1941): 84-91; Thomas Anderson, "Anderson's Journal at Fort McKay, 1814," in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Draper et al., 9: 213-26; Duncan Graham to Thomas Anderson, September 7, 1814, in ibid., 226-28; *Missouri Gazette & Illinois Advertiser* (St. Louis), September 17, 1814.

[30] Brian L. Dunnigan, "The Battle of Mackinac Island," *Michigan History* 59 (Winter 1975): 239-54; Horsman, "Wisconsin and the War of 1812," 12-14; George Prevost to Robert Dickson, January 14, 1813, *MPHC*, 15: 221; Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 156-57; Dwight L. Smith, "A North American Neutral Indian Zone: Persistence of a British Idea," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 61 (Autumn 1989): 46-58; Robert McDouall to Alfred Bulger, May 2, 1815, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Draper et al., 13: 143 (quotation).

[31] A Council at Mackinac with the Winnebagos, June 3, 1815, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Draper et al., 10: 142-45, 143 (quotation).

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Sauk (and particularly the Winnebago) evinced little interest in making peace, particularly since the anti-American members of both tribes, in the wake of their stunning successes in the summer of 1814, clearly became the ascendant voices in tribal councils. Federal commissioners began formal peace talks at Portage des Sioux, Missouri, with all the regional tribes in May 1815. The Sauk sent only a single chief who had no authority to negotiate. He was accompanied by about 50 Sauk and Fox warriors who swaggered about the treaty ground and held the commissioners in contempt. At the same time, Sauk and Fox warriors continued their depredations as though the war had not ended. One of the most significant acts was the battle of the Sinkhole in spring 1815 in which Black Hawk led a war party and took revenge upon the militiamen who had killed Quashquame's brother two years earlier. The Sauk in particular remained so aggressive that the war department considered organizing a military expedition against them in summer 1815. The Fox, always the more conciliatory of the two tribes, relented and signed a peace treaty in September 1815. The Sauk remained far more obstinate and did not sign a treaty until May 1816, when the tribal leadership realized that further violence, particularly without British support, served no purpose. Black Hawk was one of the signatories, but little did he know that the United States inserted provisions into both the Sauk and Fox treaties that stated the two tribes accepted without reservation the cession outlined in the 1804 treaty. When Black Hawk learned of this deceit, he noted that the 1816 treaty was "the first time, I touched the goose quill to the treaty—not knowing, however, that, by that act, I consented to give away my village."[32] Thus, American duplicity kept the fires of anti-Americanism burning.

Maintaining the British-Indian alliance after 1815 was another factor that sustained Native anti-Americanism. The British rebuilt their

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[32] Robert L. Fisher, "The Treaties of Portage des Sioux," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 19 (March 1933): 495-503; William Clark et al. to William Crawford, May 22, 1815; William Clark et al. to the Secretary of War, July 16; October 18, 1815, both in *ASP*, 2, *Indian Affairs*, ed. Lowrie and St. Clair Clarke, 2: 7, 8, 9-11; *Missouri Gazette & Illinois Advertiser* (St. Louis), July 8, 15, 1815; *Missouri Gazette* (St. Louis), September 16, 1815; June 15, 1816; "A. J. Dallas, Circular Letter, June 14, 1815," RG-75, microfilm, M-15, reel 3, vol. C, 215, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives; "George Graham to Andrew Jackson, August 25, 1815," Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800-1889, RG 107, microfilm, M-6, reel 8, vol. 8, 294-95, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, National Archives; Treaty with the Foxes, September 14, 1815; Treaty with the Sauk, May 13, 1816, both in *Indian Affairs*, comp. and ed. Kappler, 2: 121-22, 126-28; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 98 (quotation).

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shattered reputation among the Indians and sustained diplomatic contact with them in the event of another war with the United States. The British continued their policy of cementing ties with the tribes by lavishing them with presents at Malden as well as at a new post built on Drummond Island, 45 miles northeast of Mackinac. By 1820, a staggering 3,800 Indians had visited Malden and another 5,685 had visited Drummond Island. Of the 5,906 Indians who visited Malden in the year 1827, 4,409 or about 75 percent came from lands under American sovereignty. As they had done before the war, British Indian agents had to walk a fine line, seeking to keep the Indians within Britain's diplomatic orbit without provoking them into hostilities against the United States. This often resulted in the Indians receiving ambiguous messages.[33]

