

# A Memoir of Indian Names in Iowa, With Their Signification

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# A MEMOIR OF INDIAN NAMES IN IOWA,

WITH THEIR SIGNIFICATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

[My attention has been directed for some years, to the signification of the Indian names connected with the State, counties, towns, and rivers of Iowa. My first information was obtained from Antoine Le Claire, an early Indian interpreter of the Government, and the original proprietor of Davenport. His death hindered the completion of my design, and caused a resort to the "History of the Indian Tribes in the United States," the "History of the North American Indians," "Catlin's Letters," and the "Life of Blackhawk," as authorities, to a great extent, from which this Memoir of Indian Names is composed. It by no means completes the list of Indian names, incorporated with the geography and history of Iowa.—EDITOR.]

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## INTRODUCTION.

The story of Indian names in Iowa remains to be told. And their signification in plain English, should be ascertained before their true interpretation is forever lost from the memory of men.

The very name of the State of Iowa, of several of its counties, towns, and rivers, is Indian; and each name is full of significance. For all Indian names, like those in Hebrew and other oriental languages, have a distinct meaning. It is now too late to trace the origin of Indian names, arising from circumstances that tradition has not preserved to our time, since the American Indians had no written language nor history of their own.

Even in our day, the origin of names is often most curious and singular. For example, the county-seat of Yates, N. Y., which is Penn Yan, originated in this way: The place was settled by Pennsylvanians and Yankees from New England. And so they concluded to name it from the first syllable of each word, "Penn" and "Yan," or Penn Yan. So likewise in Iowa, the northeastern county of the State was named Allamakee, from Allan McKee, a Scotchman of that section al-

though the word as contracted sounds very much like Indian. In like manner arose the name of Winterset, the county-seat of Madison, in Iowa. The commissioners to locate and name it, as reported, were sitting around the fire, and one proposed to call it Summerset. But another, influenced by the cold of the season, said: "Call it Winterset, rather;" on which they agreed.

#### IOWA.

Iowa, to begin with the Indian name of the State, means: "This is the place," or "Here is the spot." It was so given to the country when the Indians crossed the great river Mississippi, as driven before their enemies they exclaimed: "This is the place" to live unmolested! "Here is the spot" to dwell in peace amid wild, unbounded hunting grounds!

Writers of fiction have attempted to throw much romance around this significant name. Washington Irving represented a tall Indian on the high bluffs of Illinois, "overlooking the majestic Mississippi, as exclaiming at the sight of the green prairies beyond, and of the wild scenery of nature: I-o-wa! I-o-wa! I-O-WA! Beautiful! *Beautiful!* BEAUTIFUL!"

Others, (like Augustus C. Dodge of Iowa, when formerly a United States Senator, in a speech before Congress,) have said the word means "None such." But the most reliable interpretation is that of Antoine Le Claire, which has been already given, namely: "This is the place," or "Here is the spot." Mr. Le Claire was himself of French and Indian extraction, born among the Indians, and familiar with their language from his youth, when he early began to be United States interpreter, and only ceased to be interpreter after the removal of the Indians from the territory. And it is much to be regretted that more information could not have been obtained from him before his death.

The earliest form of this name, as far as known to the writer, is in French—"Ai-ou-ez," conforming as nearly to the idiom of the Indian tongue as the French will permit, but not conveying the exact sound of the word. From the French word came the English spelling of it, I-o-way, as found in old books and maps. But the word has finally assumed the more classic form of

I-o-wa, with the accent on the letter *I*, and the final *a* pronounced like the last letter in *America*, or like *e* in the English word *her*. It is now so spelt and pronounced in Webster and Worcester's dictionaries, and so uttered by polite speakers. It is most devoutly to be wished that this classic English pronunciation may prevail.

Iowa is not only the name of a growing State, but of a large county; of a prosperous town, Iowa City; and of a beautiful river, so long the haunt of the tribe of Indians called Iowas, after the same original word, giving name to all and to each of these. It has thus, from the place or tribe been adopted and transferred to the geography and history of the country.

#### DES MOINES.

Des Moines, the French name of the present capital of Iowa, and of the river on which it is situated, as well as of the county of which Burlington is the seat of justice, is deserving of mention here as being of Indian origin, and belonging to Indian history. Mr. Antoine Le Claire wrote in a special communication to the author of this Memoir, under date of March 11th, 1858, as follows: "In regard to the definition of Des Moines, the name was given by the Indians; that is, the Indians living on this side of the river were a large tribe; and those on the other side, few in number; and these [took] the name of De Moins, meaning the small tribe of Indians. As regards some persons saying it was derived from the monks, [Des Moines,] that is incorrect."

