

# American Indian Resistance to Settler Colonialism in the Western Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi Valley, 1815–1832

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A RANGE OF MOTIVATIONS prompted the Native societies of the Old Northwest to ally with the British against the United States during the War of 1812. Nativist movements, particularly that of Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa (the Shawnee Prophet), attracted Indians in the southern Great Lakes and Ohio Valley who were drawn to militant messages of resistance. Similar movements existed among the Potawatomis and Sauks. In the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley, the Ho-Chunks (or Winnebagos) were the most zealous supporters of the Shawnee brothers. To the north, the Ojibwas, Odawas, and Menominees evinced little interest in the nativist movements, but their ties to the British fur trade ensured their participation against the Americans. Many Native people refused to take sides; even most Shawnees rejected Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet and remained neutral. American Indian participation in the War of 1812 revealed “a wide spectrum of strategies at play. Wartime upheaval necessitated Indian decisions on tribal, village, or even individual levels that often defied the strict battle lines that military leaders sought to demarcate.”<sup>1</sup> A similar dynamic characterized the post-war era,

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although important regional differences remained. In the southern Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, Indian resistance collapsed with the deaths of leaders such as Tecumseh. In contrast, the tribes of the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley retained the will to fight and resisted American expansion for several decades after the conclusion of the conflict in 1815.<sup>2</sup>

During this period, the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley included present-day eastern Iowa, the home of the Meskwaki Indians and, to a lesser extent, their allies, the Sauks, most of whom lived in what is today Illinois. In the era before statehood, eastern Iowa was part of a more complex regional configuration in the minds of its Native inhabitants and the Euro-Americans who had penetrated the region in the service of the imperial powers. The upper Mississippi River defined the western half of this region and gave it coherence. During the French, Spanish, and British regimes, and even many centuries earlier, Indian peoples plied the waters of the upper Mississippi River to engage in war, diplomacy, and trade. This great waterway, along with Lake Michigan and the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, created a regional expression that stretched from St. Louis in the southwest to the Strait of Mackinac in the northeast. The

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Klumpp, the editor of the *Annals of Iowa*, deserves special thanks for tying this essay more firmly to the history of Iowa through his editorial feedback.

1. Gregory E. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore, 1992), 118–47; Timothy D. Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship: British Policy and the Indians of the Great Lakes, 1783–1815* (Lincoln, NE, 2008), 206–71; Patrick J. Jung, “Toward the Black Hawk War: The Sauk and Fox Indians and the War of 1812,” *Michigan Historical Review* 38 (2012), 33; James Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665–1965* (Lawrence, KS, 1977), 213–14; R. David Edmunds, “‘A Watchful Safeguard to Our Habitations’: Black Hoof and the Loyal Shawnees,” in *Native Americans and the Early Republic*, eds. Frederick Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter Albert (Charlottesville, VA, 1999), 162–99; John P. Bowes, “Transformation and Transition: American Indians and the War of 1812 in the Lower Great Lakes,” *Journal of Military History* 76 (2012), 1129–146; Jonathan Hancock, “Widening the Scope on the Indians’ Old Northwest,” in *Warring for America: Cultural Contests in the Era of 1812*, eds. Nicole Eustace and Fredrika J. Teute (Williamsburg, VA, 2017), 362–73 (quotation).

2. Colin G. Calloway, “The End of an Era: British-Indian Relations in the Great Lakes Region after the War of 1812,” *Michigan Historical Review* 12 (1986), 4, 13–14; Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship*, 263–64.

Native societies of eastern Iowa were integral to the Indian-British alliance that sought to halt American expansion during the War of 1812, and they remained central to the American Indian resistance that characterized the post-war period after 1815. The history of Iowa is enriched when we recognize it as a part of this greater geographical manifestation.<sup>3</sup>

The first goal of this essay is to establish that various forms of Native resistance after 1815 had their ideological foundation in the Indians' earlier participation in the War of 1812. This notion is generally absent in the historical literature, particularly those works that chronicle the most significant instances of resistance, the 1827 Red Bird Uprising and the 1832 Black Hawk War.<sup>4</sup> Native resistance to American expansion reflected an ideology that emerged in the decades before the War of 1812 and remained a potent force after 1815, although its intensity waned by the early 1830s. Federal expansionist policies in the post-war era also fueled this ideology.

This essay's second purpose is to examine the anonymous forms of resistance employed by Native societies to counter American expansion into the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley after 1815. The study of anonymous resistance has informed historical research into regions in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.<sup>5</sup> Studies of Indian-white conflicts in

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3. Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: The Middle Land* (Iowa City, IA, 1996), 3–21; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman, OK, 1987), 2–8, 93, 98, 106, 109, 119–21, 140; Bethel Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia, 2015), 4–5.

4. Martin Zanger, "Red Bird," in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln, NE, 1980), 64–87; Peter Shrake, "Chasing an Elusive War: The Illinois Militia and the Winnebago War of 1827," *Journal of Illinois History* 12 (2009), 27–52; Kerry A. Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* (New York, 2006), 108–14; John W. Hall, *Uncommon Defense: Indian Allies in the Black Hawk War* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 33–37; Roger L. Nichols, "Black Hawk and the Historians: A Review Essay," *Annals of Iowa* 75 (2016), 61–70.

5. For examples, see Allen Isaacman, *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique: The Zambesi Valley, 1850–1921* (Berkeley, CA, 1976); Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York, 1996); Elizabeth Perry, *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China* (Armonk, NY, 2002); and Michael Ducey, *A Nation of Villages: Riot and Rebellion in the Mexican Huasteca, 1750–1850* (Tucson, AZ, 2004).

North America indicate anonymous forms of resistance such as thefts and the killing of livestock often preceded open acts of revolt, most of which were responses to outrages committed by incoming American settler populations against Native communities.<sup>6</sup> However, anonymous forms of resistance are incidental to these studies rather than the central subjects of analysis. Thus, rich possibilities exist for historians who seek to address this historiographic oversight. The area of the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley is particularly attractive because, unlike other parts of the trans-Appalachian West, it was virtually devoid of American settlers and institutions before the War of 1812.

Under the French, Spanish, and British regimes, this region had been a borderland characterized by cultural interchange and imperial rivalry. With the ascension of the United States after the American Revolution, what had been an open borderland increasingly became a "bordered land." Between the advent of Jay's Treaty in 1796 and the War of 1812, Indians from the United States and British traders from Canada continued to cross the international boundary. American weakness in the area was a principal reason. What little presence the United States had at the beginning of the War of 1812 consisted of only 185 officers and enlisted men. Fort Madison (present-day Fort Madison, Iowa) had 44 soldiers, Fort Dearborn at Chicago possessed 53, and Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island had 88. Forts Mackinac and Dearborn fell to the Indian-British alliance in the early stages of the war, and the U.S. Army abandoned Fort Madison in 1813. At the war's end, the territory from Mackinac Island to the Sauk village of Saukenuk at the confluence of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers remained in the hands of the Indian-British alliance (Figure 1). American authorities concluded (incorrectly) that the British had

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6. For examples, see Alfred Cave, *Lethal Encounters: Englishmen and Indians in Colonial Virginia* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2011), 82–91, 112–34, 147–50; Gregory Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813–1814* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2006), 54, 78, 88, 97–98, 110–13; and Roger L. Nichols, *Warrior Nations: The United States and Indian Peoples* (Norman, OK, 2013), 55–61, 66–74, 119–21, 129–31, 151–53, 187.



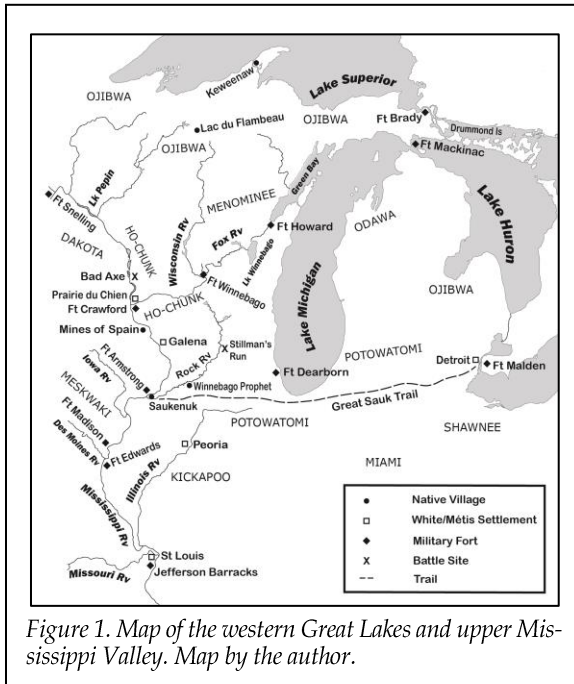


Figure 1. Map of the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley. Map by the author.

manipulated the Indians into fighting the United States during the war. Therefore, after 1815, federal officials sought to make what had been a permeable boundary into a firm border by forbidding traders from Canada from entering the United States and, less effectively, restricting Indians from the United States from crossing into Canada.<sup>7</sup>

The French and British failed to achieve dominance over the Indians of the Old Northwest and settled for maintaining systems of trade that acknowledged the political, economic, and

7. John Bukowczyk, "Trade, War, Migration, and Empire in the Great Lakes Basin, 1650–1815," in *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes as Transnational Region, 1650–1990*, eds. John Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David Smith, and Randy Widdis (Pittsburgh, 2005), 21–28; Number of Troops in Service on the Peace Establishment, 6/6/1812, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC, 1832–1861), 1:320 (hereafter cited as *ASP:MA*); Patrick J. Jung, "Lonely Sentinel: A Military History of Fort Madison," *Annals of Iowa* 75 (2016), 220–33; Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York, 2010), 437–39; Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship*, 244–50.

cultural autonomy of the Native societies. The Indians retained their supremacy to such a degree that they dictated to the imperial powers the nature of their relationship.<sup>8</sup> The young republic sought not to establish mere dominance as the French and British had attempted but to displace Native persons and make room for American citizens, a process now known as settler colonialism. Through this process, waves of soldiers, traders, miners, and agricultural settlers would allow for the creation of territories and states, and the Indians would be dispossessed of their lands through treaty cessions or by force, if necessary. This bred resentment as the regional tribes had earlier witnessed how the Indian societies of the Ohio Valley lost their homelands to the United States. The Sauk war leader Black Hawk, for example, asserted, “we had always heard bad accounts of the Americans from Indians who had lived near them!”<sup>9</sup> The United States had been unable to carry out a program of settler colonialism in the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley before the War of 1812; it was in a stronger position to do so afterward.<sup>10</sup>

From the mid-1740s onward, tribal communities throughout this region—and the entire trans-Appalachian West—developed an ideology of resistance that was built on a foundation of pan-Indian identity that transcended linguistic and ethnic divisions. While tribal distinctions remained, Native societies increasingly developed a sense of racial and cultural distinctiveness vis-à-vis Europeans and Euro-Americans. Pan-Indian identity emphasized inter-tribal cooperation and was often suffused by a religious doctrine that characterized Euro-Americans as having a separate, often diabolical, genesis from that of Native people.

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8. Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia, 2012), 114–39; Michael McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York, 2015), 14–19, 337n23–338n23; David A. Nichols, *Peoples of the Inland Sea: Native Americans and Newcomers in the Great Lakes Region, 1600–1870* (Athens, OH, 2018), 51, 136, 149.