This ambiguity, as well as the continued ideology of resistance and anti-Americanism, became evident when the Winnebago launched the first postwar rebellion against the United States. Many Winnebago returning from Malden and Drummond Island in summer 1819 believed that the British would support them in a renewed war against the United States, so they shot at and otherwise harassed U.S. Army personnel in the vicinity of Lake Winnebago. The Winnebago also sent war belts to the Santee Sioux and Ojibwe in hopes of creating yet another pan-Indian alliance. Although nothing came of these early efforts, at least a few Winnebago were inspired to kill two unarmed American soldiers at Rock Island in 1820. There were additional factors that increased anti-American sentiments among the Winnebago, particularly the large numbers of whites spilling onto their lands in southwestern Wisconsin and northwestern Illinois to mine lead. By 1826 it was estimated that 1,500 miners were mining lead (many of them illegally) on Indian lands; the result was the Winnebago Uprising of 1827. The principal actor was a Winnebago named Red Bird who sent war belts to the Santee Sioux and other tribes in an attempt to form an Indian alliance, although only the Santee Sioux evinced any interest. It is telling that Red Bird only managed to attract

[33] Colin G. Calloway, "The End of an Era: British-Indian Relations in the Great Lakes Area after the War of 1812," *The Michigan Historical Review* 12 (Fall 1986): 9-14; Catherine A. Sims, "Algonkian-British Relations in the Upper Great Lakes Region: Gathering to Give and Receive Presents, 1815-1843" (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1992), 1-91; Anderson's Remarks, July 13, 1828, *MPHC,* 23: 147-48; "Alexander Wolcott to Lewis Cass, November 14, 1819," RG 75, microfilm, M-1, reel 6, frames 212-13, Records of the Michigan Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1814-1851, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives.

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about 150 Winnebago and a few Santee Sioux, but this was enough to attack two American keelboats ascending the Mississippi on June 30, 1827. It was the first act of violence committed by an organized (albeit small) pan-tribal war party with the intention of attracting other tribes to what Red Bird hoped would be a general Indian uprising. It failed because tribal leaders throughout the region knew that British support, which had been the key to the Indians' success during the War of 1812, would not be forthcoming. The United States rapidly quelled this uprising and took the ringleaders into custody. It is interesting that the military commanders and federal Indian agents who organized the expedition against the Winnebago used a force composed of about 800 regulars, more than 180 militia, and 183 Indians (mostly Menominee).[34] Obviously, the British employment of Indians during the War of 1812 made a lasting impression upon American commanders.

In the wake of the Winnebago Uprising, the head of the Indian Office, Thomas McKenney, triumphantly boasted that there were no more "Pontiacs or Tecumthes [*sic*] to form and lead on confederated bands."[35] Yet Red Bird was simply a latter-day Pontiac and Tecumseh, albeit far less successful. Indeed, the rebellion he led was evidence that the ideology of resistance that had emerged in its mature form with the Shawnee Prophet and Tecumseh continued to exist and shape the actions of those Indians who sought to stem the tide of American expansion. Critical to this ideology were two pillars that the Shawnee brothers preached in the years before the War of 1812: pan-tribal cooperation and alliance with the British in Canada.

Black Hawk was the next great Indian leader to organize an effort based upon these principles. Like Tecumseh, he had a religious

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[34] Alexander Wolcott to Lewis Cass, November 14, 1819; Joseph Smith to Jacob Brown, January 5, 1820, both in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Draper et al., 19: 139-42; William Maddison to unknown, October 5, 1819, in ibid., 20: 126; "Nicolas Boilvin to John C. Calhoun, June 11, 1819," vol. 1, 105-7, box 3, Boilvin Letters; "John Kinzie to Lewis Cass, July 24, 1819"; "John Marsh to Lewis Cass, November 20, 1826," RG 75, microfilm, M-1, reel 6, frame 92; reel 19, frame 106, both in Records of the Michigan Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1814-1851, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives; Zanger, "Conflicting Concepts of Justice," 263-76; Martin Zanger, "Red Bird," in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 64-87; Patrick J. Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 44.

[35] Thomas McKenney to James Barbour, September 17, 1827, *Indian Tribes, Northwestern Frontier: Letter from the Secretary of War . . . in Relation to the Hostile Disposition of the Indian Tribes on the Northwestern Frontier*, 20th Cong., 1st sess., 1828, H. Doc. 277, serial 175, 11.

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advisor, Wabokieshiek, or the Winnebago Prophet, a half-Sauk, half-Winnebago seer who claimed contact with the spirit world. In contrast to the Shawnee Prophet, the Winnebago Prophet initially preached a message of healing and salvation rather than resistance. What changed his thinking were the hordes of white miners illegally taking lead ore from Winnebago lands. By 1828 he increasingly expressed dissatisfaction over the federal government's failure to control the situation. Black Hawk began consulting the Winnebago Prophet in 1828; this was the same year that the United States told the Sauk and Fox to leave the lands covered in the 1804 treaty cession. By this time a clear division existed among the Sauk, who, in contrast to the Fox, still resided largely on the ceded territory. About one-sixth of the tribe, roughly 1,000 members (the most staunchly anti-American) followed Black Hawk. Those who reluctantly decided to abide by the treaty (more than 4,000 Sauk) cast their lot with Keokuk. By 1829 Black Hawk had emerged as the leader of the antiremoval faction, and he sent runners to other tribes, some as far away as Arkansas and Texas, in order to gain their cooperation. Unlike Red Bird, Black Hawk did not intend to start a rebellion; he and the Winnebago Prophet believed that if they could gain the support of other tribes and the British in Canada, they could force the United States to reconsider the 1804 treaty.[36]

