The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

The Migratory Spirit:
Greed and Adventure at the Expense of the Sauk, Fox, and Ho-Chunk
(1826-1847)

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the Department of History
At The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire
Dr. Jane Pederson, Professor
Cooperating Professor: Dr. Oscar Chamberlain

By Jacob G. Winkler
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
May 2010
Abstract.........................................................................................................................1
Introduction..................................................................................................................2
Native Life.....................................................................................................................5
Early European Contact...............................................................................................7
Lead Mining Begins in the Region................................................................................9
The Lead Mining Rush.................................................................................................10
The Winnebago War.....................................................................................................15
The Black Hawk War.................................................................................................16
Conclusion..................................................................................................................19
Annotated Bibliography...............................................................................................21
Abstract

This paper is about change. When white settlers in pursuit of wealth from lead deposits in the vicinity of Southwestern Wisconsin arrived in the early 1800s, Native Americans were gradually forced from their land until there were no more tribes living in the area. As a result of the encroachment the Sauk, Fox, and Ho-Chunk were removed from their lands, suffered bloodshed in the battle for land, lost parts of their cultural identity as a result of American assimilation efforts, and at times became dependent on alcohol.
Introduction
“A Collision of Dreams”

How did we arrive at where we are today? This question is part of what makes history so exciting to study. Every town has a story, and for my home town of Platteville, Wisconsin the story is about the lure of lead and the collision of dreams. As I grew up in Southwestern Wisconsin I had only a vague idea of the history of the region. I went on field trips throughout my schooling to the mines and museums around the area, but my knowledge was incomplete. On these field trips we learned all about the lives of the miners; we learned about what they ate, where they slept, and how they mined. What was missing was how they got the land.

As I reflect on growing up in the lead mining region¹ I cannot recall receiving a history of the original inhabitants of the area and the challenges that they faced when the white settlers arrived in droves. The area I call home was first inhabited by several Native American tribes, including the Sauk, Fox, and Ho-Chunk.² Too often history is written and retold from the perspectives of those who conquered.

This paper is about these tribes and the period of great change that occurred upon the arrival of white settlers. The experiences of these tribes are part of a larger Indian removal movement that took place during the nineteenth century; experiences

¹ For a clear illustration of the lead mining region, see Figure 1.

² For a table of Native American nomenclature in this paper see Appendix 1.
that still affect these nations today. In order to understand the present, it is necessary to look at the past. This paper will focus on the impact that the white settlers had on the Native population of the lead mining district. As a result of the encroachment the Sauk, Fox, and Ho-Chunk were removed from their lands, suffered bloodshed in the battle for land, lost parts of their cultural identity as a result of American assimilation efforts, and at times became dependent on alcohol.

The history of the lead mining region was written as early as the early 1830s, when the lead mining rush was still taking place. Since then, there have been several books and countless articles on the subject. The most significant work written on the lead mining district is Joseph Schafer’s *The Wisconsin Lead Region*, published in 1932. Schafer’s book provides a broad overview of the region and explores many topics. The book begins with an overview of the uses of lead, transitions into the beginnings of lead mining, focuses on who the miners were, the miners’ involvement in politics, economics of lead mining, federal land policy, the agricultural transition of the region, the major towns and villages of the region, and the changes that the population of the region. Schafer’s work is a significant contribution to the history of white settlement in the area. He is very thorough in his exploration, almost to a fault. Shortly after the book was
released a reviewer commented that Schafer “may so burden the narrative with microscopic detail that the reader may find its perusal a heavy task.”  

Schafer’s work represents the sole definitive history of the region, but there are many other authors that have explored various aspects of the region. The Black Hawk War, for example, has been written about extensively in the past decade. Kerry Trask’s *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* is written in a compelling narrative style as the author tells the story of the bloody land conflict. In 2009, John W. Hall’s *Uncommon Defense: Indian Allies in The Black Hawk War* was published. In the book, Hall explores the involvement of the Menomonie, Dakota, Ho-Chunk, and Potawatomies during the Black Hawk War. His work challenges the thought that the Black Hawk War was solely a land grab for the whites, but asserts that it was also an Indian war fought among tribes with a long history of violence. Hall’s work offers a fresh perspective on a topic that has been extensively covered by historians.

In addition to a rich collection of secondary sources, there are also many primary source documents that provide a look into life in the lead mining region. Letters written during this time period offer a first person perspective on the difficulties of life on the frontier. A pioneer remembered the challenges of the lead mining frontier by

---

stating, “I found success was not so much in hard-labor, as in good luck.”