9. Saler, *Settlers' Empire*, 25–29, 41–82, 87; Michael Witgen, “A Nation of Settlers: The Early American Republic and the Colonization of the Northwest Territory,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 76 (2019), 391–98; Black Hawk, *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, ed. Donald Jackson (Urbana, IL, 1955), 58 (quotation).

10. Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 428–39; Bukowczyk, “Trade, War, Migration,” 26–27.



Figure 2. Tenskwatawa, or the Shawnee Prophet.  
Courtesy Library of Congress, LC-DIG-pga-07584.

This nativist ideology became decidedly anti-American in tone by the 1790s and found its greatest expression under leaders such as Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet (Figure 2). While this message was less influential among Indians in the northern Great Lakes such as the Ojibwas, Odawas, and Menominees, the War of 1812 became a politicizing agent, and those tribes that evinced little interest in the broader nativist movement before the war absorbed much of its anti-American rhetoric during the conflict. These attitudes shaped Indian resistance in the decades following the cessation of hostilities in 1815. The regional population of Indians was about 50,000 for those tribes—viz., Potawatomis, Ojibwas, Odawas, Menominees, Kickapoos, Sauks, Meskwakis, Ho-Chunks, and Dakotas—that had fought against the United

States.<sup>11</sup> The British decision to return the region to the United States after the war enraged Britain's Indian allies. One Ho-Chunk chief told the British commandant at Mackinac Island, "The peace made between you and the Big Knives [Americans], *may* be a lasting one; but it cannot be for us, for we hate them."<sup>12</sup>

The two components of the ideology that sustained Indian resistance against the United States after the War of 1812 were identical to those evident during the conflict: pan-tribal confederation and alliance with the British in Canada. This ideology is discernible in the historical record into the 1830s.<sup>13</sup> The term "ideology" is employed in its anthropological sense as a set of ideas that promotes a course of action that seeks to resolve social, cultural, and political strains; or, "Ideology bridges the emotional gap between things as they are and as one would have them be."<sup>14</sup> Ideologies result from the complex interplay between the various symbolic systems that constitute cultures; therefore, ideologies often vary from one community and even one individual to the next. The variegated nature of ideology explains why, after the war, every Native community had members who continued to believe pan-Indian confederation and alliance with the British were the best policies to pursue as well as others who sought accommodation with the United States. Estimating the numbers of Native persons who espoused this resistance ideology is difficult, but sources indicate about two-thirds of the Ho-Chunks and one-

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11. Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, xvii–xxiv, 23–40, 103–47; Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship*, 206–42; Jung, "Toward the Black Hawk War," 32–36, 45–52; Tabular Statement Exhibiting the Names and Situations of the Various Tribes, 2/7/1829, *Indian Affairs Generally*, 20<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., H. Doc. 117 (Serial 186), 91–96.

12. Robert McDouall to F.P. Robinson, 9/22/1815, *Collections of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, ed. J.C. Holmes, et al., 40 vols. (Lansing, MI, 1877–1929), 16:283–84 (hereafter cited as *MPHC*); Council at Mackinac with the Winnebagos, 6/3/1815, *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, ed. Lyman C. Draper, et al., 31 vols. (Madison, WI, 1855–1931), 10:142–45 (quotation; emphasis in original; hereafter cited as *WHC*).

13. For a similar assessment, see John P. Bowes, "The Late War: Black Hawk and the Legacies of Violence in the Great Lakes Region," in *The Battle of Lake Erie: A Bicentennial Reassessment*, ed. David C. Skaggs (Kent, OH, 2013), 143–56.

14. Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (New York, 1964), 47–76 (quotation).

sixth of the Sauks—the two societies with the largest numbers of anti-American members—embraced this ideology after the War of 1812.<sup>15</sup> Of course, warfare was the only realistic means by which to thwart American settler colonialism, but the withdrawal of the British from the conflict in 1815 rendered this possibility moot. Native persons who expressed this ideology in the post-war era had little choice but to employ anonymous forms of resistance until conditions favored active rebellion.

Understanding the nature of resistance is also critical to this analysis. When one group assumes itself to be superior and asserts control over members of a subordinate group (known as “subalterns” in postcolonial parlance), both anonymous and public resistance are the result. James C. Scott and Ranajit Guha have produced the most important works on anonymous resistance, the most fundamental form of which is rumor and includes anonymous threats of violence. Rumor emerges from the undocumented social space known as “the hidden transcript” and spreads through social networks that reflect the ideology of the persons within them. It also serves as a counter-hegemonic discourse that bolsters the ideology of the subalterns by critiquing systems of power and paves the way for more active (yet still anonymous) forms of resistance including “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, many types of resistance

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15. Geertz, “Ideology,” 56–59; Philip Converse, “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,” in *Ideology and Discontent*, 206–61; Jung, “Toward the Black Hawk War,” 46–52; Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship*, 213–42; William Clark to James Barbour, 7/11/1826, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1881, Microfilm Publication M-234, reel 748, frame 89, Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter this publication cited as M-234, with references to reel and frame numbers; this record group cited as RG 75; this archives cited as NA); Clark to John Eaton, 1/17/1831, M-234, 749:1126.

16. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi, India, 1983), 78–108, 136, 254–64; James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT, 1990), x–xiii, 1–44, 137–72 (quotation); Gregory E. Dowd, *Groundless: Rumors, Legends, and Hoaxes on the Early American Frontier* (Baltimore, 2015), 4–15; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT, 1985), 23–35, 255–72, 295–303 (quotation).

are not necessarily violent, and some violent forms are directed against property rather than persons. However, the most significant boundary is the line that separates anonymous resistance from open, public forms such as warfare. Anonymous resistance is never without purpose; it is grounded in an ideology articulated by the subalterns. Also important is the fact that anonymous resistance provides a segue for rebellion.<sup>17</sup>

The Indian culture of war provided the means to bring this ideology to fruition. The regional tribes were warrior societies that valorized every man as a combatant. Indian warfare emphasized individual initiative in combat and provided men with a means of gaining social status and revenge for earlier losses of kith and kin. Indians avoided unnecessary deaths in battle and practiced what Euro-Americans called a “skulking” way of war that depended on the element of surprise and tactics such as raids and ambushes. Equally important was the distinction between “national wars” and “private wars.” Both the Central Algonquian societies (Potawatomis, Ojibwas, Odawas, Menominees, Sauks, Meskwakis, and Kickapoos) as well as the Siouan speakers (Dakotas and Ho-Chunks) resided in largely autonomous bands and villages whose leaders led by persuasion. Assemblies of village chiefs and band leaders sometimes sat as tribal councils and authorized national wars that had larger strategic goals and consisted of hundreds and even thousands of warriors. Small parties of fewer than one hundred and sometimes fewer than a dozen men conducted private wars. Because Native governing systems generally lacked coercive mechanisms, young warriors, eager to gain prestige, often organized private war parties that were the principal means by which anonymous acts of resistance became manifest.<sup>18</sup>

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17. Scott, *Domination*, 115–19, 198–201.

18. Richard J. Chacon and Rubén G. Mendoza, eds., *North American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence* (Tucson, 2007), 227–30; Armstrong Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare, 1675–1815* (Norman, OK, 1998), 17–35; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York, 1991), 36–40; David Beck, *Siege and Survival: History of the Menominee Indians, 1634–1850* (Lincoln, NE, 2002), 19–24; Edmund J. Danziger, Jr., *The Chippewas of Lake Superior* (Norman, OK, 1979), 23–33; Anthony F.C. Wallace, “Prelude to Disaster: The Course of Indian-White Relations Which

What Indian warriors saw as legitimate acts of resistance, the United States saw as crimes that fell under the category of “depredations” in Anglo-American legal discourse. The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts of 1796 and 1802 ensured that Indians who committed violations against American citizens (although not against other Indians) came under the aegis of federal law. Most forms of anonymous resistance consisted of depredations against property and carried lighter penalties than acts of violence against persons. Indian agents rarely held individuals responsible for depredations against property and instead settled them outside the legal arena. Theft, for example, particularly of horses, was resolved by having the tribes return the property or deducting the value of the goods from the annuities the tribes received from earlier treaties. Acts of violence, particularly those that resulted in death, required the apprehension of perpetrators, and while federal officials occasionally had the ability to effect apprehensions, oftentimes they did not. Such acts thus remained as their perpetrators intended: anonymous.<sup>19</sup>

THE EARLIEST INSTANCES of anonymous resistance consisted of rumors and threats of violence that originated from the fact that the regional tribes as well as British officials believed the ninth article of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, prohibited the United States from establishing new military posts on Indian lands where they had not existed before the conflict.

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Led to the Black Hawk War of 1832,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 65 (1982), 249–53; Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship*, 231–33, 241–42; Paul Radin, “The Winnebago Tribe,” in *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1915–1916* (Washington, DC, 1923), 69–70, 166–77, 202, 207–11.

19. Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790–1834* (Lincoln, NE, 1962), 192–94; Larry C. Skogen, *Indian Depredation Claims, 1796–1920* (Norman, OK, 1996), xvii–xix, 24–39; Thomas Forsyth to Clark, 8/3/1822, Thomas Forsyth Papers, Series T, vol. 6, 23, Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison (hereafter this collection cited as follows: Draper MSS 6T:23; this archives cited as WHS); Lewis Cass to Alexander Wolcott, 9/11/1822, Records of the Michigan Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1814–1851, Microfilm Publication M-1, reel 5, vol. 4, 90–91, RG 75, NA (hereafter cited as M-1, with references to reel, volume, and page numbers or reel and frame numbers); Deposition of Oliver Amelle, 11/4/1830, M-234, 931:97–98.

The Native societies in the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley saw the post-war American occupation of their homelands as an illegitimate and provocative invasion. Throughout 1816, as the United States began its occupation, rumors suggested the resident tribes threatened to oppose the U.S. Army. A British officer at Drummond Island in 1816 noted that many of the 1,000 Indians assembled there “have gone so far as to ask our assistance . . . to enable them to oppose the projects of the American Government to form Military Establishments in their Territory.”<sup>20</sup> If a purpose of rumor is to undermine the confidence of a colonial power, these rumors achieved the desired effect. The army occupied its new military sites without incident because commanders, heeding the reports, arrived with large numbers of troops to deter potential aggression. About 1,000 soldiers ascended the upper Mississippi River in spring 1816 to establish new posts. Later that summer, 500 troops effected the occupation of Green Bay.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1815 and 1822, the U.S. Army reestablished Forts Dearborn and Mackinac and built new posts at Green Bay (Fort Howard), Prairie du Chien (Fort Crawford), the mouth of the Des Moines River (Fort Edwards), Rock Island (Fort Armstrong), the mouth of the Minnesota River (Fort Snelling), and Sault Ste.

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20. Speech of McDouall, 6/28/1815, *MPHC*, 16:194–95; Speech of William McKay, 6/29/1815, *MPHC*, 16:480–84; McDouall to unknown, 8/7/1816, *MPHC*, 16:509–12; Robert Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774–1815* (Toronto, 1992), 169–71; A.J. Dallas to Jacob Brown, 5/22/1815, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800–1889, Microfilm Publication M-6, reel 8, vol. 8, 106–07, Record Group 107, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, NA (hereafter cited as M-6, with references to reel, volume, and page numbers); Dallas to Andrew Jackson, 5/22/1815, M-6, 8:8:107–08; William Armstrong to Samuel Armstrong, 6/8/1816, William Armstrong Papers, file 1814, June 11, box 122, folder 16, WHS; William Puthuff to Cass, 6/20/1816, *WHC*, 19:421–22; G.H. Monk to Robinson, 7/13/1816, *MPHC*, 16:489 (quotation).