In a subsequent personal explanation, he insisted that the name should be spelt De Moins, and not Des Moines, for the reason given as to its origin, De Moins being a phrase for "The Less" tribe, or the tribe "of Inferiority."

And here it may be suggested, that it might better be anglicised and spelt Demoin, uniting the two words and dropping the final *s*, since the nasal sound of Moins cannot become English, nor the present spelling of Des Moines be rid of the hissing sound of the *s* in each word, as pronounced by the illiterate mass of people unaccustomed to the French pronunciation. But Demoin, dropping the *s* and pronouncing it as plain Eng-

lish, would make an agreeable word. Let the legislature so enact the name, or the people at large learn how to give it a euphoneous articulation for the credit of the capital of the State.

It may be proper also, to add, that the French being early among the Indians of the North, if not before the English, have given out ideas and sounds ill adapted to American notions of speech, thereby affecting permanently and unfavorably the Indian names of the Northwest. It is not so much so with the names derived from the Spanish, such as Monona and Osceola, which much more nearly conform to the classic model of American names.

#### AP-PA-NOO-SE.

##### A CHIEF WHEN A CHILD.

Ap-pa-noo-se, in alphabetical order is the first Indian name of a county on the southern boundary of Iowa. It means, "A chief when a child," implying that he was descended from a chief. It is the name of a Sac\* (Sauk) chief. He was one of the Indian delegates to Washington, in 1837. On his way home he visited Boston, and was said to have made the greatest speech of all the Indians in reply to Governor Everett's welcome. A Boston editor, through an interpreter, gave the following report of it:

"You have heard just now, what my chief has to say. All our chiefs are warriors, and very much gratified with their visit to this place. Last Saturday they were invited to a great house, (Faneuil Hall,) and now they are in the great council house. I am very much pleased with so much attention. This we cannot reward you for now, but shall not forget; and hope the Great Spirit will reward you for it. This is the place our great forefathers once inhabited. I have often heard my father and grandfather say, they lived near the sea coast, where the white man first came. I am glad to hear all this from you. I suppose it is put in a book, where you learn all these things. As far as I can understand the language of white people, it appears to me that the Americans have attained a very high rank

\*Sac or Saukee means "yellow earth."

among the white people. It is the same with us. Where we live beyond the Mississippi, I am respected by all the people, and they consider me the tallest among them. I am happy that two great men meet, and shake hands with each other."

He then extended his hand to Governor Everett as a token of regard, amid shouts of applause from the multitude, who admired his tall and self-complacent figure.

Nothing further has been learned by the writer, of this stately Indian, except that his portrait presents the appearance of a lofty and noble Indian in the prime of manhood and princely adornment, in native style of decoration and painted features.

#### MA-KA-TAI-ME-CHE-KIA-KIAH.

##### BLACKHAWK.

The Indian name of Blackhawk, Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-Che-Kia-Kiah, means more properly Black Sparrow Hawk. And it reminds one of what Cotton Mather said of some Indian names in New England, that they seemed to have been growing in length ever since the confusion of tongues at Babel! Still, however, Blackhawk is the English name of a most remarkable warrior of the Sac tribe of Indians—a name which has not only been given to a county and a town in Iowa, but has impressed indelible outlines upon the history of the Northwest, and of the whole country by the war, called the "Blackhawk War;" and by the first purchase of territory in Iowa, known as the "Blackhawk Purchase," lying between the Iowa and the Mississippi.

Blackhawk was born at Rock Island, Illinois, in 1767. His father's name was variously written, Py-e-sa, or Paw-he-se; and his great grandfather's was Na-ma-kee, or Thunder.

Blackhawk was not born a chief, but rose by personal courage and brave exploits to be a war chief; at fifteen years of age, having wounded an enemy; at sixteen, having killed and scalped an Osage Indian; and in subsequent battles, as leader of two hundred warriors, claiming to have killed five with his own hand in a single fight with the Osages, who lost one hundred in all, while his own band lost only nineteen braves. In a subsequent battle with the Cherokees, although the Sacs were victorious, his father was killed, and he became the leader of the

tribe with the "Medicine Bag," which fell to him. Afterwards young Blackhawk had six or seven battles with Osages, Chipewas and Kaskaskias, in which more than one hundred of the enemy were slain.

In 1803, Blackhawk made his last visit to Saint Louis, before it came into the possession of the United States. And with the treaty of 1804 he was always dissatisfied, maintaining that a few drunken Indians bargained away their lands at Rock Island; and he insisted on his right to his native village there, especially until the lands were actually sold to white settlers by the United States. Hence, in after years arose his conflict with the Government. And in this hostile state of mind, when he became acquainted with Lieutenant (afterwards General) Pike, in 1805, at Rock Island, Blackhawk refused to give up the British flag, saying he wished to have two fathers, or have the choice of alliance either with the British or the Americans.