Whether or not the miners were successful, word traveled and the lead mining rush began.

Native Life

Before delving into the story of the white settlers, it is important to establish the context in which the white settlers arrived. In order to better understand the changes that occurred to the tribes of the lead mining region, one has to understand what life was like before removal and assimilation. The Sauk and Fox tribes were close allies during this time period. The meaning of Asaw-we-kee (Sauk) is Yellow Earth, while the Fox Indians, or Meis-qua-kee means Red Earth. The tribes share a common Ojibwa heritage, but separated after internal quarrels. The settlement of the Sauk and Fox had been greatly varied leading up to the time of the lead mining rush as well. Legend has their roots near the Gulf of the St. Lawrence River, but war with the Iroquois pushed them towards Green Bay. Here on the interior, conflict with the Sioux was common among the tribes. In summer of 1825, a peace treaty was signed at Prairie du Chien that put a temporary halt on the war between the Sioux and Sac and Fox, but ill-feelings lingered.

---


These tribes were governed through chiefs, which are established through patriarchal lineage. The chiefs have supreme authority within the tribe, and any insubordination from a brave or warrior is punishable by flogging. Sauk Warriors are broken into two bands: Kees-ko-qui and Osh-cush. When a child is born, they are placed into one of the bands depending on birth order and the band of his father.

The Sauk and Fox were very much in tune with spirituality. One way that their spirituality can be observed is through their funerary practices. Sauk and Fox believed that the spirits of deceased ancestors would stay above the village several days after death. The tribes also believed in an afterlife and in ghosts. There were similarities between the Christian belief in an afterlife and the Sauk and Fox. According to tradition, the spirit of the deceased goes to a distant land and cross rushing water. They believed that if you had lived a good life you would be able to cross the water into woods of everlasting happiness. On the contrary, if one was a bad man, they would fall in the water and be swept away to suffer eternal misery.

Indian Agent Thomas Forsyth spent a great deal of time learning about the customs and ways of the tribes. He mentions that he does not know of any peace that has been made between tribes without American intervention. It was in the best


7 Forsyth, 209.
interest for the United States to try to keep feuding between tribes at a minimum. The U.S. had just acquired the territory after the War of 1812, and wanted to settle the area.

The Ho-Chunk tribe was involved in European contact since the arrival of Nicolet in 1634. The name Ho-Chunk means “people of the big voice”, but were also called Winnebago which means “people of the dirty water”. Unlike the Sauk and Fox, the Ho-Chunk are a Siouan speaking people. The Ho-Chunk fought alongside the French against the British during the French and Indian Wars, and later helped the British fight against the Americans during the War of 1812.8

Early European Contact (1634-1671)

The first European contact with the Ho-Chunk, Sauk, and Fox did not happen as lead miners began to pour into the area, but almost two hundred years earlier with the arrival of the French. This marked the beginnings of change for Wisconsin tribes and French alike. It has almost been 375 years since Frenchman Jean Nicolet arrived on the shores of Green Bay to meet with the Ho-Chunk; this encounter marked the first time a European was in Wisconsin9. The implications of white arrival in Wisconsin cannot be ignored. The encounters among these different cultures shaped the land and the ways of life of the Natives and the French. The arrival of the French marked the beginning of the frontier era in Wisconsin, an era renowned for the cross-cultural exchange of ideas.

---


9 Ibid, 4.
beliefs, and goods between the Native Inhabitants and the various groups who would lay claim to the area.  

On June 14, 1671 the French and Indians gathered to officially recognize the French had claim of the entire North American interior. As a way to officiate the declaration, the French leader in charge, Nicolas Perrot, had a member from each of the more than fourteen tribes sign the proclamation on behalf of their tribes. The style of signing for each tribe was represented by the use of symbols, “drawing on the sheet a beaver, otter, sturgeon, deer, elk, and other symbols of their respective clans.”

This signing of this document is the start of the French fur trade, an era that was based largely on interdependence between the Natives and the French.

Richard White analyzes the interplay between the French and Native Americans involved in the fur trade in his book *The Middle Ground*. His argument is that there is

---


11Ibid., 38-39
more to the story of the French and Indians than conquest and assimilation. He asserts that people do not give the Indians enough credit for their role in the fur trade. They were not the victims, but rather active participants in an equitable exchange.