21. Robert Wash to William Crawford, 8/5/1816, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Carter and John Bloom, 28 vols. (Washington, DC, 1934–1975), 15:167–68 (hereafter cited as *TPUS*); Francis Paul Prucha, *Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783–1846* (London, 1969), 125–28; *Missouri Gazette* (St. Louis, MO), 6/15/1816; John Miller, “The Military Occupation of Green Bay,” ed. Milo M. Quaife, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13 (1927), 549–53; William Hening to W.W. Hening, 8/29/1816, *WHC*, 13:441–43.



Marie (Fort Brady). By 1822, these eight posts possessed 1,192 soldiers, a much larger number than a decade earlier. The presence of the new posts further stoked anti-American sentiments and gave rise to new threats of violence. A trader at St. Louis in 1816 noted that many Sauks took offence to Fort Armstrong being built in their country and “sent a pipe to the different tribes on the lakes, The Chippeways, Winebagoes, Menominees & Potawatamies; inviting those Indians to aid them in driving the Americans from their lands.”<sup>22</sup> The next year, the Ojibwas, Odawas, Potawatomis, Sauks, Meskwakis, Kickapoos, Menominees, and Ho-Chunks reportedly were forming a new confederacy that sought to prevent American settlers from entering Illinois Territory. Illinois Territorial Governor Ninian Edwards insisted the rumors were genuine since he learned of them from tribal leaders. How true were these reports? How far along were plans for a new confederacy? The answers are not evident, but they are also irrelevant; the purpose of such rumors was to undermine American claims to sovereignty. In the American mind, fears of pan-Indian alliances, both real and imagined, had a long history that stretched back to the mid-eighteenth century, fears that bordered on paranoia. Thus, tales of new Native confederacies found a receptive audience after 1815.<sup>23</sup>

Just as it is difficult to ascertain the origins of rumors, it is often impossible to determine the intent behind acts of resistance committed by Native people after 1815. Most perpetrators did, indeed, remain anonymous. They evaded apprehension, and therefore, determining their motivations presents challenges.

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22. Prucha, *Sword of the Republic*, 123–28, 147–51; Francis Paul Prucha, *A Guide to the Military Posts of the United States, 1789–1895* (Madison, WI, 1964), 43, 57, 61–62, 68, 71, 73, 79, 108; Robert Wooster, *The American Military Frontiers: The United States Army in the West, 1783–1900* (Albuquerque, 2009), 48, 54–56; Distribution of Troops in the Eastern Department, 11/9/1822, *ASP:MA*, 2:455; Distribution of Troops in the Western Department, 11/9/1822, *ASP:MA*, 2:456; *Missouri Gazette*, 6/15/1816; Richard Graham to Crawford, 7/8/1816, *TPUS*, 17:359–61 (quotation).

23. Graham to Thomas Smith, 1/26/1817, *TPUS*, 17:473–74; Ninian Edwards to Crawford, 2/21/1817, *TPUS*, 17:484; Edwards to Crawford, 5/12/1817, *TPUS*, 17:504; Robert Owens, *Red Dreams, White Nightmares: Pan-Indian Alliances in the Anglo-American Mind, 1763–1815* (Norman, OK, 2015), 3–14, 235–43.

Nevertheless, a paucity of evidence does not imply the absence of ideological intent, and the motivations for such acts “must largely be inferred from practice—a quiet practice at that.”<sup>24</sup> After the army occupied its forts, the presence of American soldiers provided anti-American tribal members with potential targets, and acts of resistance followed what had been rumors and threats. In autumn 1816, the garrison at Fort Howard experienced several such episodes, all of which were likely carried out by local Menominees. A party of Indians shot at a local civilian employed by the garrison, and later, in a separate incident, another party shot at a soldier. Three Indians assaulted another soldier and stole his gun, and others killed oxen belonging to the post. A few weeks later near Peoria, a group of either Sauks and Meskwakis or Ho-Chunks assaulted federal surveyors and threatened to kill them unless they stopped their work. Another party, most likely Ho-Chunks, slaughtered cattle at Fort Armstrong. The next year in 1817, Potawatomis near Chicago stole horses, and Sauks and Meskwakis tore down trees marked by federal surveyors in Illinois Territory.<sup>25</sup>

Evidence of ideological intent becomes clearer in those cases where the tribes responded to public acts of resistance by Indian societies in other regions. The commencement of the First Seminole War in November 1817 resulted in a fresh wave of rumors. Potawatomis at Chicago asserted they had received war belts signaling an invitation to join an alliance with the Spanish, who would soon be united with the British in a war against the United States. Amazingly, the Indians around Chicago learned of the hostilities in Florida in January 1818, only six weeks after the war had started. Michigan Territorial Governor Lewis Cass wrote, “A war belt from the South, probably from the Indians engaged in Hostility in that quarter, but said to be from the Spaniards, has passed through this Country. . . . [The Indians] are perfectly aware of the state of affairs in the South, and information of

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24. Scott, *Domination*, 140–44, 188–90 (quotation).

25. John O’Fallon to Richard Johnson, 10/8/1816, *TPUS*, 17:409; Matthew Duncan to Edwards, 10/31/1816, *TPUS*, 17:440; Forsyth to John C. Calhoun, 7/2/1822, Draper MSS, 6T:10; Charles Jouett to Cass, 6/26/1817, *TPUS*, 17:516–517; Puthuff to Cass, 8/20/1817, *WHC*, 19:473.

passing events is regularly communicated to them by runners from that quarter."<sup>26</sup>

At about the same time, acts of resistance increased due to Indians living within the United States' territorial limits annually traveling to British posts in Canada. At these posts, they received presents that kept them within Britain's diplomatic orbit in the event of another war with the United States. The Sauks and Meskwakis regularly traveled the Great Sauk Trail that started at Saukenuk—the main Sauk village directly across the Mississippi River from present-day Davenport, Iowa—and terminated at the British post of Fort Malden opposite Detroit. The trail ran through southern Michigan, which, unlike the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley, attracted American agricultural settlers immediately after the War of 1812. The isolated settlements were vulnerable; in 1819, Indians killed three settlers along the Great Sauk Trail. Cass also learned of Indians plundering livestock and harassing surveyors. He estimated 90 percent of the acts of resistance that occurred along the route were committed by Indians traveling to Fort Malden. He believed British diplomacy did much to keep anti-American sentiments alive and noted the continued rumors of a renewed pan-Indian alliance when he wrote, "[The Indians] say there are [war] belts passing large enough for them all to sit upon. . . . My own opinion is that there is an intention of reviving the plans and policy of Tecumseh and of uniting them in a general confederacy."<sup>27</sup>

Often, ideological intent can be gleaned from sources other than those that describe the acts of resistance. In 1819, Ho-Chunks of the Fox River bands returned from Canada believing

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26. John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville, FL, 2004), 32–43; Jouett to Cass, 1/1/1818, M-1, 3:2:233–34; Cass to Calhoun, 4/17/1818, *TPUS*, 10:744–46 (quotation).

27. Catherine 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, 44–64, 81–91, 136–37; Harry Spooner, "The Other End of the Great Sauk Trail," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 29 (1936), 121–34; Kenneth Lewis, *West to Far Michigan: Settling the Lower Peninsula, 1815–1860* (East Lansing, MI, 2002), 13–30, 94–102, 179–93; Cass to Calhoun, 5/27/1819, *TPUS*, 10:827; Cass to Calhoun, 6/5/1819, *TPUS*, 10:833; Cass to Calhoun, 8/3/1819, *TPUS*, 10:852–55 (quotation).

Britain would support a pan-Indian uprising the next spring. The rumor circulated that the Ho-Chunks had sent war belts to the Dakotas west of the Mississippi and proposed a renewed alliance against the United States. One Ho-Chunk community flew the British flag at its village on Lake Winnebago and later shot at a group of American soldiers crossing the lake in August 1819. Similarly, in September 1819, the Ho-Chunks shot at an American trader and his men while they were traversing Lake Winnebago. In October 1819 a group of Ho-Chunks along the Fox River encountered two U.S. Army surgeons. No violence occurred, but according to one of the surgeons, the Ho-Chunks forcibly entered their tent and treated their party with such insolence that he "could scarcely prevent my men from committing violence on them."<sup>28</sup> The United States never apprehended the perpetrators in these cases, and their motivations remain seemingly inscrutable. However, the federal Indian factor at Green Bay in 1820 provided evidence of the Ho-Chunks' intent when he wrote, "No other tribe seems to possess so much jealousy of the whites. . . . They will suffer no encroachment upon their soil; nor any persons to pass through it, without giving a satisfactory explanation of their motives and intentions. In failing to comply with this preliminary step, their lives would be in danger."<sup>29</sup>

In other cases, the U.S. Army managed to apprehend the perpetrators, and what had been intended as anonymous acts generated greater documentation. However, the depositions in these cases are often frustratingly vague, and it is unclear whether the acts had an ideological foundation or were the result of personal altercations. An example is that of an Ojibwa named Ketaukah, who in May 1821, served as a guide for an army surgeon, William Madison, who was traveling southward with a party of soldiers after departing Fort Howard at Green Bay. Along the way,

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28. John Kinzie to Cass, 7/24/1819, M-1, 6:92; Wolcott to Cass, 11/14/1819, *TPUS*, 10:885-87; Lewis Morgan to Joseph Smith, 1/3/1820, *WHC*, 20:139; Smith to Brown, 1/5/1820, *WHC*, 20:139-42; William Whistler to Smith, 1/3/1820, M-1, 7:63; Whistler to John Bowyer, 1/13/1820, M-1, 20:142-43; Bowyer to Cass, 1/15/1820, M-1, 20:143-44; William Madison to unknown, 10/5/1819, *WHC*, 20:126 (quotation).

29. Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War, of the United States, on Indian Affairs* (New Haven, CT, 1822), appendix, 48 (quotation).

Ketaukah shot Madison, who lingered for two days before dying. Members of Madison's party apprehended Ketaukah. When later asked why he shot Madison, Ketaukah only said that he wanted "to see how *pretty* he would fall off his horse."<sup>30</sup>

A similar episode provides clearer evidence of ideological intent. Territorial officials and army commanders often had means at their disposal to coerce Native communities into surrendering persons who committed such acts. On March 29, 1820, a party of Rock River Ho-Chunks killed two soldiers from Fort Armstrong on a wood-cutting detail. The army secured the perpetrators by taking four Ho-Chunks hostage and holding them until tribal leaders relinquished the guilty by delivering them to Prairie du Chien. At Fort Crawford, Colonel Henry Leavenworth conducted interrogations of Chewachera, the leader; his nephew, Whorahjinka; and another warrior, Jerago. When Chewachera and his companions had arrived at Rock Island where Fort Armstrong stood, Chewachera asserted that American soldiers had killed his sister and her husband at that location two years earlier. Chewachera decided to avenge their murders by waiting in ambush for any soldiers who might appear. Jerago and Whorahjinka attempted to dissuade him, but as Chewachera was his uncle, Whorahjinka was obligated to follow his commands. Whorahjinka admitted he had fired as per his uncle's directive and that Chewachera subsequently stabbed one of the soldiers and scalped the corpses. During questioning, Chewachera admitted his guilt without hesitation: "I knew that my sister had been ill used. . . . I never had any ill intentions untill [*sic*] I heard that my sister had been abused. . . . [W]hen I came near the place where it was done I lost my senses [*sic*] and did a bad act."<sup>31</sup>

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30. Indictment of Ka-ta-koh for Murder, 9/20/1821, Records of the Territorial Court of Michigan, 1815-1836, Microfilm Publication M-1111, reel 2, Record Group 21, Records of District Courts of the United States, NA (hereafter cited as M-1111, with references to reel numbers); Affidavit of Daniel Curtis, 8/3/1821, M-1111, 2; Decision of the Jury in the Case of Ka-ta-koh, undated, M-1111, 2; Alice E. Smith, *James Duane Doty: Frontier Promoter* (Madison, WI, 1954), 23-24; James D. Doty to Henry R. Schoolcraft, 11/17/1821, *TPUS*, 11:176-77 (quotation; emphasis in original).

