

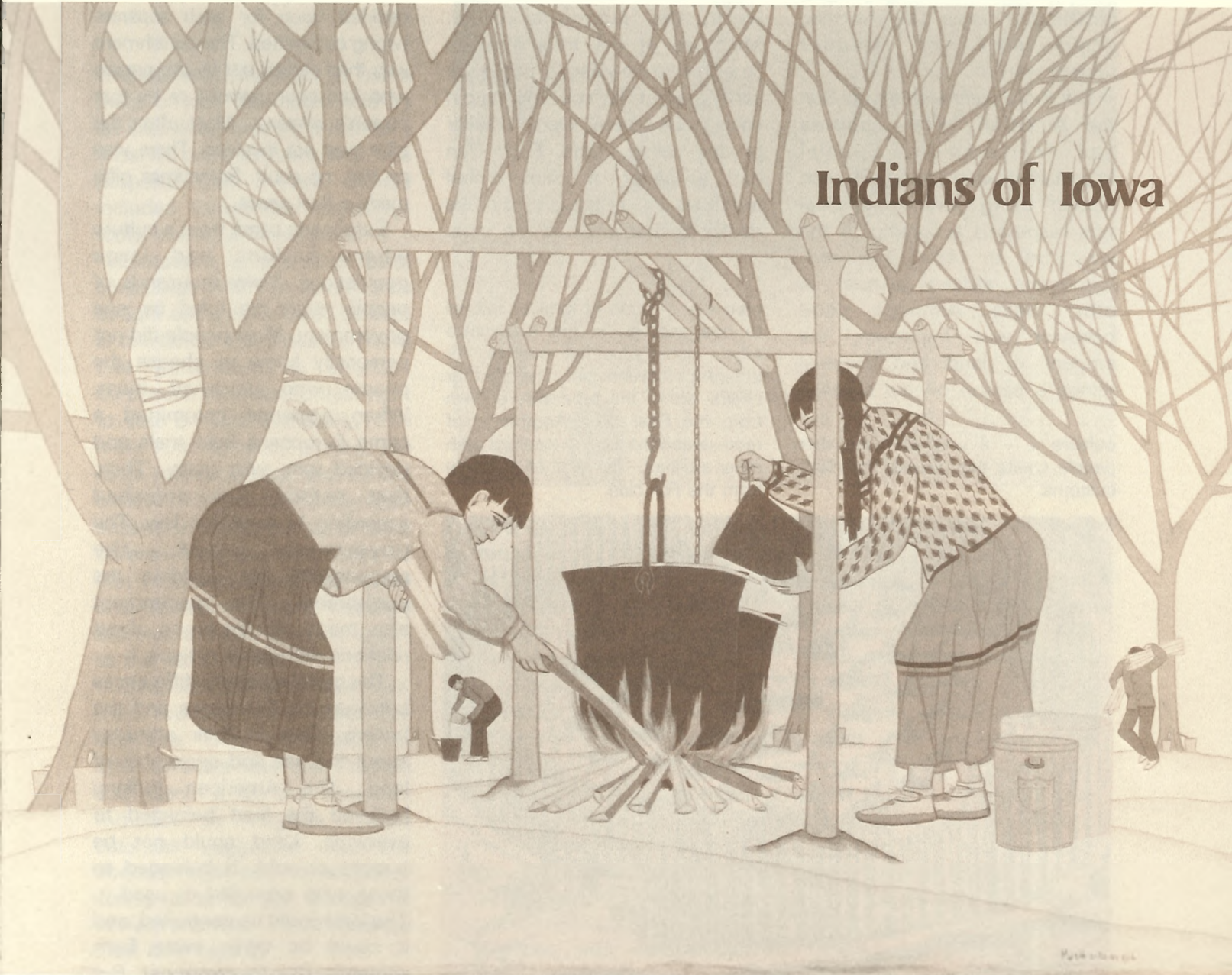
THE Goldfinch

Vol. 3, No. 4

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April 1982

Indians of Iowa



The Iowa History Magazine for Young People

Clashing Cultures

When the first European settlers arrived in America, they knew very little about the way of life of the Indian people they found living here. In fact, there was no single Indian way of life. Among the more than two hundred Indian tribes of North America there were different languages, clothing, types of homes, communities, and attitudes toward war.

But there were also things that the American Indian cultures had in common. Special importance was placed on each human being. Every individual was respected according to the way he or she behaved. Europeans earned respect in other ways. Although good behavior was important, the amount of land and material things a person owned showed

culture *n.* – a way of living that people create themselves, including customs.

how important one was in European society.

American Indian tribes organized their governments differently from the Europeans. There were many tribes or nations, each independent of the others. The size of these nations was smaller than those from which the Europeans came. Members of the tribe lived in small, separate villages, but in the same area of the country. Within each tribe there were smaller groups called **clans**. Each clan had a leader or chief. Tribal members chose leaders to make decisions that affected the tribe.

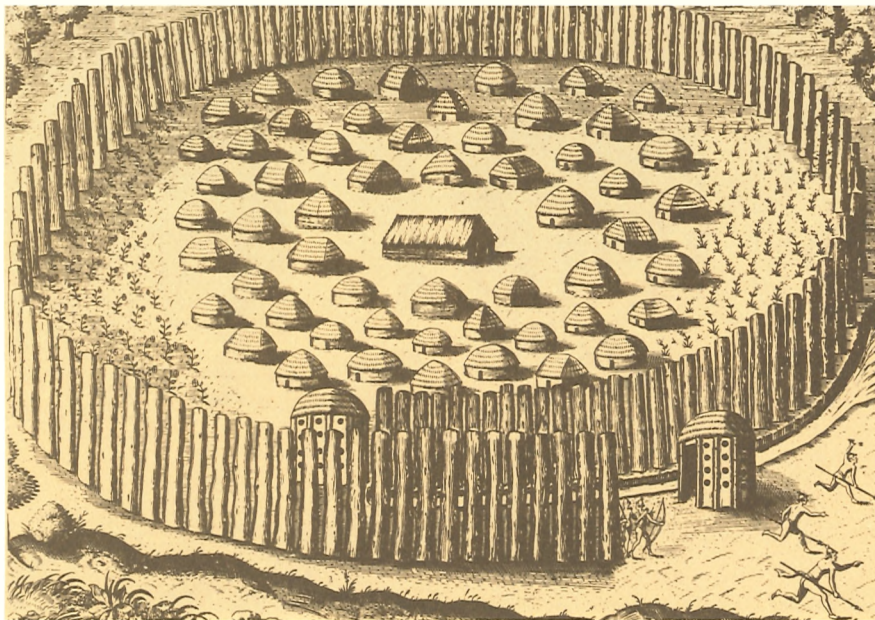
clan *n.* – a group of families related to one another. In the Mesquakie tribe, clans provided leaders for different tribal activities. The chief for affairs within the tribe was chosen from the Bear clan. Another chief represented the tribe in dealings with other nations. The war chief came from the Fox clan.