**Lead Mining Begins in the Region (1788-1810)**

French trading led traders down the Mississippi into what would become the lead mining district. In 1690 Nicolas Perrot likely built a trading post near present day Dubuque, Iowa and began mining and trading lead. Another example of early lead mining is Julien Dubuque’s diggings on the west bank of the Mississippi River beginning in 1788. Dubuque got special permission from the Sauk and Fox to mine the area, and also from Spanish authorities. Dubuque used Indian labor to mine extensively in the area.¹²

Dubuque became a legend with the Sauk and Fox of the area. He embodied the attributes of a true frontiersman. It is said that “he had the faculty of handling rattlesnakes and copper-heads without injury, and was thence esteemed a potent sorcerer.”¹³ The rapport that Dubuque built with the tribes allowed for him to work with the Sauk and Fox instead of removing them.

Dubuque would continue to mine the area until his death in 1810. Following his death, other miners began to move into the area, to which the Natives were opposed.


The Sac and Fox tribes continued to mine, although they did so in “a very imperfect manner.”14 Multiple tribes laid claim to the area, including the Sauk and Fox, Chippewa, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Ho-Chunk.15 Mining in earnest would not begin in the region for almost two decades, yet Dubuque’s mining efforts showed the potential of the region.

The Lead Mining Rush (1822-1847)

It was between 1822 and 1828 when the white population of the lead mining region increased from an estimated 20 to 10,000.16 As early Wisconsin historian Moses Strong stated, “The migratory spirit stimulated by the greed for suddenly acquired wealth, and the irrepressible love of adventure had taken possession of the pioneer immigrants…”17 Stories of men striking it rich on a lead drew men from around the world to the lead mining district.18 A pioneer tells of “one drunken Irishman, a few weeks ago, discovered a mine of lead ore, for which he was offered thirty thousand


18 See map, Appendix 2
dollars, but he laughed at the proposal. This man came into the country about two years ago, a common bog trotter without a sixpence.”

As he looked back upon his 1834 arrival to the district at Galena, Illinois, Swiss immigrant Theodore Rodolf stated, “It is useless for me to describe the magnificent scenery that presented itself to our view all along the river.” The rolling hills of driftless area\(^\text{19}\) were just beginning to show signs of spring as his steamboat en route from St. Louis puffed loudly into the Fever River. Rodolf was just seventeen years old when he arrived. He, like many others who came to the area, had little idea of what to expect. Rodolf had envisioned a life “á la Robinson Crusoe”, full of adventure in the wilderness.\(^\text{20}\) By the time Rodolf arrived in Galena, the American Indians tribes of Sauk, Fox, and Ho-Chunk that once called the area home were removed through treaties and land cessions. Stories of fear and bloodshed were fresh on the minds of inhabitants, many of whom fought in the wars and battles that erupted during this time.

White encroachment on Native soil led to hostility between whites and the American Indians of the region. In November of 1827, Indian Agent Joseph Street

\(^{19}\) The driftless area refers to the area in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota that was not glaciated during the Pleistocene era. As a result, the area is notably made up of hills and river valleys. The relief of the area is clearly visible on a topographic map (Appendix 3)

\(^{20}\) Theodore Rodolf, “Pioneering in the Wisconsin Lead District,” Wisconsin Historical Collections XV (November, 1900), 338.
wrote to the Governor of Illinois regarding the tumultuous interactions between settlers of the lead mining district and the Native Americans, who “had been soured by the conduct of the vast number of adventurers flocking to and working the lead mines of the Fever River. Those who went by land, by far the greater part, passed through Ho-Chunk country. Many of them had great contempt for ‘naked Indians,’ and behaved low, gross, and like blackguards amongst them.”21 Around the time Street wrote this letter, one particular case of white ignorance occurred East of Galena. During a “drunken frolic”, three men entered an Indian lodge. A bewildered Indian took out his gun to get the men out of the area. The drunken settlers took the gun and proceeded to beat the Native and his elderly father. The next day before the sun rose, tribal members surrounded the whites’ house. A settlement was reached before any further violence escalated.22

Acts of violence like these were not altogether uncommon during this time period. Expansion into this area began in the years following the War of 1812. After the war military forts were built in order to regulate the land. With the increased military presence, western lands soon became occupied with settlers. As settlers moved into these areas, Native Americans were being forced out. Indian Agent Thomas Forsyth


described the Sauk’s attitudes towards this influx of settlers: “They say that the white people’s thirst after land is so great that they are never contented until they have a belly full of it, the Indians compare a white settlement in their neighborhood to a drop of raccoon’s grease falling on a new blanket the drop at first is scarcely perceptible, but in time covers almost the whole blanket.”