31. Martin Zanger, "Conflicting Concepts of Justice: A Winnebago Murder Trial on the Illinois Frontier," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 73 (1980),

Chewachera's claim that soldiers killed his sister was questionable. A witness who had buried her body stated there were no marks indicating anyone had assaulted her. The witness (who was unnamed) told Leavenworth that she and her husband had fallen through the ice and drowned, but the veracity of this story, like Chewachera's, cannot be proven. However, even if Chewachera concocted the story, his admission of guilt still provides important evidence. Confessions may record the lies perpetrators weave to avoid punishment, but they also must have "the ring of credibility," and thus record truths in spite of themselves.<sup>32</sup> Chewachera's testimony indicated he loathed the presence of American troops in his country, and whether this sentiment was generated by the murder of his sister or some other cause, he settled for killing two soldiers upon whom he and his companions had stumbled. Leavenworth released Jerago since he had played no part in the killings. Chewachera and Whorahjinka were tried in Edwardsville, Illinois. The jury took only thirty minutes to find them guilty. Upon learning of the case, President James Monroe granted Whorahjinka a reprieve since, as Chewachera's nephew, he was bound to obey his uncle's commands. Chewachera died in prison before the sentence could be carried out. When Whorahjinka's reprieve expired on August 14, 1821 and no pardon had arrived, he was hanged in Kaskaskia, Illinois.<sup>33</sup>

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265–68; Jonathan Johnson to Cass, 4/19/1820, *WHC*, 20:167; Mark A. Warburton, "For the Purposes of Example and Justice': Native American Incarceration in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1803–1849" (PhD diss, University of Iowa, 2011), 95–148; Interrogation of the Winnebago Prisoners, 6/9/1820, William Clark Papers, vol. 2, 182–88, 190–93, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka (quotation; hereafter cited as Clark MSS, with references to volume and page numbers).

32. Radin, "Winnebago Tribe," 170; Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, eds., *History from Crime*, trans. Corrada Curry, Margaret Gallucci, and Mary Gallucci (Baltimore, 1994), viii–ix, 230–31 (quotation).

33. Henry Leavenworth to Winnebago Chiefs, 6/11/1820, Clark MSS, 2:182–83; Calhoun to Clark, 6/11/1821, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800–1824, Microfilm Publication M-15, reel 5, vol. E, 112–13, RG 75, NA (hereafter cited as M-15, with references to reel, volume, and page numbers); Calhoun to Jephthah Harding, 6/11/1821, M-15, 5:E:113; Zanger, "Conflicting Concepts of Justice," 269–73.

The ideology of resistance is more evident in another case involving the Ojibwas. In the 1820s, American fur traders, following on the heels of the U.S. Army, entered the region and, like federal soldiers, became targets for anti-American tribal members. In summer 1824, twenty-eight Ojibwa warriors under the leadership of Saygeeto and Keewaynoquet departed Lac du Flambeau and headed west to fight their enemies, the Dakotas. Upon reaching Lake Pepin on the Mississippi, they met a party of American traders. Relations between the two groups were initially cordial, and they camped near each other that evening. While the Americans slept, the Ojibwas snuck into their camp, killed and scalped the four men, and plundered their goods. The warriors departed and stopped at various Ojibwa villages performing dances around the scalps and displaying the American flag they had taken. While the act itself was the product of the resistance ideology, the celebratory receptions the warriors received also reflected this sentiment among the larger Ojibwa society. The Ojibwas at Sault Ste. Marie in particular had exhibited an almost universal loathing of the United States and an affinity for all things British since the War of 1812.<sup>34</sup>

Cass and the Sault Ste. Marie Indian agent, Henry R. Schoolcraft, determined to secure the perpetrators through a trader with influence among the tribe. Captain Newman Clarke, the acting Indian agent in Schoolcraft's absence, composed instructions that indicated federal officials clearly understood the Ojibwas' motivations. Clarke wrote the Ojibwas "cannot depend upon any foreign support in the present state of friendly feeling between us and a certain foreign power [Britain]. As they have been heretofore in the habit of leaning upon such support for countenance, it would be well to make them sensible of that

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34. Rhoda Gilman, "The Fur Trade in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1630-1850," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 58 (1974), 13-18; Schoolcraft to Cass, 8/31/1824, M-234, 419:87-88; Doty to Barbour, 9/22/1825, M-234, 419:355; Deposition of the Little Frenchman, 7/16/1825, M-234, 419:363-64; Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 350-51; Alexander Macomb to Calhoun, 9/7/1818, *TPUS*, 10:781-82; Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal of Travels through the Northwestern Regions of the United States* (Albany, 1821), 136-39.

fact."<sup>35</sup> The trader delivered Clarke's speech at Keweenaw in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where the assembled Ojibwa leaders seemingly pledged friendship to the United States and promised to surrender the perpetrators. Clarke threatened to send a military force if such cooperation was not forthcoming. One of the factors inhibiting the capture of the warriors was the fact the Ojibwas lived in autonomous villages. The perpetrators resided at various locations, and the village chiefs could only persuade their warriors to surrender, although this was sometimes enough to guarantee success. Gitchi Ianba, the village leader at Keweenaw, asserted "if any of the murderers belonged to my village, I would not hesitate one moment . . . but would tie him and give him up . . . as they are quite another band I must take another plan."<sup>36</sup>

Tribal leaders surrendered five men. Saygeeto, Keewaynoquet, and two others arrived at Sault Ste. Marie in June 1825; another, the Little Frenchman, arrived later in the summer, and all were transported to Mackinac Island. The depositions in this case reveal much greater evidence of ideological intent as the perpetrators expressed their anti-American sentiments with unabashed fervor. Several stated their comrades who remained at large "threaten destruction to all of the white people who are now at the several Trading Establishments in their vicinity."<sup>37</sup> The Little Frenchman also confirmed that when he and his companions failed to find any Dakotas, they turned their aggression toward the Americans they had met. The Little Frenchmen reiterated that

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35. Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 351; Cass to Thomas L. McKenney, 4/4/1825, M-234, 419:190-92; Newman Clarke to John Holliday, 12/25/1824, M-234, 419:193-95 (quotation).

36. Speech of Clarke to Gitchi Ianba, 12/25/1824, M-234, 419:197-99; Holliday to Clarke, 2/3/1825, M-234, 419:202-04; Clarke to Cass, 2/15/1825, M-234, 419:201; Speech of Gitchi Ianba, undated, M-234, 419:205-06 (quotation).

37. Clarke to Holliday, 12/25/1824, M-234, 419:193-95; Schoolcraft to Cass, 6/22/1825, M-1, 16:152; Cass to Barbour, 6/28/1825, M-234, 419:265-66; Enos Cutler to Cass, 6/30/1825, M-234, 419:279; Clarke to Cass, 6/30/1825, M-1, 16:160; Deposition of the Little Frenchman, 7/16/1825, M-234, 419:363-69; Doty to Barbour, 7/22/1825, M-234, 419:355-57 (quotation). A sixth Ojibwa was apprehended for the murder of a French *métis* trader near Lac Courte Oreilles in spring 1825, but this act was the result of a personal altercation. See Schoolcraft to Cass, 6/27/1825, M-234, 419:274-75; Doty to Barbour, 7/22/1825, M-234, 419:357.



those members of the war party who “remain in the country untouched and unpunished” posed a threat to any Americans who came among the Ojibwas.<sup>38</sup> Traders echoed this statement and related that two of those who remained free “have threatened . . . to murder all of the white people who are now in the said country, if . . . the said party who are now in custody for their trial shall be executed.”<sup>39</sup>

A grand jury indicted the five Ojibwas at Mackinac Island in June 1825, but they never stood trial. Mackinac Island, like many parts of the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley, had a large *métis* population composed of persons of mixed Native and predominantly French-Canadian ancestry. The *métis* possessed intimate ties to Indian societies, and with the aid of *métis* sympathizers, all five men escaped the jail on Mackinac Island in autumn 1825. Even before the escape, federal officials from the secretary of war on down expressed the need to apprehend all the perpetrators. At issue was American sovereignty and the possibility that those who remained at large might commit a similar act. Cass and Thomas L. McKenney, the head of the War Department’s Indian Office, made repeated attempts to secure the perpetrators; each time the Ojibwa chiefs stated they lacked the ability to force the guilty to surrender themselves. Territorial officials suggested organizing a military expedition to apprehend them, but the remoteness of the Ojibwas’ country from the three posts in the region—Forts Snelling, Brady, and Mackinac—rendered such an option unviable, as did the fact the perpetrators lived in several villages scattered across present-day northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.<sup>40</sup>

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38. Deposition of the Little Frenchman, 7/16/1825, M-234, 419:363–64 (quotation).

39. Deposition of Eustace Roussain, George Johnston, Lyman Warren, and Baptiste Corbin, 7/16/1825, M-234, 419:365 (quotation).

40. Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 352–53; Lucy Murphy, “To Live among Us: Accommodation, Gender, and Conflict in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1760–1832,” in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830*, eds. Andrew Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute (Williamsburg, VA, 1998), 270–303; Calhoun to Josiah Snelling, 9/25/1824, *TPUS*, 11:587; Barbour to Cass, 4/25/1825, M-1, 16:106; Doty to Barbour, 7/22/1825, M-234, 419:355–57; Clarke to Barbour, 9/5/1825, M-234, 419:305–06; Statement of Johnston,

The fact that those who had been confined had also been indicted and faced execution meant the chiefs were unable to use what influence they had to make any of the perpetrators surrender themselves again. By 1826, the threat of a military expedition, which had been the principal reason the chiefs were able to convince their communities to surrender five of the perpetrators in 1825, ceased to exist. For this reason, from 1826 onward, the chiefs were unwilling to accede to the demands of federal officials, no doubt sensing there was little the United States could do to force compliance. Schoolcraft, in a statement that rings quaintly naïve today, suggested the Ojibwas' lack of cooperation originated from the fact they had "never been brought to yield a cheerful acquiescence to the authority of our government."<sup>41</sup> The warriors who participated in the Lake Pepin killings remained free for the remainder of their lives.<sup>42</sup>

ANOTHER REASON FEDERAL OFFICIALS abandoned attempts to secure the perpetrators was that the Ho-Chunks again became their focus. While the presence of American traders offered new targets for the Ojibwas, of greater concern to the Ho-Chunks who lived farther south was the entry of American lead miners into present-day northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin. The lead trade centered around the town of Galena along the Fever (now Galena) River, and throughout the 1820s Americans swept up the Fever River and its tributaries. Across the Mississippi River, the Meskwakis had long worked the rich lead deposits at present-day Dubuque, Iowa, known as the Mines of Spain. The American population of the district exploded from

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11/2/1825, M-234, 419:551; Clarke to Cass, 2/15/1825, M-234, 419:201-03; Cass to Barbour, 6/28/1825, M-234, 419:265-67; Schoolcraft to Cass, 11/4/1825, M-234, 419:334-35; Brown to Cass, 2/5/1826, M-1, 18:21; Speeches of Gitshee Ianba and Ojibwa Chiefs, 2/9/1826, M-1, 18:32-33; Barbour to Cass and McKenney, 5/24/1826, M-1, 18:83; Thomas L. McKenney, *Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes* (Baltimore, 1827), 469-72, 483-84; Talk by Mozobodo, 5/25/1827, M-1, 21:39; Joseph Street to Clark, 10/29/1830, M-234, 696:260-63.