The clans had representatives among the leaders who made these tribal decisions. If a problem concerning the whole tribe came along, the group met to solve it.

Justice was often an individual matter. The important thing was that a proper punishment be decided upon for each separate wrong committed. The punishment was then carried out by the person who had been harmed or by that person's relatives. Most often the tribe was not involved. There was no trial, no court. Sometimes gifts made a final peace.

Europeans came from a culture where nations had large populations. Many thousands of people might be ruled by one government. Most people did not personally know or choose the people who governed them. When someone committed a crime Europeans held trials and decided who was guilty. Then, that person was punished according to a written law. The government took the responsibility for deciding the punishment. The government also made the decisions about relations with other nations.

The most important differences between the Europeans and the Indians were in their attitudes about the use and ownership of land. The American Indians believed the land belonged to everyone. Land could not be bought or sold. It belonged to those who occupied or used it. The land could be controlled, and it could be taken away from someone else by **conquest**. But this was only a temporary transfer, not a permanent



A European artist drew this picture of an Indian village in the 1600s. Notice the palisade that surrounds the village.

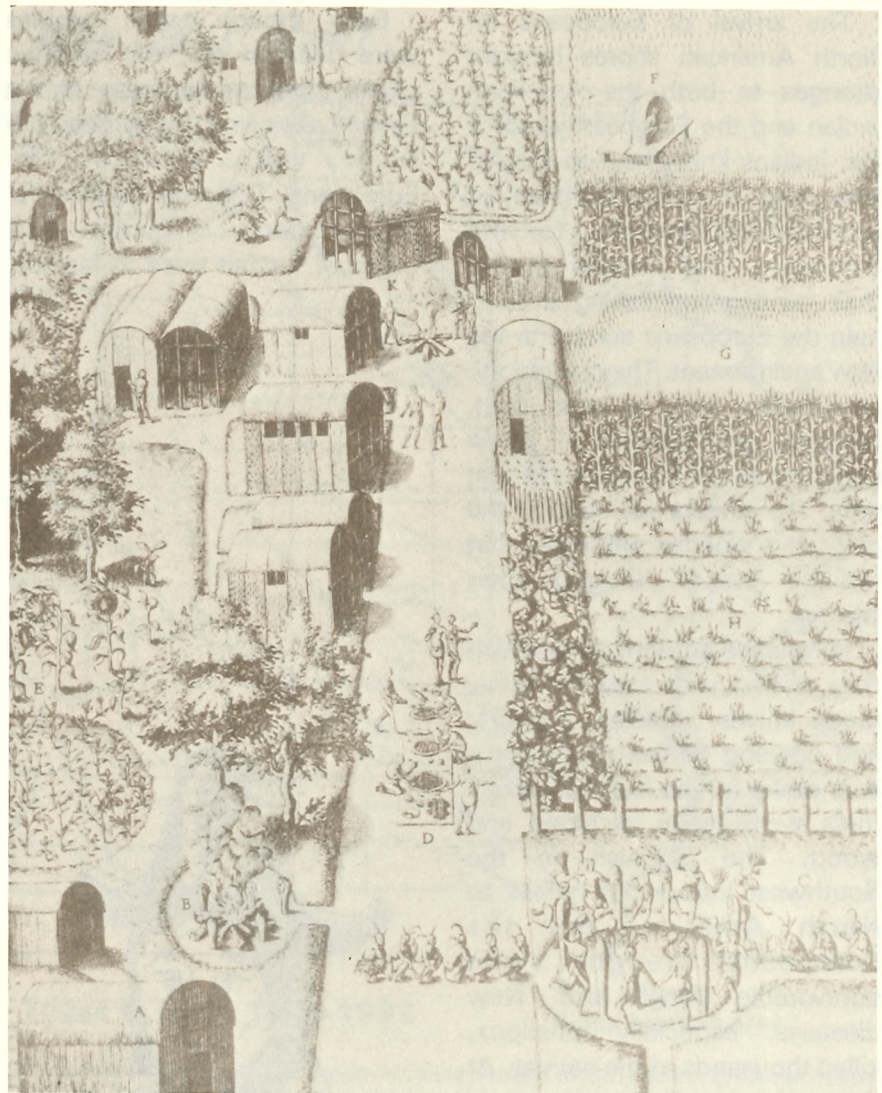
This engraving of life in an Algonquian Indian village is based on a picture drawn in 1590. The artist did not draw the village as it really was. Instead, he put a sample of everything he observed about the Algonquian way of life.

arrangement. The right to use a piece of land was never held by an individual, only by a clan or a tribe. No one could own land. The property that Indians owned included things like wigwams, tools, horses, and weapons.

Europeans, on the other hand, considered land a property to be bought and sold. It could be kept in one family and passed on from one generation to another. Europeans even based their right to vote on land ownership. The more land someone owned, the more respect others had for the owner. Because American Indians and Europeans had such different attitudes and ways of life, misunderstandings were unavoidable. Relations between the two cultures became worse as the years passed.

Europeans believed that their own culture was best for everyone. They were quick to offer to share their own culture and teach it to the American Indians. In Virginia, some colonists suggested that the Iroquois might wish to send their young sons to the College of William and Mary. The Onondaga tribal chief replied:

conquest *n.* – a winning or conquering, especially by war.



"But you, who are wise, must know that different Nations have different Conceptions [ideas] of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some Experience of it; Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the College of the Northern Provinces [New England]; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the

Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged by your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them."

The arrival of Europeans on North American shores brought changes to both the American Indian and the European ways of life. Indians knew how to survive very well in what seemed an untamed wilderness to the Europeans. The natives shared their hunting and fishing skills to help the Europeans survive in the new environment. They taught the newcomers how to raise corn, potatoes, and tobacco — crops unknown to the Europeans at that time. The settlers even copied the protective wooden **palisades** that Indians placed around their villages.

Europeans brought tools which they traded with Indians. Guns, metal knives, needles, scissors, and cooking kettles made life a little easier for the Indians, whose tools were made of stone and wood. The Spanish in the Southwest introduced horses to North America. But the Europeans brought some unfavorable things also. New diseases, especially smallpox, killed thousands of the natives. At times, whole villages of people died. Liquor also created many problems. Although Indians and Europeans learned from one another, the Europeans benefited the most from the exchange.