In spite of the disdain that the Native Americans had towards the Americans, settlers still viewed the Natives in a glorified way. There was something American Indians have long been romanticized; from depictions of Indians in early American literature to the current use of Native Americans as mascots. The Black Hawk War is a pivotal moment in Wisconsin Indian history. When Louise Kellogg wrote on the history of Wisconsin, she made mention of the romanticized views of the Native Americans during the time:

For more than a decade before 1832 the United States had not experienced a genuine Indian panic. A generation had grown up since the battle of Tippecanoe, and the frontier had been pushed to the outskirts of Illinois. The new generation, likewise, was thrilling with the Indian romances of James Fennimore Cooper. The Spy was published in 1821, and the Last of the Mohicans in 1826. Both the qualities and powers of the aborigines were regarded through the mists of romance. For these and similar reasons the Black Hawk War was a genuine epoch in the history of Wisconsin.  

---

23 Forsyth, 236.

The settlers got the information that they knew about the Native Americans from word of mouth and from books. Settlers and Indians did not come in contact very often. It was out of these words and books that these romantic ideals came from.\textsuperscript{25} In his inaugural travels to Galena, Theodore Rodolf saw some of Black Hawks men on the shore of the river and he commented that the men “showed, as yet, no effect of contamination; they impressed me as a being, physically, a superior race, and their stoicism and imperturbability were astonishing.”\textsuperscript{26} The pioneers’ ironic reverence for the Natives did not translate into positive treatment.

The conflict of this era surrounds a collision of dreams between white settlers and Indians. The settlers’ priorities and visions were held over the values of the Indians; the pioneers’ lofty aspirations of wealth were hindered by the presence of Native Americans. The settlers felt that in order to realize their dreams, they needed to deal with what stood in their way – the Indians. Land for the settlers was a way to earn capital, while land for the tribes of Wisconsin was at the core of their being.

The impact that this period had on the Sauk, Fox, and Ho-Chunk tribes is catastrophic. They were removed from their lands, suffered bloodshed in the battle for land, lost parts of their cultural identity as a result of American assimilation efforts, and

\textsuperscript{25} Appendix 6 is an illustration taken from \textit{Last of the Mohicans}. In the illustration a Native American is wrestling a bear (and it appears that he is holding his own). These types of images contributed to the unrealistic stereotypes of Native Americans.

\textsuperscript{26} Theodore Rodolf, 338-339.
at times became dependent on alcohol. The lead mining rush which brought many settlers into the region peaked in 1847, but the impact this movement had on the Sauk, Fox, and Ho-Chunk continues into today.

**The Winnebago War (1827)**

The Winnebago were becoming increasingly upset with the rising number of settlers invading their land. It was only a matter of time before things between the settlers and the natives turned violent. In March of 1827, it did just that. A Prairie du Chien family out on a walk to make sugar. The sugar making crew consisted of a husband and his beautiful pregnant wife, and their five children. The family went missing. A search party was formed and the family dog was found first, shot and holding a piece of red cloth in his mouth. The party searched the area and found the camp was burned and the bodies were brutally murdered.27

With tensions between the Winnebago and settlers the may it was, rumors spread quickly that Winnebago were responsible for the murder. Two Winnebago were put in prison at Fort Snelling. Rumors persisted that the prisoners were killed, which sparked even more anger. In an act of rage, a small Winnebago party headed by chief Red Bird attacked a farm outside of Prairie du Chien. The family that owned the farm, the Gagniers, knew Red Bird well. Mr. Gagnier invited the men in for dinner. After dinner Red Bird stood and shot Gagnier while his fellow tribesman took a baby girl

---

27 Strong, 115.
from the mothers arms, scalping the baby and throwing it on the floor. The mother managed to escape into town thanks to a quick maneuver with her husband’s musket.\(^{28}\)

Word of these horrendous attacks spread throughout the region. People fled to forts and abandoned their homes. The effect that the Winnebago and the latter Black Hawk War had on the settlers of the region is notable. Henry Gratiot’s wife was hosting a small get-together during the time of the Black Hawk War.