41. Cass to McKenney, 4/16/1826, M-234, 419:461-62; Talk by Mozobodo, 5/25/1827, M-1, 21:39; Cass to McKenney, 11/20/1827, M-234, 419:850-52; Schoolcraft to Cass, 11/4/1825, M-234, 419:334-35 (quotation).

42. William Warren, *History of the Ojibway Nation* (Minneapolis, 1885), 389-93.

150 in December 1825 to 540 by August 1826, and some estimates put the number as high as 1,500 by the end of 1826. The influx created friction with the Sauks, Meskwakis, and Ho-Chunks, all three of whom mined lead to exchange for trade goods. The federal government's weak control resulted in American miners continually entering the country without the requisite leases, but more serious was the fact that many miners illegally extracted lead on Indian lands. Federal Indian agents did nothing to remove the miners despite strident Ho-Chunk protests.<sup>43</sup>

Another factor that aggravated tensions was the murder of a *métis* family near Prairie du Chien in March 1826. The killings were the result of a personal altercation, but the belligerent handling of the matter by Colonel Willoughby Morgan, the commander at Fort Crawford, generated much ill will. Morgan determined the Ho-Chunks who committed the killings believed the head of the family, Francis Methode, had sold poisoned whiskey that had killed one of their relatives. Morgan met with over eighty chiefs and warriors and secured two men, Waukookah and Mannetahpehkeh, but much disagreement existed among the Ho-Chunks concerning whether they were guilty. Morgan harbored reservations as well, but despite a lack of evidence, he arrested both men. These unwarranted incarcerations soured relations with the Ho-Chunks. Shortly thereafter, the War Department in October 1826 abandoned Fort Crawford due to flood damage and relocated the garrison, along with Waukookah and Mannetahpehkeh, to Fort Snelling. While there, two Dakota warriors being held by the army had been turned over to their enemies, the Ojibwas, who promptly killed them. The Ho-Chunks frequently joined the Dakotas in their forays against the Ojibwas, and rumors reached the Wisconsin and Mississippi River Ho-Chunk bands that Waukookah and Mannetahpehkeh had

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43. Lucy Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737–1832* (Lincoln, NE, 2000), 80–94, 101–28; Duane Everhart, "The Leasing of Mineral Lands in Illinois and Wisconsin," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 60 (1967), 117–23; Martin Thomas to George Bomford, 9/30/1826, *The Lead Mines Belonging to the United States*, 19<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., H. Exec. Doc. 7 (Serial 149), 8; Forsyth to Clark, 8/15/1826, Draper MSS, 4T:258–59; John Marsh to Cass, 11/20/1826, M-1, 19:106.

suffered a similar fate. Although the rumor was untrue, it further inflamed anti-American sentiments.<sup>44</sup>

In summer 1826, a noticeable change was evident in Ho-Chunk communities. Stridently anti-American tribal members continued to engage in anonymous acts of resistance, but they considered more active and public forms as well. A few Ho-Chunks explored the possibility of uniting the regional tribes into an alliance against the United States. Ho-Chunks intent on executing this plan sent war belts and pipes to the Dakotas and Meskwakis. They renewed their efforts the next year and sent messages to other tribes. The effort was spearheaded by the Mississippi River Ho-Chunks, although warriors of other bands, particularly those of the Wisconsin River, were also eager for an alliance. Among the Dakotas, the principal actor was Wawzeekootee, who promised the Ho-Chunks that if they attacked the Americans, his people would join them. The chiefs of the Rock River bands, remembering the earlier punishments of Chewachera and Whorahjinka, refused to join. Nevertheless, many young warriors in their communities actively supported the cause. Despite their official rejection, the Rock River Ho-Chunks knew of the war plans and left their villages and gathered in a camp further up the Rock River. The Wisconsin River bands assembled at the Fox-Wisconsin portage. Both groups prepared to defend themselves against American military forces in the upcoming conflict.<sup>45</sup>

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44. Willoughby Morgan to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, 7/9/1826, M-234, 931:1–3; Morgan to Assistant Adjutant General, 8/7/1826, Circuit Court File on the Methode Murder, Iowa Microseries 4, Records of the Iowa County Clerk of Court, University of Wisconsin-Platteville Area Research Center, Platteville (hereafter this file cited as IMS-4; this archives cited as UWP ARC); Morgan to Assistant Adjutant General, 8/10/1826, IMS-4; Zanger, “Red Bird,” 69–70; Lawrence Taliaferro, Journal, 6/13–17/1827, Lawrence Taliaferro Papers, vol. 8, 15–16, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul (hereafter cited as Taliaferro MSS, with references to volume and page numbers); McKenney to Barbour, 8/4/1827, M-234, 419:948; Street to Barbour, 11/15/1827, *Hostile Disposition of the Indian Tribes on the Northwestern Frontier*, 20<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., H. Doc. 277 (Serial 175), 14–15 (hereafter cited as H. Doc. 277).

45. Forsyth to Clark, 7/9/1827, Draper MSS, 4T:274–75; Kinzie to Cass, 8/3/1827, M-234, 419:789–91; Marsh to Clark, 7/20/1827, M-234, 748:138–40; Wolcott to Barbour, 7/25/1827, M-234, 132:32–33; Taliaferro to Clark, 8/1/1827, Taliaferro MSS, 4:95; Street to Edwards, 11/1827, *WHC*, 11:360–61.

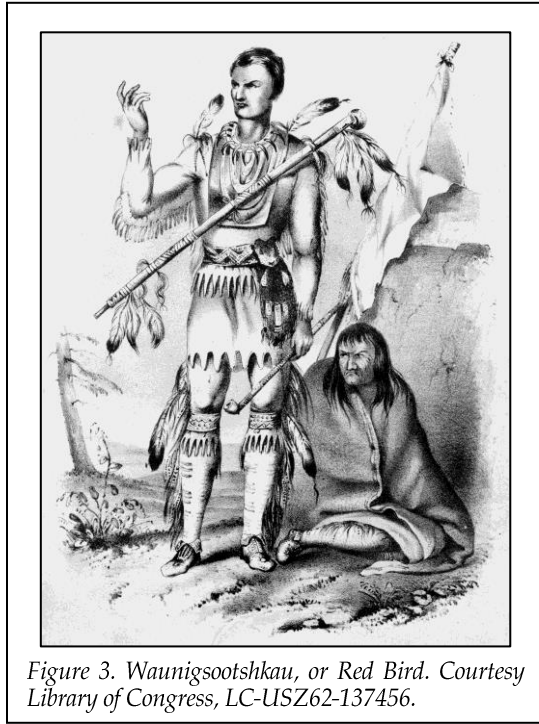


Figure 3. Waunigsootshkau, or Red Bird. Courtesy Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-137456.

What became known as the Red Bird Uprising (or Winnebago Uprising) began on June 28, 1827 when Waunigsootshkau, or Red Bird (Figure 3), led a party that included his son and two others, Wekau (The Sun) and Chickhonsic (Little Buffalo). All four were members of the Prairie La Crosse band of the Mississippi River Ho-Chunks, and Waunigsootshkau was determined to kill Americans when he arrived at Prairie du Chien. He and his party first went to the residence of an American trader who was absent; instead, they went to the house of Registre Gagnier. Waunigsootshkau's choice of the Gagnier household was unusual, given that the family was *métis*. The decision appears to have been dictated by the fact Gagnier's hired man, Solomon Lipcap, was a discharged American soldier, and the homestead was in an isolated location. Thus, the evidence indicates Waunigsootshkau and his companions sought to avoid apprehension and maintain their anonymity after committing the killings.

Waunigsootshkau and his companions killed Registre Gagnier and Lipcap, but Gagnier's wife and son escaped.<sup>46</sup>

Waunigsootshkau and his party returned to Prairie La Crosse and urged their fellow Ho-Chunks to revolt against the Americans. The Prairie La Crosse band again sent war belts to the regional tribes, but only the Dakotas remained interested. Federal officials would have handled the Gagnier killings as simply another instance of violence, but the next event revealed something larger was afoot. On June 30, 1827, two American keelboats were descending the Mississippi, and the Prairie La Crosse Ho-Chunks, encouraged by Waunigsootshkau's actions, decided the war against the United States must continue. The boats appeared to be easy targets as they passed the Indians' camp near the Bad Axe River. The warriors shot at the first boat and killed two men and injured four others. The second vessel passed the mouth of the river after darkness and arrived at Prairie du Chien relatively unscathed.<sup>47</sup>

Sources indicate the number of Ho-Chunks involved ranged from as low as thirty to as high as 180. The higher estimates likely included women, children, and other non-combatants present, while the lower estimates included only warriors. About thirty Dakota warriors were also present. While the numbers were relatively small, the attack demonstrated a concerted action by an entire Ho-Chunk band as well as allies recruited from another

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46. Zanger, "Red Bird," 69–70; McKenney to Barbour, 9/17/1827, H. Doc. 277, 10; Thomas L. McKenney, *Memoirs Official and Personal, With Sketches of Travels*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, 1846), 127–30; James Lockwood, "Early Times and Events in Wisconsin," *WHC*, 2:160–61. Sources present various dates for the Gagnier killings, but most, including the legal indictments, list the date as 6/28/1827. See James D. Doty, "Trials and Decisions in the Several Courts held in the Counties of Michilimackinac, Brown, and Crawford," 143–44, James D. Doty Papers, box 3, WHS (hereafter cited as Doty, "Trials and Decisions").

47. Zanger, "Red Bird," 70–72; McKenney to Barbour, 9/17/1827, H. Doc. 277, 10; Taliaferro to Clark, 7/9/1827, Taliaferro MSS, 4:91–92. Allegedly, the keelboat crews had sexually assaulted several Ho-Chunk women, but historians are divided over the veracity of this claim. The Prairie du Chien Indian agent, Joseph Street, mentioned nothing about these allegations, although he discussed other outrages committed by white miners against the Ho-Chunks that led to the uprising. See Murphy, *Gathering of Rivers*, 125; Hall, *Uncommon Defense*, 80, 284n44; and Street to Calhoun, 11/15/1827, M-234, 696:42–49.

tribe in the upper Mississippi Valley. Thus, it was the first regional pan-Indian alliance formed to make war against the United States since the War of 1812. More important, the keelboat attack was an instance of open resistance. Waunigsootshkau and those who followed him crossed the threshold that separated anonymous acts of resistance from warfare, a fact recognized by Cass, who told his counterpart in St. Louis, Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Clark, "Hostilities have actually commenced."<sup>48</sup> The Gagnier killings served as a segue for a larger, public act of resistance. Waunigsootshkau hoped the Gagnier killings would spur the Ho-Chunks and their Dakota allies to join the Prairie La Crosse band, and the keelboat attack would likewise encourage other tribes to join in a general revolt. When he returned to Prairie La Crosse after committing the Gagnier killings, Waunigsootshkau reportedly uttered "now we have begun the war we must carry it on—if we stop the Americans will hang us & it is better to die bravely with our arms [weapons] in our hands."<sup>49</sup>

His actions as well as attempts by other Ho-Chunks and Dakotas to create an intertribal alliance throughout 1826 and 1827 were not without effect. During the uprising, Rock River Ho-Chunks committed robberies and assaults against Americans in the lead mining region. Warriors of the Wisconsin River bands threatened to stop any Americans passing through the Fox-Wisconsin portage, while others near Prairie du Chien killed cattle. Dakotas around Fort Snelling spread the rumor they would kill all the Americans in the area, and Ho-Chunks issued a similar threat at Prairie du Chien. However, these anonymous acts by sympathetic Indians would be the limit of support for the leaders of the uprising. Tribes such as the Potawatomis and Meskwakis rejected the war belts they had been sent. Moreover, while a few

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48. Henry Atkinson to Edmund P. Gaines, 9/28/1827, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1827*, 20<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., H. Doc. 2 (Serial 161), 155–56 (hereafter cited as H. Doc. 2); Marsh to Cass, 7/4/1827, *TPUS*, 11:1096; Forsyth to Clark, 7/28/1827, Draper MSS, 6T:66–67; Cass to Clark, 7/11/1827, M-234, 748:98 (quotation).