1776

palisade *n.* — a protective fence of closely set stakes driven into the ground.

Even though early colonies were located on the Atlantic coast, tribes as far away as the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River were affected by Europeans. This was because of the fur trade. In Europe, hats made of fur felt were in fashion.



1820

The fashion for beaver hats for men and women began in the late 1500s and lasted for almost 300 years. After 1600, most of the pelts used to make felt for these hats came from North America.



1800

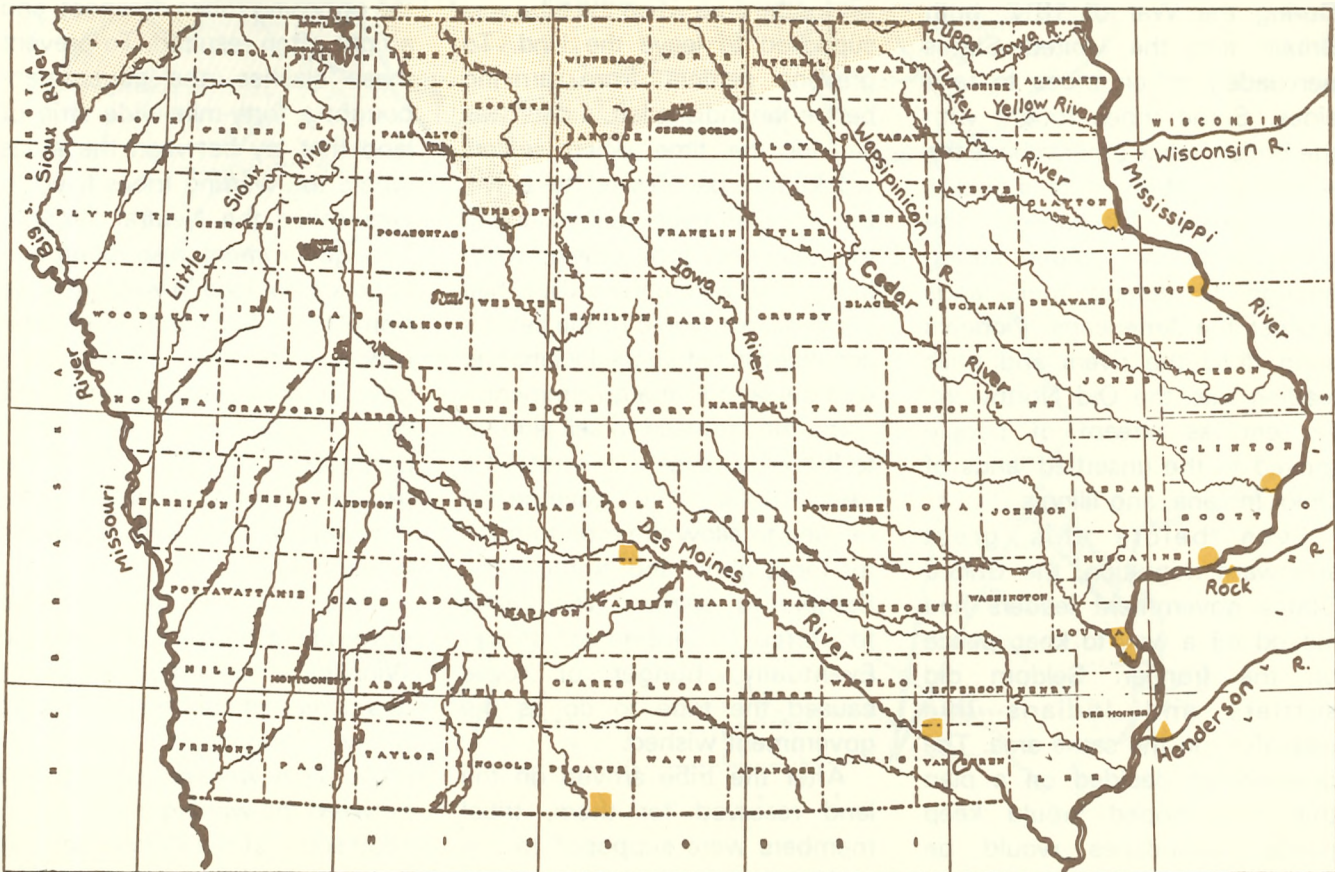
Fur traders traveled far into North America bringing guns, metal tools, and liquor to trade for beaver pelts. In only a few years, the Indians became dependent on Europeans for guns, ammunition, tool repairs, and blankets. The more attached they became to European goods, the less they paid attention to their old way of life. Slowly they gave up the old skills that had helped them live independently in the past. There was little choice but to continue to do business with the Europeans. The Indians spent their time trapping animals for

furs to trade. Life would never again be the same.

Before the American Revolution, the tribes had traded with the French, British, and Spanish. Between 1763 and 1803 these countries lost control over much of their land in North America. By 1803, many of the Indians dealt with the United States government. The government regulated the fur trade and also claimed ownership of much of North America. The settlers continued their westward advance onto the land, and the Indian tribes resisted. There were many wars. But slowly and steadily the great numbers of Americans and their military might either killed or pushed out the Indians.

By the time settlers were on their way to live in Iowa, two hundred years had passed since the first Europeans had settled along the Atlantic coast. The United States government had made laws that would remove the Indians to places reserved for the tribes. The government had decided that the two cultures could not live peacefully side by side.

Who Was Here?



■ loway villages
● Mesquakie villages

Tribes In Iowa, 1800-1832

▲ Sauk villages
 Sioux hunting area

Several tribes already lived and hunted in the Iowa country at the time when the government decided to move all the American Indian tribes west of the Mississippi River.

Fifty years after the American Revolution, the westward-moving frontier settlers arrived at the Mississippi River. At that time two tribes of people lived in villages along that great river where it flows between Illinois and Iowa today. On the east side of the river, in what is now Illinois, lay the Sauk villages. The Mesquakies lived on the west side.

Other tribes lived in the Iowa country as well. The villages of the loway tribe occupied places along the Des Moines River. Farther

west, along the wide, muddy Missouri River, lived the Sioux.