Afterwards in the same hostility to the Americans, with his band of thirty warriors, he attacked Fort Madison, Iowa, killing three soldiers outside of the fortifications. And in 1812, at the battle of the Thames (Tippecanoe), when Tecumseh was killed by the Kentucky dragoons, Blackhawk with two hundred of his warriors was by the side of that noted chief, who fell at the first fire of the American troops. "I saw," said Blackhawk, "Tecumseh stagger forward over a fallen tree near which he was standing." After the battle, at night, he found Tecumseh's body, with a bullet wound above the hip, and his skull broken, probably by a soldier's musket, on the spot where he saw him fall. He and his men buried him as he was, in a common dress, Tecumseh not being distinguishable from the other Indians in dress, nor being mutilated by the soldiers, while another chief decked out with Indian finery, was skinned and pierced all over his body, doubtless being mistaken by the vengeful soldiers for Tecumseh, the leader of the Indian allies of the British in this battle.

After this, on his return to Rock Island, Blackhawk and his adherents were known as the "British Band." And in 1815, on the 24th of May, he attacked Fort Howard, with eighteen of his warriors, and successfully resisted the main force from

the fort under Lieutenant Drake, who pursued them, retiring into a sinkhole, where they defended themselves against a moveable breastwork on wagon wheels, constructed by the lieutenant, until under the cover of the darkness, they retreated, leaving five of their Indian braves dead, and with others wounded; and, on the part of the fort, a loss of one captain, one third-lieutenant, and five privates killed, and five wounded; and one citizen killed, and two mortally wounded.

At a still later period Blackhawk and his band attacked some boats ascending the Mississippi, and drove back the boatmen, with some killed on board.

But on the 13th of May, 1816, he made a treaty with Messrs. Clark, Edwards & Chouteau, commissioners of the United States, in which the treaty of 1804 was accepted, and Blackhawk agreed to leave his native Rock Island village, on the sale of the lands by the United States to actual settlers.

The building of Fort Armstrong on Rock Island, about this time was another grievance to the Indians who said the Good Spirit fled affrighted on his swan-like wings from the cave in the south end of the Island, now known as "Blackhawk's Cave." Dispirited also, by deaths in his family, first of a son, and then a grandson, Blackhawk discolored his face, remained at home, drank only water at noon, and ate but little at evening.

In the winter of 1819-20, a Sac having killed an Iowa Indian, Blackhawk called at the wigwam of the murderer, who was too sick to go, and his brother went in his place, to the camp of the Iowas. But when they found it was the murderer's brother, they cheerfully surrendered the brother, and so settled the matter between the tribes.

In 1822, during the winter, Blackhawk encamped on the Two Rivers in Illinois, where being charged without proof with shooting hogs, a white man wrenched his gun from him and beat him with sticks, which treatment he highly resented as unjust, and only resulting from suspicion. Continual encroachments by the whites also, were made on his village, of which he complained to the commandant at Fort Armstrong, and to Governor Coles of Illinois. On one occasion, a white man

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having bought a barrel of whisky to sell to the Indians, Blackhawk, with a few of his band went and rolled out the barrel, and knocking in the head, poured the whisky on the ground.

In 1829, the United States sold some tracts of land embracing Blackhawk's village. The Fox Indians with Keokuk, their head man, retired to Iowa, while Blackhawk and his British band offered to leave for six thousand dollars. The United States' agent notified them to leave. Eight settlers with one whisky dealer, memorialized Governor Reynolds of Illinois, who then informed General Wm. Clark, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, that on account of "actual invasion," he had called out seven hundred militia on the 28th of May, 1831. And Gen. Clark responded by ordering six companies of United States troops to Rock Island, which he deemed sufficient without the militia. On their arrival, General Gaines held a council at Rock Island with Keokuk, Wapello and other chiefs, at which Blackhawk appeared. The General asked: "Who is Blackhawk? Is he a chief? By what right does he appear in council?" Blackhawk wrapped his blanket about him, and walked away. The next morning he took his seat again in council; and rising said: "Yesterday, my father, you inquired: Who is Blackhawk? Why does he sit among the chiefs? I will tell you who I am. I am a Sac; my father was a Sac. I am a warrior; and so was my father. Ask the young men who have followed me to battle, and they will tell you who Blackhawk is. Provoke my people to war, and you will learn who Blackhawk is." Here the matter was dropped. But Blackhawk and his party refused to go over the Mississippi. General Gaines called for volunteers, sixteen hundred of whom under General Joseph Duncan, Governor Reynolds sent. The next morning the Indians were encamped on the Iowa side of the river, under a white flag. And on the 30th of June, 1831, a treaty was made with Blackhawk, Pa-she-pa-ha. (the Stabber,) and others, or a capitulation of submission by the British band to the other Indians, of trade only with the United States, and of visits only with leave to the Rock Island village, their old home and burying ground.