49. Zanger, "Red Bird," 71–72; Marsh to Clark, 7/20/1827, M-234, 748:138–39 (quotation).

Dakotas joined the rebellion, the majority did not. During an earlier meeting with the Ho-Chunks, one Dakota leader stated, "What will you gain by war with the white people? . . . They are too numerous for you to fight them, and they will take our traders from us, and if they don't whip us, they will starve us."<sup>50</sup>

These words became prescient. Federal officials responded quickly to the rebellion despite the fact 1827 was the nadir for American military power in the region. Because of the need for soldiers farther westward, the War Department had abandoned Forts Dearborn, Edwards, and Crawford by 1826. The three remaining posts—Forts Howard, Snelling, and Armstrong—had only 207, 220, and 91 soldiers, respectively. Military planners established Jefferson Barracks in 1826 believing a large post at St. Louis would allow the army to respond to crises throughout the Mississippi Valley. The Red Bird Uprising revealed the flaws of this plan due to the distance that separated the post from the theater of operations. Brigadier General Henry Atkinson departed Jefferson Barracks with over 500 regulars and received another 200 from Fort Snelling upon arriving at Prairie du Chien. Atkinson also accepted the services of a 130-man militia force composed of American lead miners. The commander at Fort Howard rounded out his roughly 100 regulars with about 230 volunteers composed of recently arrived New York Indians (Oneidas, Stockbridges, and Brothertons), Menominee warriors, and *métis* residents from Green Bay. In late August, both military forces converged on the Fox-Wisconsin portage, where the Mississippi and Wisconsin River Ho-Chunks had assembled. The Red Bird Uprising ended on September 3, 1827, when the Ho-Chunk

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50. Atkinson to Gaines, 9/28/1827, H. Doc. 2, 155–56; Marsh to Clark, 6/30/1827, M-234, 748:92–93; McKenney to Barbour, 7/19/1827, M-234, 419:932; Clark to Barbour, 7/23/1827, M-234, 748:132; John Dixon to Clark, 7/24/1827, M-234, 748:144; Joseph Rolette to Cass, 11/16/1827, M-1, 21:176; Zanger, "Red Bird," 71–72; Cass to Barbour, 7/4/1827, *TPUS*, 11:1093–95; Wolcott to Barbour, 7/25/1827, M-234, 132:32–33; Forsyth to Cass, 9/10/1827, M-1, 21:102–03; Forsyth to Clark, 10/15/1827, Draper MSS, 6T:76–77; Street to Barbour, 11/15/1827, H. Doc. 277, 15 (quotation).



leadership, not wishing to engage in a war it could not win, surrendered Waunigsootshkau and Wekau.<sup>51</sup>

The Red Bird Uprising forced the federal government to reassess its policies. The War Department ordered Forts Crawford and Dearborn reoccupied as well as the building of a new post, Fort Winnebago, in the heart of the Ho-Chunks' country. The United States also sought to resolve the problem of American miners on Indian lands. In the wake of the Red Bird Uprising, Waunigsootshkau, Wekau, Chickhonsic, and three others were taken into custody. Waukookah and Mannetahpehkeh remained confined for the Methode killings a year earlier. The wheels of justice turned slowly; Waunigsootshkau died while in jail. When the seven defendants appeared before Judge James D. Doty in September 1828, the court dropped the charges against Waukookah and Mannetahpehkeh as well as three of the Ho-Chunks involved in the uprising for lack of evidence. Wekau and Chickhonsic stood trial, and, after being found guilty, Doty sentenced both to be hanged. The federal government saw an opportunity. Many miners believed the "victory" over the Ho-Chunks gave them access to the tribe's mineral lands by right of conquest, and a new wave of Americans illegally occupied Ho-Chunk lands. The federal government lacked the resolve to remove the hundreds of new miners, and it pursued the easier option of purchasing the Ho-Chunks' territory. In exchange for the pardons of Wekau and Chickhonsic, the Ho-Chunks reluctantly ceded their mineral lands in 1829.<sup>52</sup>

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51. Prucha, *Guide to Military Posts*, 71, 73, 81; Patrick J. Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832* (Norman, OK, 2007), 34, 44; Wooster, *American Military Frontiers*, 74-77; Zanger, "Red Bird," 73-77; Atkinson to Gaines, 9/28/1827, H. Doc. 2, 156-57; Cass to Barbour, 8/17/1827, M-234, 419:779; Ebenezer Childs, "Recollections of Wisconsin since 1820," *WHC*, 4:172-73; Patricia Ourada, *The Menominee Indians: A History* (Norman, OK, 1979), 83, 232-35.

52. Barbour to Edwards, 9/10/1827, M-6, 12:12:313; Macomb to Peter Porter, 11/1828, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1828*, 20<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., S. Doc. 1 (Serial 181), 26; Wolcott to Barbour, 3/20/1828, H. Doc. 277, 6; Minutes of the Territorial Court for Crawford and Iowa Counties, 1824-1832, 44-47, 54-56, Iowa Series 74, Records of the Iowa County Clerk of Court, UWP ARC; Doty, "Trials and Decisions," 143-45; Street to Clark, 12/10/1827, M-234, 748:253-58; Zanger, "Red Bird," 79-81.

This anti-climactic conclusion and the revitalized American military presence dramatically changed the nature of Indian resistance in the region. The regional tribes had witnessed the failure of the uprising's leaders to foment a larger rebellion, and while Wekau and Chickhonsic received pardons, others like Chewachera and Whorahjinka had not been as fortunate. Even those who escaped American justice like the perpetrators of the Lake Pepin killings suffered miserable confinements in the hellish conditions of local jails and military stockades. Doty described the jail at Mackinac Island as "an insecure and unwholesome place . . . without any provision made for their [the prisoners'] support."<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the incarceration of Native persons, often through extra-legal means, was a strategy used by federal officials to erode Native resistance. For these reasons, the killing of Americans, at least in times of peace, disappeared. Other types of non-lethal depredations—assault, destruction of property, theft, etc.—occurred with greater frequency.<sup>54</sup>

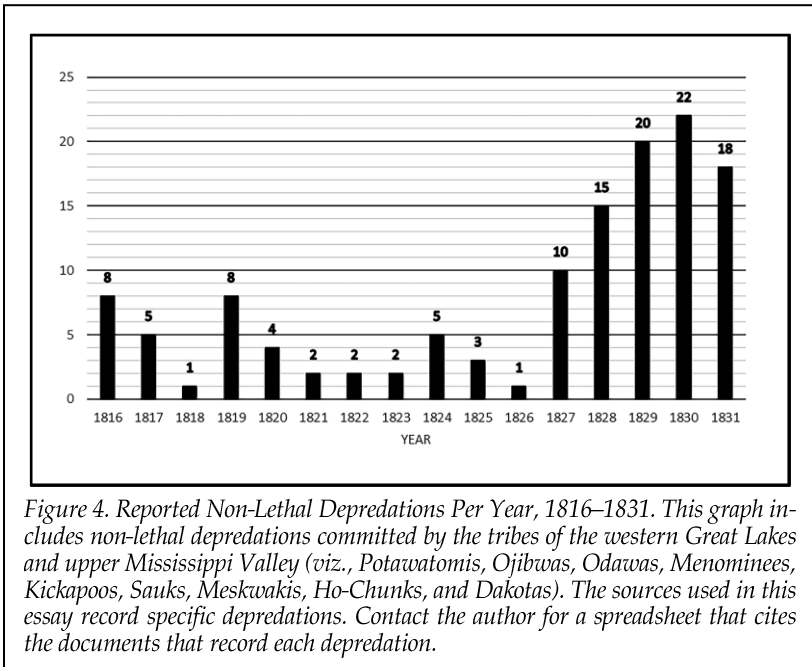
Indeed, non-lethal depredations became the most significant form of anonymous resistance in the region after 1827 and increased thereafter (Figure 4). The data must be considered with caution. Such acts were almost certainly underreported, and Indian agents often mentioned "depredations" but did not describe specific instances.<sup>55</sup> The relatively low numbers before the late 1820s reflect this imperfect documentation as well as the limited opportunities to commit acts of resistance since most of the Americans in the region were soldiers confined to the relative security of their forts. The increase in depredations after 1827 had two causes. First, the Red Bird Uprising, like the First Seminole War, encouraged many Indians to commit anonymous acts of resistance in 1827; the Black Hawk War witnessed a similar dynamic in 1832. A second cause was the fresh wave of Americans

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53. Doty to Cass, 7/22/1825, M-234, 419:357 (quotation).

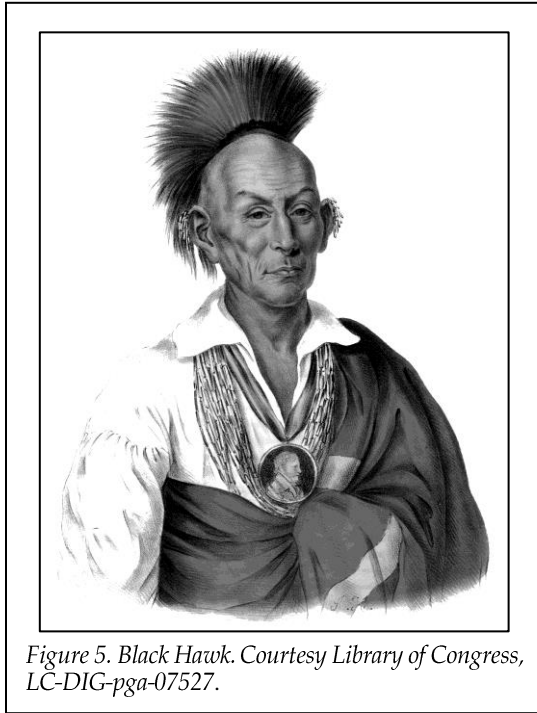
54. Warburton, "For the Purposes of Example and Justice," 29–32, 214–92; Marsha Rising, ed., "White Claims for Indian Depredations: Illinois-Missouri-Arkansas Frontier, 1804–32," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 84 (1996), 275–304.