The Mesquakie and Sauk tribes are part of a group of more than one hundred tribes known as the Algonquian. The Algonquian Indian nations had controlled a large area of land in southeastern Canada and the northeastern part of what is now the United States. Crops surrounded their woodland villages, providing the dwellers with corn, beans, squash, and tobacco. Villagers hunted the

animals instead of raising cattle and hogs as the Europeans did. In the forests they gathered nuts, berries, wild potatoes, and onions. When spring arrived, they boiled sap to make maple sugar.

The loway and Sioux belonged to the Siouan culture. Although the loway built villages and grew crops, the Siouan tribes spent more time away from the village hunting for food than the tribes of the woodlands.

The **GOLDFINCH** (ISSN 0278-0208) is published four times per school year, September, November, February, and April by the Iowa State Historical Department, Division of the State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. Available by yearly subscription in quantities of ten for \$15. Second-class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa. **POSTMASTER:** send address changes to: THE **GOLDFINCH**, Division of the State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Exit, the Indians

During the War of 1812, both Britain and the United States persuaded Indian tribes to take sides. Some tribes fought with the British, while others chose the Americans. Many Indians died in the conflict. Afterwards, the tribes were no longer strong enough to defend their lands against the Americans. Pioneers soon filled the rivers and trails leading into the Old Northwest. An endless stream of people moved to the unsettled lands of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

Even before this great westward migration, the United States government leaders had looked for a way to keep peace on the frontier. Seldom did settlers and Indians live peacefully in the same area. The government decided on a plan that they hoped would keep peace. Boundaries would be made to keep settlers separated from the Indian tribes. In the 1820s, the United States decided to move all the tribes then living east of the Mississippi River to the Louisiana Territory. There, it was reasoned, the tribes could live happily and separately from the settlers.

Before the tribes moved west, the government had to purchase the land from the different tribes that lived on it. Tribal and official government representatives signed a written agreement called a treaty. The treaty described the land that the government purchased and the amount of money and goods that it promised to pay. Also, a date was

set for the time when the tribe was supposed to leave the land. To prevent settlers from arriving before the Indians left, a date was set for the time when settlers would first be allowed to arrive. But the plan never really stopped the pioneers from moving onto Indian land before the Indians had left it. In fact, some of the settlers arrived even before the Indians had sold the land to the government.

If a tribe refused to sell land, or to leave, because it considered a treaty unfair, the government refused to allow the tribe to trade for food, guns, and ammunition. Sometimes, soldiers were called to force a tribe to move. Eventually, hunger or force caused the tribe to do as the government wished.

After the tribe arrived on the land reserved for them, tribal members were supposed to live and hunt within the boundaries of the lands assigned to them. If migrating settlers were found on the Indian land, the government was responsible for removing the trespassers.

On the land that became Iowa, the story went something like this: By 1825 the government had moved the Ioway, Sioux, Mesquakies, and Sauk into the Iowa country. For many years the Sioux had been enemies of the Mesquakies and Sauk. Now, the government had forced the three tribes to be close neighbors. There was only an unmarked boundary, the Neutral Line, to separate them. But members of

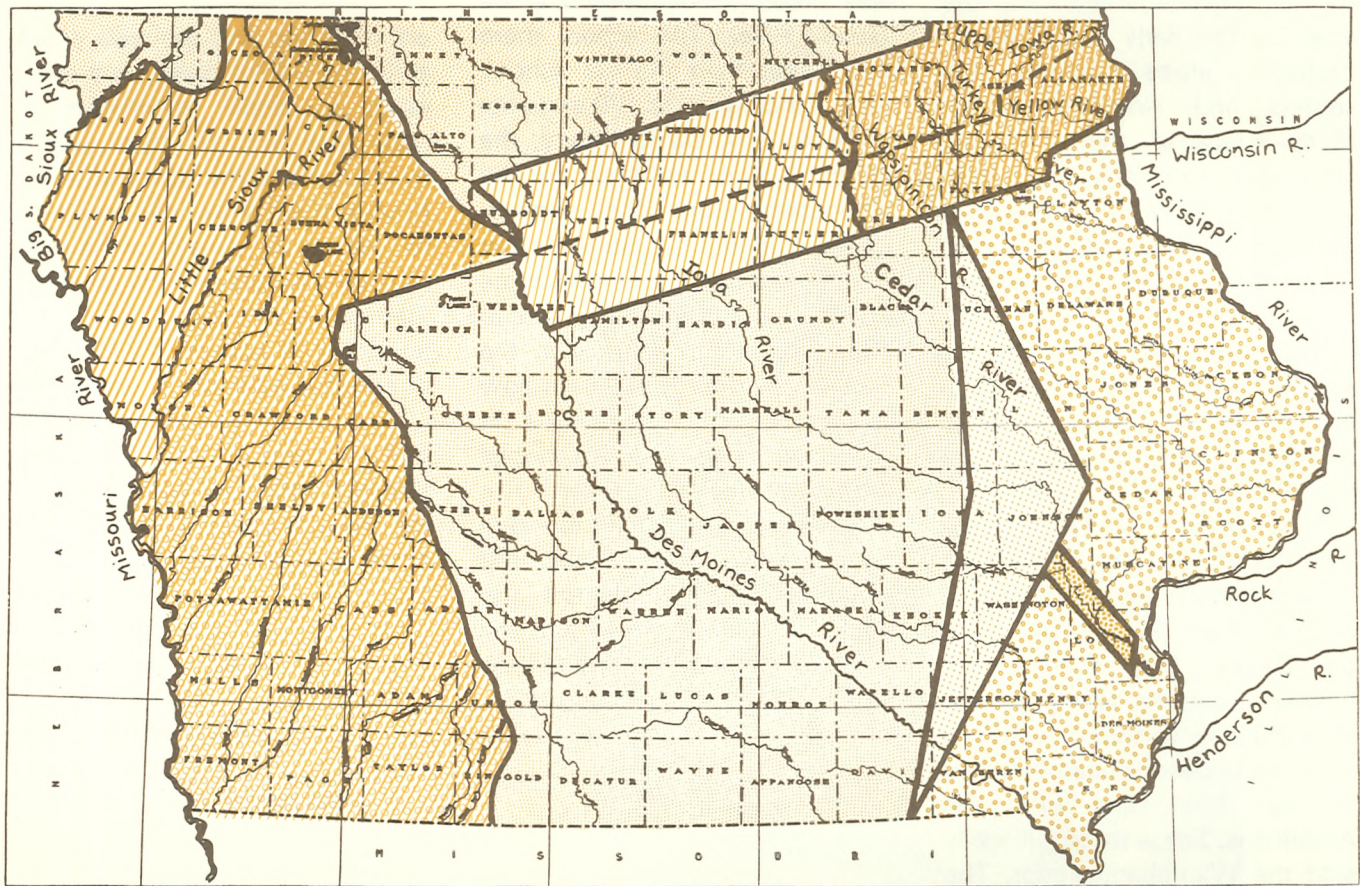
the opposing tribes did meet, and a fight often resulted. To prevent these clashes, the government bought a forty-mile-wide strip of land that lay between the areas where the warring tribes lived. It was called the Neutral Ground. The government also bought a large area of land in western Iowa from the "Sac and Fox" and Ioway. In the treaty, the government agreed that this land was to be used for Indian purposes only. In 1833 the government moved the Potawatomi from Indiana to this western land.