It being now too late to plant that year in Iowa, some of the

young Indians in the autumn, crossed over to get some roasting ears from the fields which their band had planted near Rock Island, and were shot at by the white settlers. A party of Indians also went up to Prairie du Chien to avenge the murder of some of their tribe, fell on the Menominies and killed twenty-eight of that tribe. Upon a demand for the surrender of the slayers of these to the authorities of the United States, the Indians refused on the plea of ordinary native warfare; and thus the whole British band were regarded as assuming a hostile attitude toward the United States.

In April, 1832, after vainly endeavoring to unite the rest of the Sac and Fox Indians, and other tribes in a general Indian war, Blackhawk and his party in violation of the late treaty, crossed over the Mississippi on their way to the Winnebagoes, to plant corn on their grounds. General Atkinson ordered them to return to Iowa. But they went and encamped on the Kish-wa-co-kee, (Kish-wa-kee), where they were preparing a dog feast for some Pottawattamie chiefs on a visit to them. Hither the volunteers from Illinois and the United States troops pursued them. By permission of General Whiteside, who commanded the militia from Illinois, Major Stillman with two hundred and seventy-five mounted volunteers, started on a scout from Dixon's Ferry towards the Indian camp. He went about thirty miles to Sycamore Creek, near to where the Indians were preparing their dog feast. It was on the 14th of May, that Blackhawk was informed of their approach; and he sent three of his young men with a white flag for a parley. And then he sent five more to find what had become of the three. The one carrying the white flag, meanwhile had been killed, and the other two were captured by the volunteers, and two of the five were killed in an encounter with twenty mounted men, the captured Indians escaping, and killing each a trooper on their return to the Indian camp. Blackhawk with fifty of his warriors sallied forth to avenge the death of his braves, one of whom carried a flag of truce, the rest of his men being ten miles off. A skirmish ensued in which Major Stillman's force was put to a hasty retreat, with a loss of ten or twelve men, and all his camp supplies. Nor did he stop till he reached headquarters

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at Dixon's Ferry, with a greatly exaggerated account of the battle, and of the number of the Indians engaged. Blackhawk now irritated by this attack on his white flag of truce party, and supplied with provisions, blankets, and all sorts of equipments left behind by Stillman's retreating force, prepared in earnest for a border war, assisted by some Winnebago volunteers. The women and children were sent forward toward the Four Lakes. Hostilities began; a party of Pottawattamies fell upon a white settlement on Indian Creek, a branch flowing into Fox river, and killed fifteen men, women, and children, taking two Misses Hall prisoners, who were afterwards returned by friendly Winnebagoes. An Indian party also stole some horses, at Kellogg's Grove, near Galena, and were pursued by Capt. J. W. Stephenson, killing five of the Indians, and losing three of his twelve men. It was at a council about this time, near Galena, that Na-o-po-pe, second in command, advised to go and burn Galena, and butcher the women and children, as most of the men were gone to the war. But Blackhawk said: "I do not war with women and children."

On the 11th of June, eleven Sac Indians killed five white men at Spafford's farm. General Dodge, with twenty-nine men pursued them into a swamp, and shot, and killed, and scalped them all, retaliating with the scalping knife in true Indian style.

On the 24th of June, the Indians attacked a fort at Buffalo Grove, guarded by Captain Dement with one hundred and fifty men, some of whom were killed, and forty horses were taken by the Indians, with which and some provisions, they retreated. They were met by Col. Posey, with a detachment sent for the relief of the fort, and there was some loss on both sides, the troops out-numbering Blackhawk's party of two hundred Indians.

On the 21st of July, General Atkinson, with four hundred regulars and twenty-one hundred militia or mounted volunteers, having pursued the Indians, with General Dodge, overtook them at the Wisconsin river. The most of the Indians were with the women and children, crossing over to an island for safety. Blackhawk had only about fifty warriors with him, and

was obliged to fall back into a deep ravine till darkness protected his escape, with a loss of only six of his guard, while his whole loss by shooting, and by drowning, in the attempt to cross by some, and to float down the river by others, was sixty-eight. And all along the trail of the retreating Indians many were found starved to death.

Despairing of being able to make further resistance, Blackhawk hurried on his people to Bad Axe, nearly opposite the Little Iowa river, on the banks of the Mississippi, with the hope of crossing away from the troops.

Arrived thither on the first of August, he and his people, although making friendly signals, were attacked with cannon by a force on the steamboat *Warrior*, and twenty-three of the Indians were killed before they could escape the range of the guns.