Black Hawk first attempted to realize this plan in 1831 when he led between 1,200 and 1,600 Indians in a defiant occupation of Saukenuk. He was more successful than Red Bird in drawing support from other tribes, for in addition to his Sauk supporters, Black Hawk also attracted more than 200 Kickapoo (who, like the Sauk, faced removal westward), about 100 Potawatomi, and roughly 50 of the Winnebago Prophet's followers. The Winnebago Prophet assured Black Hawk that as long as they remained at peace, the United States would not force them to leave. However, Maj. Gen. Edmund P. Gaines warned Black Hawk that he would use force to effect their removal. Gaines federalized 1,450 mounted Illinois militia, who, along with 270 regulars, stormed Saukenuk on the morning of June 26, 1831.

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[36] Caleb Atwater, *Remarks on a Tour to Prairie du Chien: Thence to Washington City in 1829* (Columbus, Ohio: Isaac N. Whiting, 1831), 65, 90, 134; "Thomas Forsyth to William Clark," June 22; May 24, 1828; May 22, 1829, all in vol. 6, 88-89, 81-82, 100-101, Forsyth Papers; "William Clark to John Eaton, January 17, 1831," RG 75, microfilm, M-234, reel 749, frame 1126, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives; Nehemiah Matson, *Memories of Shaubena: With Incidents Relating to the Early Settlement of the West* (Chicago: D. B. Cooke, 1878), 106; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 113-37.

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They found the village deserted, for Black Hawk and his followers wisely decide the night before the incursion that discretion was the better part of valor and slipped across the Mississippi under the cover of darkness. In the months that followed, Black Hawk gained another advisor, a young Sauk civil chief named Napope. Napope stated that he had visited Malden and that the British promised to support Black Hawk's plan to remain at Saukenuk and also would support him in the event of a war with the United States. Napope also asserted that the regional tribes—the Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Winnebago—would ally with Black Hawk. Having been humiliated by his retreat from Saukenuk in the summer of 1831, Black Hawk was receptive to Napope's promises. He noted after listening to Napope, "I now began to hope, from his *talk*, that my people would be once more happy."[37]

Black Hawk later learned from bitter experience that Napope's assurances were, indeed, the fantastic products of a fertile imagination. Nevertheless, they prompted Black Hawk to cross the Mississippi in the spring of 1832 with more than 1,100 followers. He had roughly 200 Kickapoo who been with him since 1830 and 50 Fox, as well as more than 900 Sauk. The Fox had joined him after killing a group of Menominee the summer before; they were now fugitives attempting to escape punishment. One member of the Fox tribe made his sentiments clear when he brandished a lance he had used against the Menominee and bragged that he "hoped to brake [*sic*], or wear it out on the Americans."[38] Collectively Black Hawk's followers were named, not surprisingly, the British Band. It clearly was not a war party, for the British Band had women, children, and elderly members. Black Hawk hoped that by moving up the Rock River, attracting the support of

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[37] William Clark to the Secretary of War, August 12, 1831; Edmund P. Gaines to Roger Jones, June 14, 1831; Felix St. Vrain to William Clark, May 15, 1831; John Reynolds to Andrew Jackson, August 2, 1831; William Clark to John Eaton, July 6, 1831; William Clark to Lewis Cass, August 9, 1831; Letter from Rushville, June 20, 1831; Edmund P. Gaines to Hugh White, July 6, 1831, all in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 2: 136, 135-37, 138n, 47, 7, 122n, 102, 127, 128n, 64-71n, 102-3; "Joseph Street to John Eaton, July 12, 1831," RG 75, microfilm, M-234, reel 696, frame 355, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives; Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster," in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 1: 45-46; John A. Wakefield, *Wakefield's History of the Black Hawk War* (1834; repr., Madison, Wis.: Roger Hunt, 1976), 29, 159-76; Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 63; *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore), May 4, 1833; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 119-35, 132 (quotation, emphasis in original).

[38] Felix St. Vrain to William Clark, April 6, 18, 1832, both letters in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 2: 230-31, 277 (quotation); Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster," in ibid., 1: 39-40.