Two years later, the government decided to move the Winnebago tribe out of Wisconsin to a portion of the Neutral Ground. Many Winnebago refused to move. They were not eager to live between the warring tribes. But in 1839 some of the Winnebago did move to the Neutral Ground. The government built a school for the children, planning to help the tribe to learn American ways. Then in 1846, only seven years after the Winnebago had moved there, the government moved the tribe again, this time to Minnesota.

In the meantime, the government purchased the remaining lands of the Mesquakies, Sauk, and Ioway. The Potawatomi, who had lived in southwest Iowa since 1833, also gave up their rights to land in Iowa. Finally, in 1851, the last remaining Indian land in northern Iowa was purchased from the Sioux.

Mesquakie or Fox?

For over two hundred years the Mesquakie tribe has been referred to by a mistaken name. There are several stories that explain the mix-up. One story says that it all began when members of a Mesquakie clan first met some French traders. The French asked the natives who they were, and the Mesquakie gave the name of their clan, Fox, instead of the tribe. Ever since, the whole tribe has been known by the name, Fox.



- 1825 - Neutral Line established between the Sioux and the Sac and Fox.*
-  1830 - Sioux and Sac and Fox ceded lands to establish a Neutral Ground. Four bands of Sioux, Sac and Fox, and loway cede lands in the western region.
-  1832 - Black Hawk Purchase, ceded by the Sac and Fox.
-  1836 - Keokuk Reserve, ceded by the Sac and Fox.
-  1837 - Second Purchase, ceded by the Sac and Fox.
-  1842 - Sac and Fox cede their remaining lands west of the Mississippi River.
-  1846 - Winnebago ceded their lands in the Neutral Ground to which they had been moved in 1835. Potawatomi ceded lands in the western region to which they had been moved after 1836.
-  1851 - Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of Sioux cede remaining lands.

*The United States government always made treaties with the Sauk and the Mesquakie tribes as though the two tribes were actually one. The government called the two tribes "Sac and Fox."

The lands west of the Mississippi River did not long remain a special reserve for Indian tribes. Westward moving frontierspeople did not want to stop at the Mississippi River. The government decided to move the tribes to lands farther west so that pioneers could settle in the Iowa region. This map shows when the lands in Iowa were ceded by the Indian tribes to the United States.

As the Americans settled in the West in the early 1800s, many problems arose between the settlers and American Indian tribes. Because their cultures, languages, and habits were very different, the American government decided that a good way to solve the problem was through education. The government thought that if Indians learned American ways and religion they would eventually become useful and happy citizens.

In September 1832 a treaty was signed with the Winnebago Indians to build a school for them on the Yellow River near Prairie du Chien. The Winnebago, however, did not want to send their children to the school. The tribe had been cheated when trading their furs with the Americans. Some traders illegally sold the Winnebago liquor. The tribe believed that their children would learn these corrupt ways. Even though the first teachers didn't know the Winnebago language, they managed to start the school by using hand-signs.

In 1837 the school had 25 boys and 16 girls. They were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. Boys were taught how to tend a garden (work usually done by Indian women), while the girls learned how to mend and stitch their clothes.

When Americans moved close to the Winnebago area, the tribe

was forced to move west near the Turkey River. The school there was larger than the old school. Attendance grew to 170 students in 1844. Rev. David Lowry, the principal, was well-liked by the Winnebago and the settlers. Some students did so well that Rev. Lowry had hopes that some of his students would go on to attend American schools in the East. There they could learn how to instruct their own tribe in American ways. But his hopes were destroyed when the Winnebago were forced to move once more. Once again, the American settlers wanted the land. The school closed and the Winnebago traveled north to their new reservation in Minnesota.

— Debbie Littlewood



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Wigwam — A dome-shaped dwelling made with a frame of bent poles covered with bark, rushes, woven mats, or a combination of these materials. It can be built quickly, but is not portable.

Tepee — A dwelling built of poles arranged to form a cone-shape which is then covered with skins. It can be taken apart and moved from place to place.

WHICH TRIBE IS IT?

Many counties and towns in the state are named for Indian tribes or individuals. Some of these tribes lived in the area that became Iowa, while others have no connection with the history of the state. Below is a list of counties and the Indian tribe with which each name is associated. Use the information in this issue to decide if the tribe belongs in Iowa history.

Use a map of Iowa to find towns named for Indian tribes or individuals who lived in Iowa. Try to find out which tribe each name represents.