But on August 2d, 1832, occurred the final battle of Bad Axe, which was more of a slaughter of Indians, squaws, and papposes indiscriminately, than a regular fight. Some attempted to cross the river, a squaw actually holding to the tail of a swimming Indian pony, thus going over the Mississippi. Some fled, and among them Blackhawk. But one hundred and fifty were slain on the ground. And those that reached the Iowa shore were captured and returned by the Sioux Indians. Thirty-nine women and children were taken prisoners by the troops, consisting of four hundred regulars and over nine hundred volunteers. Colonel Taylor, (afterwards President), commanded the regulars. Twelve Indians who escaped on the Wisconsin side, were captured by Capt. Eliphalet Price, and a number were taken by the Sioux on the west bank. Such in brief was the battle or rather the slaughter of Bad Axe, that ended the "Blackhawk War." For Blackhawk himself and the Prophet were pursued by Decorah, known as the "one eyed," and by Caramani, and were taken near the Dalles on the Wisconsin, and delivered by Capt. E. Price to Mr. Street, the Indian agent, at Prairie du Chein. Na-o-po-pe, second under Blackhawk was among those taken and returned as prisoners by the Sioux. It was owing to the bad counsel of Na-o-po-pe and the Prophet,

that Blackhawk left Iowa, and fell into so great disaster and distress.

On the 21st of September, 1832, General Scott and Governor Reynolds made a treaty with the Sac and Fox Indians, retaining Blackhawk and his two sons with the Prophet, Na-o-po-pe and five others, as hostages during the pleasure of the United States, and setting the other prisoners at liberty. This Blackhawk war cost the lives of about five hundred men, women and children of the Indians, as well as of many soldiers, among whom the cholera was very deadly at Rock Island, besides two millions of dollars of the United States, all of which might have been prevented by a more liberal treatment of Blackhawk and his British band, who insisted that they had been wrongfully sold out of their lands at St. Louis, in the treaty of 1804, in which they had no part, twenty millions of acres of good land having been bargained off for twenty thousand dollars.

Blackhawk and the other hostages were confined at Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, under Jeff. Davis, Lieutenant at that time, and were put in irons with "ball and chain," which was a great mortification to all. The author of the "Sketchbook," Washington Irving, described him as an emaciated old man of seventy, as his portrait still indicates; and he added: "He has, however, a fine head, a Roman style of face, and prepossessing countenance." Na-o-po-pe wished Mr. Catlin to paint him with a "ball and chain," and when this artist would not so paint him, he kept changing his position to avoid being taken on canvas.

In April, 1833, the prisoners were ordered to Washington, and Blackhawk's first address to President Jackson was: "I am a man, and you are another." He and his fellow prisoners were desirous to return at once to their wives and children, but they were sent into confinement at Fortress Monroe on the 26th of April, where they were kept till the 4th of June, when they were conducted homeward by way of Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, and Detroit, to Fort Armstrong, where the Sac and Fox tribes were called to welcome them on their release. After much interchange of speeches, and the announcement of Keokuk as chief, and Blackhawk as his coun-

sellor, and a social banquet, they dispersed to their wigwams in Iowa.

In the autumn of 1837, Blackhawk again went to Washington with Keokuk and other delegates from the tribes at war with the Sioux. But he was much dejected, and felt degraded by Keokuk being preferred over him by the government. Yet everywhere the multitude, curious and inquiring, asked: "Which is Blackhawk?"

On returning to Iowa, he spent the winter of 1837-38, on Devil Creek, Lee county, below Fort Madison, with his wife, two sons, Na-she-as-kuk and Samoset, a daughter and her husband, being engaged in the usual pursuits of Indians. In the spring he removed with his family to the camp and trading post of his tribe on the Des Moines, about ninety miles from its entrance into the Mississippi, where he built himself a bark cabin, furnished it with a table, a looking glass, chairs and mattresses, dressing like an Indian chief, except as to his broad-brimmed, black hat.

On the 4th of July, 1838, he appeared for the last time in public by invitation, at Fort Madison, Lee county. To the toast: "Our illustrious guest, Blackhawk!" he made a response which proved his last public speech. Among other things he said: "Rock River was a beautiful country. I liked my towns, my cornfields, and the home of my people I fought for them."

Toward Keokuk, who superseded him as chief, he always bore unforgiving hate, and was wont to say that "Keokuk excelled him in nothing but drinking whisky."

In the latter part of September, 1838, he was seized with a severe bilious fever, which baffled the skill of his Indian doctor, and the attention of his devoted wife. She said: "He is getting old—he must die! Monotah calls him!" Monotah is their name for the Great Spirit. He died on the 3d of October, 1838.

