

The Black Hawk Treaty

By BETTY FIEDLER

"The historian who locates a document linking the present with the distant past becomes as excited and remains in that state longer than the driller who brings in a gusher or the jockey who wins the Kentucky Derby.

"At this moment there is a high tide of excitement in historical circles over the finding of Keokuk's copy of the treaty of 1832 by which the Indians relinquished six million acres of Iowa land, following the conclusion of the Black Hawk war.

"The city of Davenport stands today on the site where this treaty was written, and the land upon which Davenport is built was a part of the six million acres relinquished by the Indians."

These views are those of men interested in bringing this important document home to Davenport.

I became interested in the purchase of the Black Hawk treaty through newspaper articles reporting that the Iowa Book Collectors club was proposing its purchase. A telephone directory fortunately showed that Mr. Fred Schwengel, president of the club, was practically a neighbor. I made an appointment, borrowed the car, and started off on a Sunday afternoon adventure of real historic drama.

No interviewer could have asked for a more enthusiastic personality than Mr. Schwengel, a state representative of Scott county.

Because I knew nothing of the Iowa Book Collectors club, Mr. Schwengel informed me that the club was originated at the State University of Iowa by Mr. Ralph Ellsworth, head of the University library, and Mr. Clyde Walton, head of the rare book section at the library, now secretary of the Book Collectors club. Though organized but two years ago, the club can presently boast a membership of over one hundred.

Mr. Schwengel is also a member of the Midwest's Civil War Round Table club which meets in Chicago. "The secretary of this club, Mr. Ralph Newman, head of the Lincoln Bookstore in Chicago, was asked to investigate a copy of the Black Hawk treaty supposedly owned by a Mr. Manson, now living in Kansas City," explained Mr. Schwengel. "The Chicago buyer, represented by Mr. Newman, planned to purchase the treaty and upon the event of his death leave it to the State University of Iowa.

"Before the treaty was acknowledged, investigation showed that Chief Keokuk moved from this territory to a reservation near Wapello, then to Tama, and from there to Kansas City.

"Upon the death of this great chief, the treaty was handed down to his son Moses, who was considered even wiser than his father. Moses became a Baptist and was baptized in Kansas City. He was then the head of the tribe and married twice, the second time to a white woman. Before her death, the treaty was given to Mr. Manson, a relative of Chief Keokuk through marriage.

"Since the treaty was authenticated, Mr. Newman received authorization to purchase the document. However, in the interim, the Chicago buyer died."

IOWANS BECAME INTERESTED

This is the point where the existence of the treaty came to the attention of Mr. Schwengel and Mr. Walton. Because of the Book Collectors' interest in any valuable collection such as this, Mr. Schwengel and Mr. Walton looked into the prospect of purchase. On January 18, 1954, the yellow, fourteen-page bundle returned to Davenport after an absence of one hundred and thirty-two years.

"The purpose of bringing the treaty to Davenport was to show it to interested persons of this area with the idea of raising money," said Mr. Schwengel. "However, a number of pledges have already been made in the Davenport area, and the State University of Iowa has also received cash gifts towards its purchase.

"There are but two known originals of the treaty—the one recently discovered in the hands of a relative of Keokuk and proposed for purchase, and the one in the official archives in Washington, D.C.

"A study of the many treaties entered into with the numerous tribes and bands of Indians seemed to indicate, with few exceptions, two kinds of agreements—treaties of friendship and understanding, and treaties of cession with agreement for friendship in which we laid down the law.

"The former were most common in the early history of America, especially following the War of 1812. Apparently these were necessary to protect the white man who lived near the Indian Territory, to renew and rebuild understanding, and to control the conduct of the Indians in his trade with the whites and other tribes. It also served to bring about a better understanding on the part of the whites of the problems of the aborigines, as well as an appreciation by the Indian of the motives and intent of the white man in his desire to build a nation and to grow.

"The signatures, with very few exceptions, were signed solely with an 'X' by the chief and warriors representing the tribes."

Looking through a copy of the treaty itself, one can see such names as Keokuk, or He Who Has Been Everywhere; Pashepaho, or the Stabber; Wawkkumee, or Clear Water; Pacotokee, or Wounded Lip, and Mauquette, or the Bald Eagle. Following each is the traditional "X."

Well known names to all Davenporters are those of Farnam and Davenport mentioned in Article V of the treaty, which reads:

The United States, at the earnest request of the said confederated tribes (Sac and Fox) further agree to pay to Farnam and Davenport, Indian traders at Rock Island, the sum of forty thousand dollars without interest, which sum will be in full satisfaction of the claims of the said traders against the said tribes, and by the latter was, on the tenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one, acknowledged to be justly due, for articles of necessity, furnished in

the course of the seven preceding years, in an instrument of writing of said date, duly signed by the Chiefs and Headmen of said tribes and certified by the late Felix St. Vrain, United States' agent, and Antoine LeClaire, United States' interpreter, both for the said tribes.