Appanoose — Sauk

Black Hawk — Sauk

Cherokee — an Indian tribe

Chickasaw — an Indian tribe

Keokuk — Sauk

Mahaska — Iowa

Osceola — Seminole

Pocahontas — Chippewa

Pottawattamie — an Indian tribe

Sac — an Indian tribe

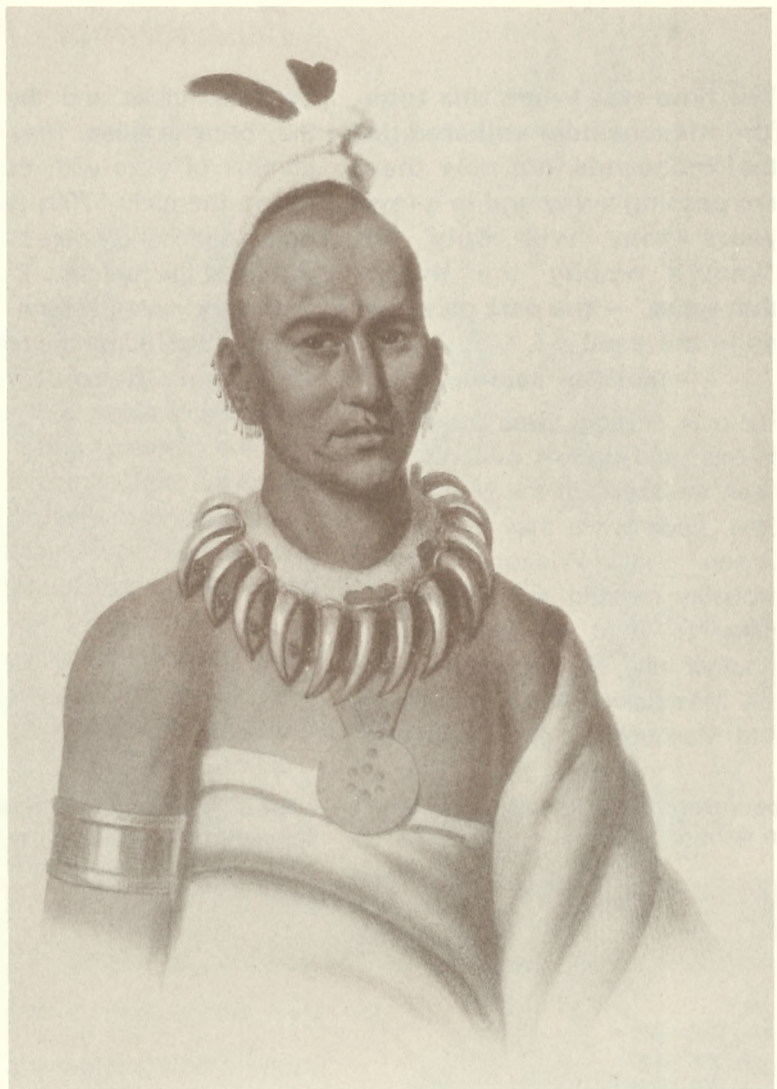
Sioux — an Indian tribe

Tama — Mesquakie

Wapello — Mesquakie

Winnebago — an Indian tribe

Winneshiek — Winnebago



TAIMAH, A MESQUAKIE AND A MEMBER OF THE THUNDER CLAN. The county and town of Tama preserve his name.

Perseverance Pays

The time was when this tribe [the Mesquakie] numbered [in the] thousands, but now they are passing away and in a few years they will only be "known among the things that were" — the pale face has done the deed.

— The Editor, *Keosauqua Times*.

For over seventy years the rivers, forests, and prairies of Iowa had been the home of the Mesquakie tribe. Even while they lived near Green Bay, Wisconsin they probably crossed the Mississippi River to hunt in Iowa lands. Another tribe, the Sauk, lived near the Mesquakies. When the Sauk and Mesquakies were threatened

by other tribes and the French, they became allies. They fought a number of wars with the French during the early 1700s, when the British and French were battling for control of the fur trade. The French eventually lost control to the British. Later, about the time of the American Revolution, the Mesquakies, along with the Sauk, left the forests and lakes of Wisconsin and settled along the Mississippi River. Most of the Sauk lived on the Great River's east side, near the mouth of the Rock River (in present-day Illinois). The Mesquakies lived in villages on the west side of the Mississippi River.

During their years in the

Mississippi Valley, the Mesquakies and Sauk lived in villages surrounded by fields of corn, beans, and melons. From April to October they planted, tended, and harvested their crops. After the crops were gathered, they left their villages in small family groups to hunt. During the hunt they lived in camps protected from the winter weather by the thick groves of trees that grew along the rivers. When spring came they made maple sugar. Then they returned to their villages once again to plant their crops. They traded furs and lead for guns, ammunition, tools, and blankets at the trading posts at Prairie du Chien and St. Louis.

In the spring of 1803, while the Mesquakies were probably busy

perseverance *n.* — a continued effort in spite of difficulties.

allies *n.* — nations joined together for a common or special purpose.



Courtesy Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

A MODEL OF A MESQUAKIE VILLAGE IN THE WOODLANDS.

tending their crops, an important event that would influence their future happened far away in Europe. The United States purchased Louisiana from France, including the land west of the Mississippi River where the Mesquakie villages stood.

Only a year later, a group of four Sauk and one Mesquakie signed a treaty with the United States. The members of both tribes had gone to St. Louis to arrange for the release of a Sauk warrior held there on a murder charge. The prisoner was released, but was shot in the back as he left the prison building. The group returned to the tribal villages, bringing instead presents from the United States government and the news that every year the two tribes would receive more presents, worth \$1,000. They didn't remember much about the treaty because they had been given whisky by the government officials and had become drunk.

The treaty signed at St. Louis began the formal relations between the United States and the two tribes. It was called the Sac and Fox Treaty of 1804. William Henry Harrison, the government's representative at the time of the treaty, thought the Mesquakie and Sauk tribes were no longer separate. He thought they were now one tribe, the "Sac and Fox." It was the beginning of a tribe that has never existed, but that the government still insists does exist. From that day, the two tribes have been called as one tribe, "Sac and Fox." Because of this it is difficult to know, when reading about the tribes, if the information is about one tribe or the other. According to the government, there are now three "Sac and Fox tribes" located in



THE JAMES POWESHIEK FAMILY, ABOUT 1900.

three different states: Iowa, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The group known as the "Sac and Fox of Iowa" are properly called the Mesquakies, or translated, the Red Earth People. It is not surprising that the history book writers have often been confused about the proper names for the three groups. The people of the tribes, however, were not confused. The Mesquakies continued to live in their own villages, follow their own customs, speak their own language, and make their own decisions. And the Sauk continued to live in their own villages, follow their own customs, speak their own language, and make their own decisions.

The 1804 treaty sold lands east of the Mississippi River to the United States for future use by settlers. This land was home to most of the Sauk and some of the Mesquakies. The treaty allowed the people of both tribes to continue to use the area until the settlers wanted it. Twenty years later, the settlers began to arrive. They were there illegally. The 1804 treaty stated that "as long as the lands which are now ceded to the United States remain their property, the Indians belonging to said tribes, (the Sac and Fox), shall enjoy the privilege of living and hunting upon them." Unfortunately, the American frontier people paid little attention

The editor is most grateful to Adeline Wanatee for her assistance with this article. Kay Eginton helped with both the research and writing of the Mesquakie history.



Two styles of wickiups are seen in this picture. One is square-shaped, called a lodge-house, with a pitched roof. The other is dome-shaped. Mesquakie women usually built the wickiup, covering the pole framework with large flat pieces of bark or woven, rush mats. A wickiup may appear crude to some people, but Mesquakie families had used wickiups for centuries. A wickiup was a practical form of shelter because all the materials from which it was made were easily found growing in the river bottoms. A rush covered wickiup provided a snug winter home. The overlapped rush mats held natural air pockets which provided insulation from the winter cold. A small hole at the center of the roof allowed smoke to escape from the cooking and heating fire inside.

to the requests of the government. There was plenty of land to the east, but as the Americans had done in the past, the law was ignored and the settlers moved onto land that still belonged to the Indians.