He was buried in the uniform given him by President Jackson at Washington, in a grave of usual length, and six feet in depth, in a sitting posture, with the cane, that Henry Clay gave him, in his hand, and with his war trophies, garments and

weapons around him. The grave was covered, and a mound of earth was raised some feet over his head, on which mound a staff with the American flag hoisted, was erected at the foot of the grave, and the whole was surrounded with pickets twelve feet in height.

His remains, however, were not suffered to rest unmolested there, near the banks of the Des Moines. But the curiosity and rapacity of an Illinois physician led to their removal to Quincy, Illinois. Upon detection, he restored the reputed bones of Blackhawk to Governor Lucas, then the Executive of Iowa Territory, and he gave them to the sons of Blackhawk, who returned them to the Governor, who committed them to Dr. Lowe, then of Burlington, Iowa, by whom they were deposited among the relics of Iowa Historical Society there, and they were afterwards mostly consumed with the building which contained them. Thus has passed away the most warlike Sac of his time, the Washington of his nation, at the full age of seventy-two years.

The following caricature of Blackhawk's death is by a contemporary print:

"REMARKABLE IF TRUE.—There are some 'old settlers' yet among us who knew Blackhawk, an Indian, very well, and were cognizant of the fact that he died. Many were glad of it, because while that noble chieftain lived they had certain unpleasant apprehensions as to the stability of their scalps.

"As far as we know these settlers have always remained in darkness as to the real cause of Blackhawk's demise. Richard Mansill, a resident of Coal-town, Rock Island county, has recently thrown some light upon that important mortuary event.

"From a small work that has recently been published by him, entitled, 'Earthquakes and Volcanic Eruptions,' on page 53, we read that—

"'Blackhawk died on the 3d of October, 1838. Mercury was at its perihelion on the 2d of October, 1838.'

"Hence, putting the two dates and Blackhawk together, we find the long sought for reason for the death of that remarkable warrior.

"Why the condition in which Mercury found itself on that memorable day did not kill the entire Indian race is one of the mysteries of the spheres for which we are in no way accountable.

"Blackhawk died intestate. He did not live long enough to tell what killed him."—*Davenport Democrat*.

## KEOKUK.

## THE SLY FOX.

Keokuk, whose name signifies the "Sly Fox," was the eloquent orator of his, or the Fox tribe. It strictly means the "*doubling* fox," from that animal's habit of turning back on the track, in the chase, to avoid pursuit. He was not a chief by birth, which was on the Rock River, about 1780. In his youth, mounted on horseback, with his spear, he killed a Sioux, and so he was promoted as a brave to all the rights and privileges of a chief, and to a public feast.

On the destruction of the Indian Peoria village, by the authority of the United States, in a moment of excitement, Keokuk said: "Make me your leader and let the young men follow me, and the pale faces shall be driven back to their towns." Afterward encountering the Sioux, who were expert horsemen, Keokuk dismounted his men in a close circle behind their horses, and so repelled their repeated charges, the Sacs and Foxes being the best marksmen.

At another time, with a small party of his tribe falling upon a large Sioux camp too near to retreat, Keokuk dashed down alone upon them, and called for their chief, saying: "I have come to let you know that there are traitors in your camp: they told me that you were preparing to attack our village. I know they told me lies, for after smoking the pipe of peace, you could not be so base as to murder my women and children in my absence. None but cowards would be guilty of such conduct." But as they gathered around, and began to seize his legs, he added with a loud voice: "I suppose they told me lies; yet, if what I heard is true, then the Sacs are ready for you," pushing them aside, and putting spurs to his spirited steed, brandishing his tomahawk, and making the air ring with his war-whoop, he soon distanced all his mounted pursuers, who soon gave up the chase from fear of falling into ambush, while Keokuk with his party made hasty escape.

But Keokuk excelled more by his eloquence in council assembled, than by his exploits in war. In a conference with the Menomnies at Prairie du Chein, where General Street had



assembled the tribes, on account of some Sacs having slain some unarmed persons of their tribe, and when the Menomies refusing at first to treat for peace, prepared to fight, Keokuk arose, and by his eloquent appeal won the attention of his enemies and said: "I came here to say that I am sorry for the imprudence of my young men. I come to make peace. I now offer the hand of Keokuk. Who will refuse it?" Rising, they shook hands and accepted offered terms of peace.

Keokuk had also to resist the appeals of the Indians under the excitement of various causes, especially that of whisky, to assail the white population, and on one occasion he stilled the tumult, by saying: "First put all your women and children to death before crossing the Mississippi, and then resolve to perish amid the graves of your fathers!" At length discontent arose in the tribe against Keokuk as chief. He submitted the matter of his being chief to the vote of the tribe. A young man was chosen in his stead, whom Keokuk was the first to obey and salute him as chief. Yet Keokuk soon rose by common consent to be chief again, while the young man sank into insignificance and obscurity.

