

Comment by the Editor

THE SACS AND THE FOXES

Although not native to the prairies west of the Mississippi, the Sacs and the Foxes figured more prominently in the history of Iowa than any other Indians. Having invaded this region shortly after their confederation in the first part of the eighteenth century, they remained the dominant red men of Iowa for more than a century. As possessors of the land, they were the tribes with whom the early settlers came in contact. It was principally they who ceded most of the Iowa country to the government.

While the Sacs and Foxes have almost invariably been treated as a single people by the government and in literature, they were in fact separate tribes. Even after their alliance they did not always act in unison either in peace or war. Though drawn together by their common Algonkian culture and in time still more intimately by intermarriage, the Sacs and the Foxes nevertheless maintained their tribal integrity and lived in separate villages. They differed widely in personal characteristics and frequently in public policy. As a rule the Foxes were individualists, whereas the Sacs were more socially minded. United for military purposes, they did not always go on the war-path together.

Both the Sacs and the Foxes were splendid warriors. Perhaps that accounts, in a measure, for their dominant rôle in the history of Iowa. Brave, resolute, and defiant they were. They put on the war-paint as joyously as they hunted the deer and the elk on the prairie. What they wanted they took, and they were willing to fight for their rights. Usually at peace with their Algonkian neighbors, whose language they understood, they were perpetually at war with the Sioux, who spoke an alien tongue. In their relations with white men, they were not particularly hostile and generally respected their treaty agreements. There is significance in the fact that the Spirit Lake massacre was a Siouan outrage.

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