The American settlers and Indians did not get along living near one another. Finally, the government decided to move the Indians in order to keep the area peaceful. Many Sauk began to cross the river to the lands where the Mesquakie villages were located. Not all of the Sauk left the east bank of the Mississippi. About 800 people at Saukenuk refused to leave their village. They listened to Black Hawk, a Sauk warrior, who claimed the 1804 treaty was invalid because the people who signed it were not sent by either tribe to make a decision about land. Besides, the

Sauk still occupied the land, and the treaty had said it was theirs while they continued to live on it. In the fall of 1829, the Sauk left Saukenuk for their usual winter hunt. When they returned in the spring, white settlers were living in the Sauk village. Each group complained about the other to the government. The government forced the Sauk to leave. Black Hawk was unwilling to give up. Ignoring the advice of other Sauk and Mesquakie leaders, Black Hawk, with a group of followers, went back to Saukenuk. The return of the Sauk frightened the American settlers. The territorial governor sent the Illinois militia to remove Black Hawk. The militia was unsuccessful, and eventually the United States troops arrived to help control Black Hawk and his followers. For four months they fought a small series of battles,

called the Black Hawk War, as the soldiers chased the Sauk through Illinois and Wisconsin. The end finally came at the Battle of Bad Axe, as the Sauk tried to cross the Mississippi River back to the safety of the Iowa country. Most of Black Hawk's band were either dead or scattered, and Black Hawk was captured and sent to prison for almost two years.

Because the United States government now treated the Mesquakies and Sauk as one tribe, the Mesquakies, along with the Sauk who had not joined Black Hawk, were held responsible for Black Hawk's actions. The penalty was that both tribes had to pay for the cost of the war with a sale of land on the west side of the Mississippi River — land where most of the Mesquakies had lived, and where the Sauk had only recently been

forced to move.

The Sauk and Mesquakies who did not take part in the war were allowed to keep a strip of land along the Iowa River called Keokuk's Reserve. It included most of the Mesquakie villages and fields, as well as the home of some Sauk who had moved to the west side of the river before the Black Hawk War began. But, once again, because the United States did not understand how the tribal governments worked, a terrible mistake was made. The government appointed Keokuk, a Sauk, as head chief of all the

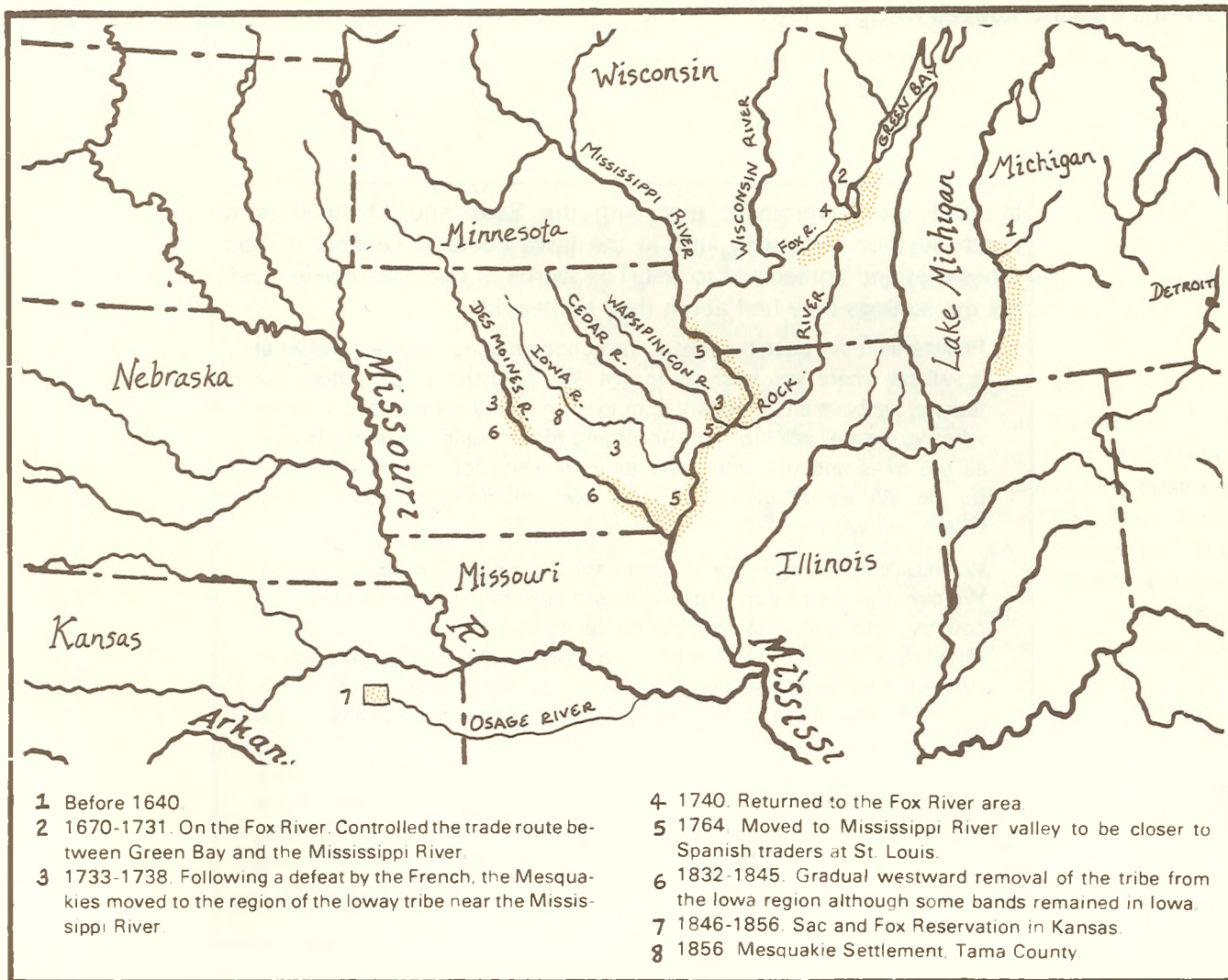
"Sac and Fox" tribe. This placed the Mesquakies under the absolute rule of a Sauk. The Sauk were also shocked because Keokuk did not belong to the proper clan to govern the tribe.