Always loyal and acting on the American side, he surrendered his own nephew and four innocent Indians in the place of the other perpetrators of the murder of Mr. Marten, in Warren county, Illinois. He also restrained the majority of the Sacs by his influence from the Blackhawk war. His style of speaking was bold and strong. When representing his tribe at Washington, a Sioux chief said: "My father, you cannot make these people (the Sacs and Foxes), hear any good words, unless you bore their ears with sticks." Another Sioux said: "He would as soon make a treaty with Keokuk's little son, as with a Sankie or a Musquakee." Keokuk retorted: "They tell you that our ears must be bored with sticks; but, my father, you could not pierce their skulls in that way—it would require hot iron. They say they would as soon make peace with a child as with us. They know better, for when they made war with us they found us men!" Thus his quickness of retort and manly eloquence, and stately gestures were universally admired, and his speeches every where applauded.

In his person he was stout and thick set, but not so tall as many Indians. He excelled all in horsemanship; and rode at that time, the fastest and finest horse in Iowa. And, in New York city, when Mr. Catlin mentioned this circumstance to a large audience who seemed not to believe it, Keokuk arose and expressed his surprise and indignation that they should doubt his having as fine a horse as any man. And Mr. Antoine Le Claire being present, confirmed the statement by saying that he sold Keokuk the horse for three hundred dollars—the best horse in Iowa.

Keokuk at length became dissipated and extravagant, squandering the annuity of the tribe, and died under circumstances that led to suspicion of foul play by the sons of Blackhawk. Thus passed away the most eloquent Indian orator of the Northwest. The name of Keokuk is perpetuated in that of a considerable county, and of a populous city, the latter being situated upon the spot near the junction of the Des Moines and the Mississippi rivers, where he and his tribe loved to linger. This city ought to erect an equestrian statue to his memory, exhibiting Keokuk on horseback as he most delighted to appear.

#### MA-HAS-KA.

##### WHITE CLOUD.

Mahaska, the elder, and son of Ma-ha-ga, or Wounding Arrow, was killed at a dog feast by the treacherous Sioux, who had invited him to it, on the west bank of the Iowa, which his father, Ma-ha-ga, (Wounding Arrow), called Ne-ho-ne, or the Master of Waters. Ma-has-ka, the younger, joining a party as a private warrior, to avenge his father's death, pushed forward and took the scalp with his own hand, of the Sioux in the very lodge where he killed his father. He then, as chief, took the command of his tribe and warriors. He had eighteen battles with the Osages, with success. While on the north bank of the Missouri, at a later period, he was stopping the bleeding of his nose, three Frenchmen in a canoe hailed Mahaska's party, fired and wounded an Indian. Mahaska and his party returned

the fire, killing one Frenchman. He was arrested for the crime, but escaped from prison.

He married four sisters. But Rant-che-wai-me, or Female Flying Pigeon was his favorite wife. She was characterized for her extreme generosity, giving away the last blanket, or bladder of bear's oil she had.

Mahaska always lamented the killing of the Frenchman, and when looking at his hand, would say: "There is blood on it!" He boasted that he never shed the blood of an American.

In his last expedition against the Osages, with ten of his braves he took two scalps; was himself wounded in the leg, and hid under a log over a stream, he being mostly covered with water till night, when he took an Indian horse and drove him over the Missouri, swimming after the horse, carrying his gun and scalps. He gave the scalps to In-the-ho-ne, (Big Axe), saying: "I have now avenged the death of my father—I will fight no more."

In 1824, he went with his associates to Washington, D. C. At this time he had seven wives. Near the mouth of the Des Moines, Rant-che-wai-me. (Female Flying Pigeon) stood before him, with uplifted tomahawk in hand. Passionately she said: "Am I not your wife? I will go with you."

A talk was held with President Monroe, at Washington, and a treaty with ten years annuity to the tribe, was formed. While at Washington, being suddenly surprised with his wife by the Indian agent, as if it denoted effeminacy to be intimate with his squaw, he jumped out of the window and broke his leg. His portrait by King indicates that he still felt the pain arising from his injury.

On his return home, he planted his cornfield, and lived in a double log cabin. At length while crossing the country, he went before his wife, Rant-che-wai-me, and child four years old, and turning back he found her dead, near a precipice, with the child on her bosom. The child said: "Father, my mother is asleep." Mahaska exclaimed: Wa-cun-da-meniam—bratuskunnee, shungau-meniam-nauga-nappo! "God Almighty! I am a bad man! You are angry with me! The horse has killed my squaw!"