55. Cass to Wolcott, 9/11/1822, M-1, 5:4:90–91; Citizens of Rock River to John Reynolds, 4/30/1831, *The Black Hawk War, 1831–1832*, ed. Ellen M. Whitney, 2 vols. (Springfield, IL, 1970–1978), 2:3–4 (hereafter cited as *BHW*).



into the mining region and white settlers into northern Illinois; the area around Saukenuk became particularly turbulent. The increased numbers of miners and settlers resulted in more instances of aggression against Native communities and likewise created more opportunities for Indians to commit acts of resistance. The mining region remained a flashpoint because even after selling their mineral lands, the Ho-Chunks continued to hunt in the area. In the case of Saukenuk, the first American settlers appeared in 1829. Clark reported, “The white settlements are now extended to their [the Sauks’] fields, and it may be expected that difficulties will arise between them.”<sup>56</sup>

56. Atkinson to Gaines, 9/28/1827, H. Doc. 2, 155–56; McKenney to Barbour, 7/19/1827, M-234, 419:932–36; Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 95–96, 107, 172–74; Henry Gratiot to Joseph Duncan, 1/26/1831, M-234, 931:96; Wallace, “Prelude to Disaster,” 269–70; Clark to Eaton, 5/20/1829, M-234, 749:632 (quotation).



*Figure 5. Black Hawk. Courtesy Library of Congress, LC-DIG-pga-07527.*

The altercations at Saukenuk occupied a nebulous position between anonymous resistance and open rebellion as the Sauks' very presence at Saukenuk was an open, nonviolent form of resistance. In 1828, the federal government ordered the Sauks and Meskwakis to remove from the east side of the Mississippi into present-day Iowa in accordance with an earlier land cession treaty fraudulently negotiated with the two tribes in 1804. Along with their participation in the War of 1812, the 1804 treaty was a significant source of anti-American sentiment among the Sauks. Most Meskwaki villages already stood in Iowa, and by summer 1829, the majority of Sauks under the leadership of Keokuk reluctantly relocated there. Only those Sauks who refused to remove remained at Saukenuk, and from 1829 onward, these Sauks, called the British Band, came under the leadership of Keokuk's rival, Black Hawk (Figure 5). In autumn 1829, Keokuk and the Sauk and Meskwaki Indian agent instructed Black Hawk and his followers to cross to the west side of the

Mississippi when they returned from their winter hunts. In defiance of these entreaties, the British Band went back to Saukenuk in spring 1830. Six American families had settled in the vicinity, and the British Band frequently destroyed their crops and stole their livestock in retaliation for depredations committed by the settlers, who fenced in and stole the Sauks' cornfields and tore down their lodges. Several settlers asserted the army would remove the Sauks, to which the leaders of the British Band responded that they would fight along with their Kickapoo, Potawatomi, and Rock River Ho-Chunk allies. Black Hawk ominously warned one settler that this pan-Indian alliance "would make the Whites *Eat Dirt* and *Choke to death*."<sup>57</sup>

The British Band returned to Saukenuk again in 1831, but this time events unfolded differently. One of Black Hawk's advisors was Wabokieshiek, a half-Sauk, half-Ho-Chunk seer known as the Winnebago Prophet (Figure 6), who advised Black Hawk that if he and his followers returned to Saukenuk in 1831, the Americans would not force them to leave. The Winnebago Prophet likely developed this notion based on his understanding of the ninth article of the Treaty of Ghent, by which the United States agreed to "never interrupt any nation of Indians that was at peace."<sup>58</sup> When Black Hawk returned to Saukenuk in 1831, he had approximately 1,000 Sauks as well as several hundred Kickapoos and Potawatomis with him. By midsummer, between 1,200 and 1,600 Indians, all staunchly anti-American, made a defiant stand at Saukenuk. However, these would be the only Indians who supported Black Hawk. Major General Edmund P. Gaines, commander of the army's Western Department, assembled a force of 270 regulars and 1,400 Illinois militiamen and moved against the British Band on the morning of June 26, 1831. The troops found Saukenuk deserted; Black Hawk and his people had wisely slipped across the Mississippi during the night. Black

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57. Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster," 267–73; Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 17–24, 51–59; Deposition of Rinnah Wells, 11/3/1831, *BHW*, 2:190–92; Deposition of William Brashar, 11/3/1831, *BHW*, 2:180–82; Deposition of Erastus Deniston, 11/1831, *BHW*, 2:198–99; Deposition of William Deniston, 11/4/1831, *BHW*, 2:199; Deposition of Jonah Case, 11/3/1831, *BHW*, 2:183–87 (quotation; emphasis in original).

58. Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 56–61; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 124 (quotation).

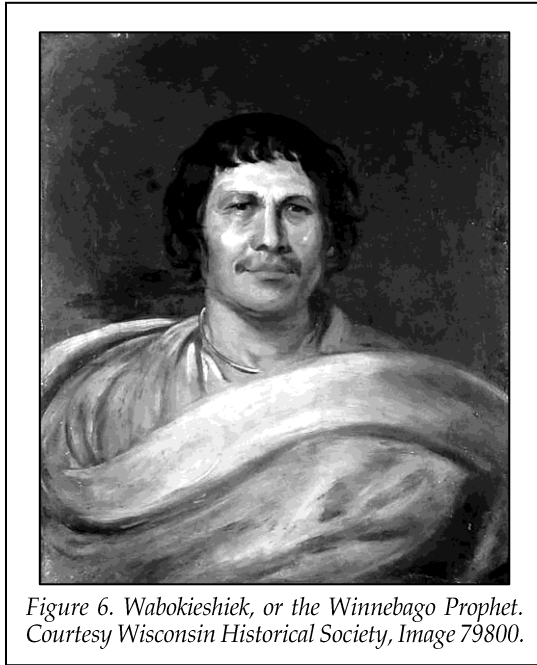


Figure 6. *Wabokieshiek, or the Winnebago Prophet.*  
 Courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society, Image 79800.

Hawk stated the regulars might have taken him prisoner, but the Indian-hating Illinois militiamen would likely have engaged in violence as “they were under no restraint of their chiefs [commanders].”<sup>59</sup>

A few days later, Gaines extracted from Black Hawk a promise to never return to Saukenuk, a pledge Black Hawk grudgingly planned to honor, at least initially. Black Hawk’s decision to cross the Mississippi the next year set in motion the tragic episode known as the Black Hawk War. The conflict illustrates how the resistance ideology still retained a potency into the 1830s, particularly the twin pillars of pan-Indian cooperation and alliance with the British. Taking the advice of another advisor, a Sauk civil chief named Napope, Black Hawk believed if he crossed the Mississippi, other tribes would rally around him in greater numbers than they had in 1831. The British also would deliver supplies to support the confederacy Black Hawk would lead. While Napope’s

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59. Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 60–63; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 128–29 (quotation).

promises turned out to be false, Black Hawk, dejected after the events of 1831, was receptive to these predictions. Equally important was the fact that Black Hawk did not intend to make war; his actions provide further evidence of the trend away from lethal forms of resistance after the Red Bird Uprising. The British Band had women, children, elderly persons, and civil chiefs and was a tribal band and not a war party. Black Hawk likely crossed the Mississippi in 1832 with the intent of creating a strong pan-Indian alliance with British support that would peaceably coerce the United States into reconsidering the 1804 treaty so the Sauks could remain at Saukenuk. Upon crossing the Mississippi, the British Band did not return to Saukenuk, thus partially honoring Black Hawk's pledge, but proceeded north to the Winnebago Prophet's village, which stood on unceded Indian land.<sup>60</sup>

While the tribes of the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley increasingly expressed their disdain toward the United States through non-lethal resistance after 1827, they shifted much of their energy toward intertribal warfare. Even at the height of the pan-Indian movement during the War of 1812, when leaders such as Tecumseh urged the tribes to put aside their differences, intertribal warfare never entirely disappeared. The Ojibwas and Dakotas began fighting in the 1730s. After 1805, the Sauks and Meskwakis began to expand westward into the Dakotas' territory, making them natural allies of the Ojibwas. The result was a system of alliances that became more entrenched in the 1820s and 1830s. The Ojibwas, Sauks, and Meskwakis became the central tribes of the first alliance and were frequently joined by the Kickapoos as well as the united bands of Potawatomis, Ojibwas, and Odawas of the Illinois River and the western shore of Lake Michigan. The Dakotas, the largest tribe in the second alliance, counted the Menominees and Mississippi River Ho-Chunks as allies. In fact, the Sauks' and Meskwakis' lack of support for the Red Bird Uprising was due to the fact the core

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60. Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 64–73; Wallace, "Prelude to Disaster," 276–87; Hall, *Uncommon Defense*, 129–30.

support for the rebellion came from a Ho-Chunk band in the rival alliance.<sup>61</sup>

While federal officials could not prosecute Indians for fighting other Indians, they still sought to prevent intertribal warfare. As the Lake Pepin killings demonstrated, war parties in search of Indian enemies sometimes turned their attention toward Americans. For this reason, in 1825, federal officials attempted to end intertribal warfare by establishing boundaries between the tribes during a treaty council at Prairie du Chien. Cass and Clark optimistically proclaimed the treaty would result in a peace that would be “most favorable and . . . permanent.”<sup>62</sup> As they soon learned, the idea of firm boundaries between the tribes was an alien notion among the Indian societies and a product of American settler colonialism that many members of Native communities rejected. Also, securing promises from tribal leaders meant little when the practice of private war allowed young warriors to leave their villages without tribal sanction and attack their Indian enemies. While the peace held for three years, the killing of six Ojibwas by the Dakotas in 1828 led to a resumption of warfare in the upper Mississippi Valley. The fighting spread thereafter. Two incidents had the potential to erupt into a larger, national war. In May 1830, a party of Dakotas and Menominees killed fifteen Meskwakis. In July 1831, about 100 Meskwakis killed twenty-six Menominees encamped at Prairie du Chien in retaliation for the assault the previous year. News of the attack sent shock waves all the way to Washington, DC; even President Andrew Jackson expressed concern.<sup>63</sup>

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61. Harold Hickerson, *The Chippewa and Their Neighbors: A Study in Ethnohistory* (New York, 1970), 66, 76–90; Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 47–48; Samuel Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1821–1846* (Lawrence, KS, 2013), 49–51.

62. Clark to Forsyth, 5/1/1824, Draper MSS, 5T:32–33; Street to Clark, 3/20/1829, M-234, 749:641; Treaty with the Sioux, etc., 8/19/1825, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, ed. Charles Kappler, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1904), 2:250–55; Cass and Clark to Barbour, 9/1/1825, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians, 1801–1869, Microfilm Publication T-494, reel 1, frames 750–53, RG 75, NA (quotation).

63. Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), 72–74, 89–94; Forsyth to Clark, 8/9/1829, Draper MSS, 6T:108–09; Forsyth to Clark, 9/15/1829, Draper MSS, 6T:112–13; Street to Clark,



One of the ironies of the Black Hawk War was that at about the same time that the British Band crossed the Mississippi in April 1832, Atkinson was on his way to Prairie du Chien to secure the perpetrators of the Menominee massacre, about sixty of whom had found refuge with the British Band. When he learned Black Hawk had crossed the Mississippi, Atkinson had the dual responsibilities of preventing a national war from erupting and forcing the British Band back across the Mississippi into eastern Iowa. At Atkinson's urging, the governor of Illinois called up the militia to handle the supposed "menace" of the British Band. Meanwhile, Black Hawk was busy with his diplomatic offensive to rally the regional tribes. He made it clear he would not fight unless attacked, and for several weeks in April and May 1832, his warriors made no assaults on American settlements in northern Illinois. However, even during these weeks of peace, strong passions on both sides had a potentially disruptive effect. Sauk warriors threatened to kill a federal Indian agent sent as a messenger by Atkinson. One Meskwaki brandished a lance he had used during the Menominee massacre and bragged he "hoped to brake [sic], or wear it out on the Americans."<sup>64</sup> The Illinois militiamen were no better; a lanky captain of twenty-three named Abraham Lincoln "often expressed a desire to get into an engagement" so his men could "meet Powder & Lead."<sup>65</sup>

When 260 Illinois militiamen commanded by Major Isaiah Stillman had an encounter with about forty of Black Hawk's warriors on May 14, 1832, a skirmish erupted. Another irony of the Black Hawk War was that shortly before this clash occurred, Black Hawk had decided to return to the Iowa side of the Mississippi.