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additional tribes along the way, and taking receipt of goods that Napope said the British would deliver to Milwaukee, he would be able to make a strong show of force that would cause the United States to reconsider its position. However, as Black Hawk traveled up the Rock River, Napope's promises began to unravel. Other tribes had no intention of supporting him, and no British goods were waiting at Milwaukee. Tragically, Black Hawk decided to turn back just as his warriors made contact with the Illinois militia on May 14, 1832. With this event, known as the battle of Stillman's Run, the Black Hawk War began.[39]

Although Black Hawk did not intend to start the war that bears his name, the conflict illustrates both the persistence and limits of anti-Americanism and the ideology of resistance that it spawned. In addition to the Kickapoo and Fox who joined his band, Black Hawk also received assistance from the Winnebago and Potawatomi. However, unlike the Kickapoo and Fox who were committed to Black Hawk's cause, the Winnebago and Potawatomi generally used the advent of the war to settle disputes they had with local white settlers. An excellent example is the Big Indian Creek massacre, which occurred on May 21, 1832, when about 50 Potawatomi descended upon a white settlement in northern Illinois and killed 15 of the 23 whites present. Although the battle of Stillman's Run the week before may have been the catalyst, the cause was the beating a local Potawatomi received earlier that year from a white man at the Big Indian Creek settlement. Local disputes were also the cause of Winnebago attacks against white settlements at the Blue Mounds in Wisconsin. All told, only about 50 Potawatomi and the same number of Winnebago committed depredations during the Black Hawk War; much greater numbers of warriors from both tribes fought against Black Hawk. Indeed, the United States enjoyed the assistance of at least 754 Indians, and thousands more indirectly assisted the American cause by simply staying neutral. They had little to gain by fighting against the United States, particularly without British support. Nor was their support of the Americans purely mercenary: tribes such as the Menominee and

[39] Examination of Prisoners, August 20, 1832; John Bliss to Henry Atkinson, April 9-12, 1832; Andrew Hughes to Henry Atkinson, April 13, 1832; Samuel Stambaugh to George Boyd, August 13, 1832; Nathan Smith to Henry Atkinson, April 13, 1832; John Dixon to Isaiah Stillman, April 28, 1832; George Davenport to Henry Atkinson, April 13, 1832; Examination of Prisoners, August 27, 1832; Militia Officer's Report, May 18, 1832, all in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 2: 1034-35, 237-39, 248, 1056-57, 1074, 249, 325, 247, 387-88; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 135-46; Matson, *Memories of Shaubena*, 105-6; Forsyth, "Original Causes," 9: 54-59; Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster," in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 1: 39-40.

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the Santee Sioux had specific grievances against the Sauk and Fox; the Potawatomi and to some extent the Winnebago hoped that serving against Black Hawk would prevent giving the United States the pretext it needed to take their lands without adequate compensation.[40]

It is odd that in his autobiography Black Hawk mentions the Shawnee Prophet only once and Tecumseh not at all.[41] He undoubtedly knew of the great Shawnee leader, for both of them fought together in Ohio during the War of 1812. This involvement, as well as the participation of hundreds of Sauk, Fox, and members of other tribes in the western battles of the War of 1812, provided the next generation of Indian leaders such as Black Hawk and Red Bird with a wealth of experience on which to draw as white settlers continued to press upon their domains and the federal government facilitated the process through the aggressive acquisition of Indian lands. The failures of Black Hawk and Red Bird should not obscure the debt they owned to earlier patriot chiefs such as Pontiac and Tecumseh. Certainly, the ideology of resistance that the nativist movements in the Old Northwest spawned from the 1730s to the 1830s eventually ran its course, and later Indian resistance was shaped by other factors. Nevertheless, for the better part of a century, this unique set of ideas inspired men such as Pontiac, Tecumseh, Black Hawk, and Red Bird. The War of 1812 was the culmination of this ideology; the Black Hawk War was its dénouement. In the months after the War of 1812, Black Hawk hinted at this outcome. In a speech he delivered at Prairie du Chien in August 1815 he noted, "I hope I may not be obliged to dig up my Hatchet[.] I know these Big Knives have sweet tongues and [I] fear they have cheated us all."[42]

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[40] Matson, *Memories of Shaubena*, 117-27, 149-53; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 147, 151-53; Examination of Prisoners, August 27, 1832, 2: 1055; "George Wacker to Henry Atkinson, January 17, 1833," RG 75, microfilm, M-234, reel 728, frame 316, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives; La Salle County Circuit Court Order, May 21, 1834; War News from Galena, May 30, 1832; Robert Anderson, Memoranda, August 27, 1832, all in *Black Hawk War, 1831-1832*, comp. and ed. Whitney, 2: 1283, 488-89, 1057; Clifton, *Prairie People*, 233; Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 95-96, 112, 174; John W. Hall, *Uncommon Defense: Indian Allies in the Black Hawk War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 241-56.

[41] Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 66.

[42] Speech of Black Hawk, August 3, 1815, *MPHC*, 16: 197.

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