When, in 1841, the government began talks with the Sauk leaders to sell more land west of the Mississippi, the outraged Mesquakies sent a letter to Territorial Governor John Chambers to protest the sale. It said:

Previous to the Black Hawk War of 1832, we the Foxes resided west of the Mississippi

and owned the land in Iowa and the Sauk resided on the east side of Mississippi. At the conclusion of that war . . . we consented that the Sauk should come over and reside among us. It was agreed among us that the Sauk should reside in the lower end of the territory. . . . They have no right to sell any lands on the North East of the Des Moines without our consent.

The Mesquakies had made their point. In 1842 members of both tribes met and decided to sign a treaty that sold the last of their land in Iowa Territory. They



As the Europeans and Americans pushed toward the center of North America, the Mesquakies moved their villages from Wisconsin to the Mississippi River Valley. This map shows the areas where the Mesquakies lived from the time they first met the French traders to their settlement in Tama County.

were moved to a "permanent residence" upon a "tract of land suitable and convenient for Indian purposes upon the Missouri River, or some of its waters." The site was on the Osage River in eastern Kansas.

On the day of the final move, the Indian agent reported that all the 2,200 Sauk and Mesquakies were heading west along the Raccoon River. Early in 1846, most of the Sauk arrived at the reservation in Kansas. But less than 250 of the 1,271 Mesquakies arrived. Many stopped at the Kickapoo villages before they reached the reservation. Poweshiek's band stopped where

the Potawatomi lived in southwestern Iowa. There they planted corn and stayed. Several more groups of Mesquakies camped in other unsettled areas in western Iowa.

The reservation in Kansas was very different from Iowa. The land was poor, with very little spring water. Rainfall on the Kansas plains was much less than in the woods and prairies of Iowa. The Sauk and Mesquakies on the reservation suffered greatly. The Indian agent reported that "the soil is so much worse than in Iowa" that to produce crops as fine as those in their old homes in Iowa required "working extra

hard." Hard work could not bring rain, and drought threatened the allied tribes with starvation and **extinction**. Diseases also brought sad losses to the tribe. Many died of smallpox, **cholera**, and other diseases.

But the Mesquakies in Iowa kept to their old schedule of farming in the spring, summer, and fall. They usually arrived on the Iowa River in early March to make maple sugar and to raise corn, beans, and squash through

extinction *n.* – a making or becoming extinct; total destruction.

cholera *n.* – a highly contagious and often fatal disease of the intestines.

In 1841 the government met with the Sauk and Mesquakies to purchase their remaining land in the Iowa country. Leaders of both tribes met and agreed not to sell. The words of two Mesquakie chiefs tell the feelings they had about their homeland:

POWESHIEK: We have thought of the condition of our families, and what it will be where you wish us to live. We hold this country from our fathers; we have an hereditary right to it, and we think we have to judge whether we will sell it or not. According to our custom, our chiefs own all the trees and the earth, and they are used for the benefit of our people. We should give up a timber for a prairie country, if we went where you wish.

WAPELLO: It is impossible for us to subsist where you wish us to go. We own this country by occupancy and inheritance. It is the only good country, and only one suitable for us to live in on this side of the Mississippi River. . . . We were once a powerful, but now a small nation. When the white people first crossed the big water and landed on this island, they were small as we now are. I remember when Wisconsin was ours; and it now has our name: we sold it to you. Rock River and Rock Island were once ours: we sold them to you. Dubuque was once ours: we sold that to you. This is all the country we have left; and we are so few now we cannot conquer other countries. . . . We are but few, and are fast melting away. If other Indians had been treated as we have been, there would have been none left. This land is all we have; it is our only fortune. When it is gone, we shall have nothing left.

the summer. After the harvest they could no longer hunt as in the past because the forests had been cleared away and much of the prairie had been plowed. The wild game became less plentiful. With hunting so poor, some Mesquakies went back to Kansas for the winter. Some tribal members continued to live along the Iowa River.

As the number of American settlers increased in Tama and Marshall counties, where the Mesquakies stayed, complaints about the presence of the Indians increased. The government agreed that the Indians should be removed and made to live on the reservation. Mounted troops hunted the river valleys, captured many Mesquakies, and sent them back to Kansas. But it was impossible to catch all of them. Even when sent to the reservation they seemed to return to Iowa almost immediately.

Then in 1859, while the Mesquakies were away from the reservation hunting, the Sauk signed a treaty selling the "Sac and Fox" land in Kansas and agreeing to move to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). When the Mesquakie chief at the reservation refused to sign the treaty, his chieftanship was taken away. After this event, most of the Mesquakies left Kansas and returned to Iowa.

Earlier, in 1852, the Iowa settlers' attitude toward the remaining Mesquakies had changed. Letters went to the governor suggesting that the Mesquakies be allowed to remain in the state and purchase land for a permanent settlement. No one seems to know why the settlers did this, although the Mesquakies did seem to work at being good

neighbors. In July 1856, the Iowa legislature passed a law that allowed the Mesquakies to purchase land in the state. The tribe purchased the first 80 acres in 1857.

But years of new hardship followed. The United States government refused to pay **annuities** to Iowa Mesquakies, and they had used all their money they had to buy the land. That land had been occupied by 8 to 10 people. It now had over 200 people to support. The people in the settlement did what they could to survive. They wanted to live as they always had, farming and hunting. But 80 acres was not enough land to support them. Sometimes people became so hungry that they begged for food. This poverty lasted for nearly a dozen years. Finally, leaders in Iowa persuaded the government to pay the annuities. The Mesquakies began purchasing more land. Today the tribe owns 3,300 acres.

The Mesquakies are the only American Indian tribe to purchase and live on their own land. There, they live by their own customs and traditions. There have been changes over the years, but children still learn the Mesquakie language and religion as they grow up. They did not become like the Americans. They did not die away. The Mesquakies today remain a tribe, living together as a proud people.

The editor of the Keosauqua *Times* was wrong.

annuities *n.* – the money paid by the government to tribes on a regular schedule. Yearly annuity payments were usually promised to tribes when the government purchased their land.

Important sources for "Perseverance Pays" include "Mesquaki Exodus," by Johnathon Lantz Buffalo (unpublished paper, University of Iowa, 1977); "Indian Affairs in Iowa Territory, 1838-1846: The Removal of the Sacs and Foxes," by Michael David Green (M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1965); and "The Migration of the Sauk and Fox Indians," by Leonard V. Ramer, (M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1936).

One Step Further...

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FILM

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Division of the State Historical Society

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Cover: Mesquakies making maple sugar, painted by Push-e-to-ne-qua.

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