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8/25/1828, M-234, 696:97; Robert Stuart to Eaton, 2/9/1830, *TPUS*, 12:125-26; Joseph Hardy to Wyncoop Warner, 5/7/1830, M-234, 749:954-55; Clark to Eaton, 5/10/1830, M-234, 749:920; Street to Gustavus Loomis, 7/31/1831, *BHW*, 2:114-15, 115n2; Cass to Clark, 8/25/1831, Letters Sent by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Microfilm Publication M-21, reel 7, vol. 7, 338, RG 75, NA.

64. Macomb to Atkinson, 3/17/1832, *BHW*, 2:219-21; Atkinson to Macomb, 4/3/1832, *BHW*, 2:224; Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 65, 70-82; Felix St. Vrain to Clark, 4/18/1832, *BHW*, 2:277-78 (quotation).

65. Benjamin Irwin to William Herndon, 9/22/1866, *Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln*, eds. Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis (Urbana, IL, 1998), 353 (quotation).

While a few Rock River Ho-Chunks offered his band assistance, they were reluctant to provide overt support. The Potawatomis rejected his overtures, and Black Hawk learned the British had no plans to send supplies or support his campaign to remain on the east side of the Mississippi. Stillman's men opened fire on Black Hawk's warriors, despite their efforts to surrender, and ignited the first battle of the Black Hawk War. Black Hawk's small number of experienced warriors routed the larger body of militiamen, many of whom were drunk. After what became known as the Battle of Stillman's Run, any hope for a peaceful resolution vanished.<sup>66</sup>

THE BLACK HAWK WAR illustrated the continued existence of the resistance ideology that had reached its height during the War of 1812, but a discernable diminution was also in evidence by the early 1830s, particularly the notion of pan-Indian alliance. During the conflict, the British Band received some assistance from the Rock River Ho-Chunks and Potawatomis of northern Illinois. Like the Red Bird Uprising, the commencement of hostilities provided these warriors with the encouragement and anonymity required to commit acts of resistance. Moreover, while the killing of Americans disappeared as a form of resistance after 1827, it returned with a vengeance during the Black Hawk War.<sup>67</sup> After the Battle of Stillman's Run, a spate of killings occurred that were outside the engagements fought between Black Hawk's followers and the American forces sent to subdue them. The most significant transpired on May 21, 1832, when about fifty Potawatomis descended on an American settlement along Big Indian Creek in northern Illinois and killed fifteen of the twenty-three settlers present. The killings were in retaliation for an earlier incident in which a white settler viciously beat a Potawatomis for

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66. Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 77–78, 83–90; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 139–47.

67. The Winnebago Prophet reportedly killed an American in 1827, but as an Indian agent received this information from the disaffected relations of the Prophet's deceased wife, and no remains were found, the truth of this claim is uncertain. Even if this killing occurred, it was a rare event for the five years that separated the Red Bird Uprising and the Black Hawk War. See Gratiot to Cass, 11/17/1832, M-234, 696:395–98.

tearing down a dam that restricted the Potawatomis' ability to procure fish. The Potawatomis also killed another six Americans in northeastern Illinois. Farther west, Rock River Ho-Chunks killed eight Americans during the same period. About fifty Potawatomis and fifty Ho-Chunks rallied to Black Hawk's side. They generally did not fight with his war parties but instead settled scores with Americans in their localities. While this participation by small numbers of Potawatomis and Ho-Chunks was a less-than-impressive manifestation of pan-Indian solidarity, it was nevertheless evidence of its continued existence. The commission of these acts in time of war indicated the perpetrators also sought the critical condition of anonymity. The Potawatomis blamed the killings in Illinois on Sauk war parties, but Black Hawk and his warriors at the time were operating farther to the north and west. The Potawatomis hoped the "fog of war" would conceal the fact their anti-American kin had committed the killings. This became a reality since no witnesses could attest to the guilt of any Potawatomis or Ho-Chunks, and no members of either tribe ever stood trial.<sup>68</sup>

Additional evidence for the decline of pan-Indian alliance as a means of resistance was the fact that much larger numbers of Indians fought against Black Hawk because American commanders were able to exploit intertribal rivalries. As with the Red Bird Uprising, Atkinson employed Indian auxiliaries to assist his regulars. At least 752 Indians fought alongside federal soldiers and militiamen during the Black Hawk War. The Menominees and Dakotas were particularly eager to take up arms against their foes. William Hamilton, a lead miner and the son of Alexander Hamilton, commanded an Indian contingent that included forty Menominees and twenty Prairie La Crosse Ho-Chunks, members of the same band that led the Red Bird Uprising, and who, along with the Dakotas, counted the Sauks and Meskwakis among their enemies. Another 232 Menominees formed a

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68. Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 93–113, 174, 184, 207–08; Jung, "Toward the Black Hawk War," 51–52; George Wacker to Atkinson, 1/17/1833, M-234, 728:316; Patrick J. Jung, "To Extend Fair and Impartial Justice to the Indian: Native Americans and the Additional Court of Michigan Territory, 1823–1836," *Michigan Historical Review* 23 (1997), 43.

battalion that missed the final massacre of the British Band at the Battle of Bad Axe in early August 1832. They contented themselves with scouring the surrounding area for those who had escaped the horrific melee. The Dakotas did the same since about 200 members of the British Band managed to cross the Mississippi into present-day northeastern Iowa during the battle. By late August 1832, the Dakotas brought sixty-eight scalps and twenty-two prisoners to Prairie du Chien.<sup>69</sup>

The Black Hawk War radically changed the situation for the regional tribes. A new round of land cessions occurred after the conflict, and by the mid-1830s, thousands of American settlers flooded into present-day northern Illinois, eastern Iowa, and southern Wisconsin. Various forms of anonymous resistance persisted and provide evidence the ideology of resistance to American settler colonialism continued to exist; such acts simply did not create a segue for public forms of resistance after 1832. Throughout 1833, Americans in the lead mining region reported petty thefts by the Ho-Chunks. Rumors of renewed alliances between the tribes and warfare against the United States also circulated, but these only amounted to rumors. The Black Hawk War was the final episode of open resistance in the region. One rumor reported by an Indian agent in November 1832 expressed the desperate hopes of the regional tribes more than any sort of credible threat. A Ho-Chunk chief warned “the Great Spirit is mad with the whites, and when they gather again to come against us, he will send a sickness among them that will destroy them, and we will remain on Rock River in peace.”<sup>70</sup>

Native resistance would not disappear in the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley after 1832, but it would undergo a transformation. While the era of open resistance was at an end, Native communities developed new strategies against American settler colonialism, particularly the federal policy of Indian removal. This included “adaptive resistance,” or negotiating for reservations of land to avoid removal across the Mississippi.

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69. Hall, *Uncommon Defense*, 145–205; Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 104, 138, 174–76.

70. Jung, *Black Hawk War*, 185–89, 200; Gratiot to Cass, 2/8/1833, M-234, 931:127; Gratiot to Cass, 3/2/1833, M-234, 696:542–43; Gratiot to Cass, 11/17/1832, M-234, 696:395–96 (quotation).

Many of the Indians of the Ohio Valley had successfully developed this strategy after the War of 1812, and the Potawatomis and Menominees adopted it in the period after the Black Hawk War. In the case of the Rock River Ho-Chunks, many of them defied the United States government and returned to their ceded lands in late 1833, despite not possessing reservations in their former territory. The various Ho-Chunk bands continued to resist westward removal from their Wisconsin homelands until 1881, when they applied for homesteads in the state that functioned as reserved lands.<sup>71</sup>

The phenomenon of anonymous resistance providing a segue to active, public resistance became manifest in regions farther west that later experienced settler colonialism. Iowa's 1857 so-called Spirit Lake Massacre offers an excellent example. At the conclusion of the Black Hawk War in 1832, fewer than fifty whites resided in Iowa. By 1852, six years after statehood, Iowa's white population exceeded 200,000. When the United States pressured the Dakotas into selling their lands in Iowa and Minnesota in 1851, the Dakota leader Inkpaduta objected. Like Black Hawk before him, Inkpaduta refused to leave his home along the Little Sioux River, and while he often enjoyed friendly associations with his white neighbors, cultural misunderstandings sometimes created conflict, as did white outrages against the Dakotas. When a white settler killed a Dakota leader and his family in 1854, Inkpaduta became increasingly disillusioned with the newcomers. White settlers often harassed Dakota hunters and attempted sexual assaults against Dakota women. The Dakotas retaliated by stealing and shooting the settlers' livestock. When white militiamen stole the firearms from his band during the particularly bitter winter of 1857, Inkpaduta and his warriors

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71. John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman, OK, 2016), 13, 177–81, 185–210 (quotation); Rebecca Kugel, "Planning to Stay: Native Strategies to Remain in the Great Lakes, Post-War of 1812," *Middle West Review* 2 (2016), 1–26; Beck, *Siege and Survival*, 174–86; Libby Tronnes, "Corn Moon Migrations: Ho-Chunk Belonging, Removal, and Return in the Early Nineteenth-Century Western Great Lakes" (PhD diss, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2017), 369–87; Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "Winnebago," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, DC, 1978), 700–02.

responded by looting the homes of white settlers along the Little Sioux River. When they reached the isolated settlements around Spirit Lake in March 1857, Inkpaduta and his war party killed thirty-two white settlers and another seven in Springfield, Minnesota.<sup>72</sup> Thus, a pattern similar to that of the Red Bird Uprising and the Black Hawk War became discernable a quarter century later in northwestern Iowa.

Farther to the east, in the region of the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley, the Black Hawk War was the *de-nouement* of the resistance movement that had reached its zenith a generation earlier. Both Waunigsootshkau and Black Hawk saw themselves as latter-day Tecumsehs, and both, in varying degrees, appealed to the twin pillars of the resistance ideology: pan-Indian confederation and alliance with the British. Both also engaged in anonymous forms of resistance that became precursors to open rebellion. Once the region opened to large-scale white settlement, even the most ideologically motivated Indian leaders realized no combination of the tribes could overcome the demographic advantage possessed by the United States. The peace between the United States and Britain became permanent and withheld from the tribes the services of an ally that had been crucial to their success during the War of 1812. Black Hawk lamented this situation in 1833 when he noted the large number of settlers on land formerly belonging to his people and taken by a treaty after the war. He stated, "I am very much afraid, that in a few years, they [American settlers] will begin to drive and abuse our people, as they have formerly done. I may not live to *see* it, but I feel certain that the day is not distant."<sup>73</sup> The phenomenon of anonymous resistance providing a segue to open rebellion would occur on other borderlands of the American republic, but in the western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley, the Black Hawk War became the final act in this great drama.

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72. Paul N. Beck, *Inkpaduta: Dakota Leader* (Norman, OK, 2008), 30–83; Kevin T. Mason, "Inkpaduta in Iowa: Dakota Decline, Dispossession, and Erasure," *Annals of Iowa* 80 (2021), 123–57.

73. Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors*, 15, 473n21; Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 356–57; Sims, "Algonkian-British Relations," 378–410; Nichols, *Natives and Newcomers*, 4, 110; Black Hawk, *Autobiography*, 175–76 (quotation; emphasis in original).