Of particular interest in this treaty is the provision whereby LeClaire was granted land. It was from these grants that Davenport eventually emerged. As stated in Article VI of the treaty:

At the special request of the said tribes, the United States agree to grant, by patent, in fee simple, to Antoine LeClaire, interpreter, a part Indian, one section of land opposite Rock Island, within the country herein ceded by the Sacs and Foxes.

Davenport became one of these grants named for Colonel George Davenport at the insistence of his friend LeClaire; the other became what we now call the town of LeClaire. Because of the great love, friendship, and trust placed in LeClaire by the Indians, it is generally thought that Keokuk insisted on these two grants.

CITY OF DAVENPORT ESTABLISHED

Before establishing the city of Davenport, LeClaire and a group of friends met February 23, 1836, at the home of Colonel Davenport on the Island. Of the members of the original company LeClaire and Davenport are the two prominent names identified with the city.

The town was to be laid out by May first of the same year. During this month lots were placed on sale and buyers came by boat from St. Louis and other points. For two days the sales continued during which time fifty to sixty lots were sold from three hundred to six hundred dollars each. Unsold property was divided among the proprietors.

The first hotel was opened at Front and Ripley streets by Davenport and LeClaire. These transactions gave birth to the infant city of Davenport. The area was then but a fraction of the city's present site, bounded on the east by Harrison, on the north by

Seventh street, on the west by Warren, and on the south by the Mississippi.

The treaty has tremendous historic value because of its termination of the Black Hawk war and its cession of land to the United States. In speaking of the document, Mr. Schwengel referred to a series of articles written on it by Mr. Rex Ballard of the *Daily Times*. In one of these articles Mr. Ballard states that:

The conflict between Black Hawk and Keokuk as rival chieftains of the Sac and Fox nation, bitter and long lasting, played an important role in shaping the history of Iowa. Had Black Hawk been of different temperament he might have heeded the counsels of his rival, and the Black Hawk Purchase which opened up Eastern Iowa to white settlement might not have come about. Or at least, acquisition of the territory in that cession might have occurred in a different manner and under different circumstances.

Keokuk, whose counsels prevailed among the greater portion of the Sac and Fox nation after the Black Hawk war, had the wisdom, foresight to recognize the inevitable, that it was useless to struggle against the white people.

Where Black Hawk resisted, Keokuk compromised. Black Hawk was crafty in war, but not sagacious in diplomacy. Where Keokuk avoided obstacles, Black Hawk combatted them.

However, the treaty itself was named after Chief Black Hawk, who ruled the country's largest Indian nation in the midwest area, the Sac and Fox.

Though many historians believe that the signing of the treaty took place at Fifth and Farnam streets, Mr. Schwengel and others feel certain that "the preliminary councils were held here but that the actual signing took place on the island or near the fort." For in the treaty itself the opening sentence reads, "Articles of a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cession, concluded at Fort Armstrong, Rock Island . . ."; and it closes, "Done at Fort Armstrong, Rock Island, Illinois, this twenty-first day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two, and of the independence of the United States the fifty-seventh."

Time had nearly escaped me when I suddenly real-

ized that it was time to conclude my interview. Before I left, however, Mr. Schwengel took time to show me his fascinating collection of books on famous women in history. On looking through the history of these books alone one could find more than ample material for another story. Nevertheless, my mind came back to the Black Hawk Treaty purchase as Mr. Schwengel said, "The collectors club with the cooperation of interested citizens to buy the document and place it in the Davenport Museum if and when it has a more adequate building available. Until such time, it is thought that the treaty should be housed in the University Library.

"It will take approximately four thousand dollars to purchase this great historic Indian treaty for Davenport," he said. Genuine enthusiasm gleamed in his eyes as he spoke of the famous papers. "This document, which really begins Davenport city history, should be permanently located here," added he. "It belongs in Davenport. Every generation of Davenport children will find it of lasting importance when they study the history of their community and their state."

Record of Living Events

The newspaper is the historian's surest and most nearly eternal source of information. The living event is gone, but the newspaper is evidence that life and action were there.

Who wrote the above lines is not known, but they suggest and typify a reliance in the highest ideals of journalistic endeavor when honestly performed. The factual recording of events, just as they are, represents morality in service, when not tainted by slanting or distortion of statement.

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