



Indian

MA-KA-TAI-ME-SHE-KIA-KIAH

by Colonel Tim McCoy

Near Oregon, Illinois, high on a bluff overlooking the Rock River, towers the statue of an Indian chief. He is the epitome of pride and dignity—majestic, powerful, arms folded, head high as he looks out across what once was Indian country. He seems to say, “I am Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiah—Black Sparrow Hawk, the man.”

The land this statue gazes upon no longer has Sac, Fox and Winnebago villages upon it. Instead, it contains thriving mid-western cities. And in the libraries of these cities can be found any number of historical tomes telling how the pioneers conquered and settled these lands that were taken from Black Hawk's tribe. This conquest was called the Black Hawk War.

The Black Hawk War wasn't much of a war as wars go. Probably its two outstanding results were the finish of the Indians in Illinois and the first election to any office of Abe Lincoln, who had taken the field with the militiamen of New Salem and, following the old democratic militia custom, had been elected their Captain. His company never met up with the Indians, and therefore, saw no action.

Whenever the white man has fought to protect his land or his principles, he has been called a patriot. When the red man in turn has fought in defense of his rights he has been called a hostile savage, and punished for his audacity. He was whipped or starved into submission by armed troops, his lands were taken from him, and his field of movement restricted.

This was the pattern of the Black Hawk War; almost the same as that adopted by the men who first set foot on America. The Tide of Empire pushed this familiar pattern farther and farther westward: Red Cloud and “The Thieves Road,” Sitting Bull losing Pa-Sapa—the sacred Black Hills, Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce driven from their Wallowa Valley—all the result or penalty for progress and civilization. Then it was Black Hawk's turn.

Like most Indian wars, the Black Hawk War started with a treaty. In 1804 a group of Sac chiefs went to St. Louis to plead

for a member of the tribe who was in prison. They were treated royally by the officials—big feasts, flattering speeches, and presents. When sufficiently loaded with rum, the Sacs were easily persuaded to make a treaty which signed away the rights of the entire tribe for a consideration of \$1000 a year plus certain rations and trade goods.

Black Hawk was not a party to this treaty and repudiated it. Great rivalry existed between Keokuk and Black Hawk for power among the Sacs, and government officials kindled this rivalry by building up Keokuk with presents and flattery. This proved to be the wedge that split the Sacs. Keokuk was persuaded to acknowledge the treaty of 1804 and move across the Mississippi to lands in Iowa. Black Hawk said that no one could sign away his rights to lands belonging to him and his tribe.

Black Hawk did everything possible to avert hostilities when the white men started moving in around his village of Saukenuk, at the junction of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers. He even made the mistake of permitting some of the white settlers to occupy part of his village. When he and his braves went off to the forest to hunt their winter's meat, the settlers took over and told the returning Indians to live somewhere else. The Sac warriors wanted to fight for their homes, but the Chief, to avoid hostilities, moved his people across the big river.

In the meantime, Governor John Reynolds of Illinois issued a proclamation that “the State has been invaded by hostile Indians,” and a call was sent out for volunteers. Troops took the field, both regulars and volunteers. Black Hawk, informed of these developments, was desperately trying to get his people to safety. The Sacs were being hunted by determined militiamen who blamed Black Hawk's people for the lootings and killings that the young braves of the Ottawas and Winnebagoes committed on farms and small settlements. Troops converged on the Prophet's village only to find it empty and reduced to ashes. Further up Rock River, Black Hawk received reports of the soldiers' advance. He decided to ask for a council—he wanted