

INDEX CARDS:

Tribe - Sac and Fox  
Bark Houses

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Indian-Pioneer History  
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198

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The Sac and Fox Indians usually had two houses, a winter house and a summer house. The winter house was called the wi-ki-ob-e, or the wigwam. "Wi-ki-ob-e" is the Sac and Fox name for wigwam and has been corrupted to "Wikkyup". The summer house was the bark house. This house was used both for living and ceremonial use.

In erecting the bark house there was a ceremony for each task, from the smallest to the greatest, and the arrangement of the poles and other things had a certain significance.

The house faced the east with an east front door and a west back door. There were twelve pillars to support the framework, which represented the twelve months in the year. In the center of the house were four poles, representing the four seasons, which were used as cooking poles.

The twelve poles selected were as thick as could be procured, usually around twelve inches in diameter. Two poles, one in the middle of the east side and one in the middle of the west, were five or six feet higher than the rest in order to support the cross beam for

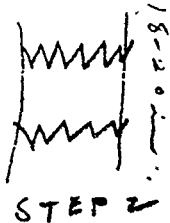
the roof. There were five poles on the north and five on the south totaling twelve in all.

In early times stone hatchets were used in digging the holes for the pillars, but for a long time "white" tools have been used.

~~The frame work was then continued with rafters, cross beams, etc., just as the framework for a modern house is made. Poles and branches of unfinished wood were used, rather than lumber from the lumber-yard, though. Instead of nails, slipper-elm strings soaked in water were used to tie the poles together.~~

Now the bark "shingles" were put on. These were taken from the bottoms of elm trees, and other trees whose bark came off easily.

The bark pieces were cut from the trees in this manner: The bark was



cut in a zigzag fashion with an ax, then cut down one side. A chisel made of stone is then inserted in the cut and it is gradually slipped off. When the tree is sappy, it nearly slips off by itself. When

3

Stretched out flat, the piece of bark is approximately twenty by twelve inches, according to the tree. A hole is cut in each corner of the bark so as to tie it on. They are then placed on the house much in the manner of shingles.

In the center of the roof is a hole approximately six feet long and two feet wide, through which the smoke passes.

~~These houses were built along the river, or,~~  
more preferable, near a spring.