He buried her, with all her ornaments given her at Washington, in a box, raised on a high scaffold, and killed a dog, and hung it at the head of the scaffold, and also a horse, with the tail near the head. The Indians thus vainly suppose that the spirits of animals accompany their owner into the world beyond this life. He likewise observed a dog feast.

In 1833, an Iowa was killed by the Omahas. Mahaska was urged to pursue the murderer; but he said that the treaty provided for his punishment. The murderer was arrested and confined at Fort Leavenworth. When he saw Mahaska he threatened to kill him if he got away. And afterwards, while Mahaska was encamped on the Nodaway, in 1834, the Omaha stole into camp and killed Mahaska, saying: "He was the hardest man to kill he ever knew." Thus Mahaska died, being about fifty years old.

Mahaska's son, with the spirit of Indian vengeance went to the Omaha's village, killed the assassin's dogs and horses, and ripped up his lodge, charging him with the murder, and then left him with his tribe. The Omahas met the next day, and decreed that the murderer must die. He was accordingly shot and his body was left without burial.

Mahaska's wives mourned for him six months. One of them, Mis-so-sah-tar-ha, (female deer bounding over the plains,) refused to be comforted, and said her husband was "a great brave, killed by dogs!" His many wives all went to poverty and wretchedness.

Mahaska was a person of remarkable beauty and symmetry, and of extraordinary strength, activity and stature, being six feet and two inches in height. His name is perpetuated in the name of Mahaska county, a rich agricultural section of southern Iowa.

#### TAIOMAH, OR TAMA.

THE BEAR THAT MAKES THE ROCKS TREMBLE.

Taiomah, from which Tama county is doubtless named, means "the bear that makes the rocks to tremble"! He was very friendly to the Americans, being of the Musquakee, or Fox tribe. He was the head of a secret Indian society, or of

a sort of Masonic fraternity of the Fox tribe. They were wont to meet in a large lodge, with a sentinel set to keep guard. They had certain ceremonies and scrutiny to go through on admission. Some women also were admitted or initiated. They wore a peculiar dress in public, and were called the Great Medicine of the Sacs and Foxs, with four degrees or roads, as they were termed. The cost of admission to these was about fifty dollars. By the greatest offers, Tai-o-mah could never be induced to reveal the mysteries of the lodge.

He accompanied the delegates of the tribe under Governor William Clark to Washington, in 1824, was in poor health, and died after his return. He may be designated as the Indian Free Mason.

## EXPLANATION OF OTHER INDIAN NAMES.

Before closing this Indian Memoir, it may be proper to explain the signification of some other Indian names of frequent occurrence in Iowa.

### SAC OR SAUKEE, AND MUSQUAKEE.

Sac or Saukee, means "yellow earth," and is the name of a county in northwestern Iowa, of small population, or sparse settlements, as yet. It may have come from the coloring matter used in painting their faces, although this is all uncertain. It should be pronounced *Sauk*, not Sack, in English, as it too often is, to the great disrelish of classic taste.

Mus-quah-kee, or the Fox Indians' name, signifies "red earth." They are also called Ontagamies by the French. Their designation as "red earth" may have also originated from their painted faces. All is uncertain about the origin of such names as Saukee, or Saukie, as the French spell it, and Musquakee. The original Hebrew for man, Adam in the scriptures means "red," but it is difficult to trace any connection with such an object, or resemblance in the nature of mankind.

## KE-O-SA-QUA.—(SEPO.)

CLEAR, BROAD RIVER.

It is a considerable town on the Des Moines river, to which this word gives name.

## WAPSIPINACON.

WHITE ARTICHOKE.

Wap-si, or Wa-bes-sa, denotes white or swan-like, and pin-a-ca, artichoke, or a sort of wild, white potato, which abounded on the extended bottoms of that stream, where the Indians resorted for a winter's supply of such vegetables and roots.

## CHIC-CA-QUA, OR THE SKUNK.

Chic-a-qua is the Indian name of Skunk river, passing south-east through several counties, with its two branches, and emptying into the Mississippi below Burlington, in Des Moines county. It is the same original word as gives name to Chicago, the great metropolis of the Northwest. An effort has been made to define it simply as "strong," but the prevailing interpretation is the former. It were well, if, in Iowa the more savory name, Chíc-ah-quah, so pronounced, were to take the place of the odorous English word. Such are some of the curiosities and singularities of Indian literature and tradition.

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GENERAL PUTNAM'S CAPTURE.—In Lossing's "Revolutionary Sketches," he places the capture by the Indians at Fort Ann, N. Y., and his deliverance by a French officer, when the fire and fagots were kindled around him, but checked by a sudden shower. A better tradition is that he was captured at Crown Point, N. Y., and released by an English officer. His name and fame are to be found there in the creek, now called for short, "Put's Creek." The Crown Pointers certainly have the best of the case.

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