On the 4\(^{th}\) of July I claimed the privilege of entertaining our friends at dinner; the table was set the guests assembled. Ours were primitive accommodations. I was carrying a large bowl of custard to the table, Mrs. Henry Gratiot was assisting me carrying something, when we saw four tall Indians, with guns in their hands, coming to the house. I was so taken by surprise that the bowl fell from my hands, to the great dismay of the children. I ran in to apprise the gentlemen. The Indians gravely entered, and we were quite relieved when we saw our visitors stack their guns and accept a share of our dinner; but all appetite and joyousness had fled.\(^{29}\)

Tension and fear were common with settlers on the frontier. One man recalled sending his wife and children back down river on a steamboat to St. Louis until the situation with the Natives should simmer.\(^{30}\) The conflict between the settlers and natives was largely based on access to land.

The Black Hawk War (1832)

The Black Hawk War is an example of the different emphasis that whites and many Natives placed on land. The Sauk first ceded their lands east of the Mississippi in 1804, but many continued to live there. In 1830 the Indian Removal Act was signed by

\(^{28}\) Trask, 14.


Andrew Jackson. While Jackson recognized that Indian removal was part of a moral dilemma, but justified his actions by saying that it was in the best interest of the Indians to be relocated. Jackson asked which would Americans rather have an “extensive republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion” or “a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages?”

According to Jackson’s point of view there was no middle ground that could be achieved between the Native Americans and Americans. His policy called for the removal of Natives east of the Mississippi River. Jackson’s military experience showed that he was more than willing to use force if necessary. In a conversation with a Colonel, Jackson stated, “If I remember aright this Indian Chief, Black Hawk, and his band fought against us in the late war. Am I correct?” When the Colonel confirmed that was true Jackson replied, “by the Eternal, every last one of them shale cross the Mississippi, or be killed.”

Jackson’s policy aimed at expansion towards the West, and Native Americans were collateral damage.

With the increased pressure coming from white squatters, tension was building within Makataimeshekiakiak, a Sauk leader. Black Hawk, as he is better known, felt a

---


32 Andrew Jackson, quoted in I Am a Man: The Indian Black Hawk, (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1938), 92.
connection with his homeland of Saukenuk. As discussed in the section about Sauk and Fox before white settlers came, the tribes placed a great deal of emphasis on spirituality. The land where their ancestors were buried was visited by the spirits of the deceased. The Sauk and Fox held strong the belief that their ties to the land were eternal. This reverence for the land and for the dead may have been why there was so much animosity towards white squatters when they began impeding on the Sauk’s homeland.

Not all Sauk were vehemently opposed to moving to the other side of the river. Another leader in the tribe, Keokuk, believed that removal was inevitable, thus he yielded to the demands of the Americans. His compliance earned him respect from American officials, and eventually led the Americans to treat Keokuk as the chief of the Sauk. The Americans held Keokuk in higher regard than did members of his own tribe. This gave him more power than he had before and angered Black Hawk. This rivalry between Keokuk and Black Hawk would have great implications on the turnout of the Black Hawk War.

The Americans were getting what they wanted from Keokuk: land and Keokuk was receiving payments directly to himself on top of the tribes’ annuities. Keokuk lobbied for his tribe and made sure that they were getting fair and just deals. Black Hawk viewed his cooperation with the whites as cowardice.

---

As the name of the war implies, Black Hawk eventual began his quest. He believed that it was nobler to die in trying to stay in his homeland than to live a coward on the other side of the river. In April of 1832, American troops mobilized to forcefully remove the Sauk from Saukenuk. Black Hawk retreated North, leaving a trail of skirmishes behind. Black Hawk’s band reached the confluence of the Mississippi River and Bad Axe River to a barrage of American troops. Around 300 of Black Hawk’s band, made up of men, women, and children were either killed by U.S. soldiers, drowned, or were killed by Dakota warriors on the other side of the river. Black Hawk’s stand was put down.

**Conclusion**

In the roughly twenty years it took for the white man to come into the lead mining region and extract all they could, the Sauk, Fox, and Winnebago tribes were forever changed. The promise of wealth and fortune made the region’s population explode. Lead mining became less profitable when the miners dug too deep and hit the water table. At the peak of the lead mining rush approximately one-fourth of the population of the state of Wisconsin was found in Grant, Iowa, and LaFayette counties. This number would continually drop as people left the lead mining district and either headed west in pursuit of gold or moved to more urban area in eastern Wisconsin.\(^{34}\)

\(^{34}\) See Appendix 5 for a graph that demonstrates the population drop.
Black Hawk’s rival Keokuk would die in Kansas. There were unconfirmed reports that he had been poisoned by one of his own men. In his final years, Keokuk drank heavily and earned a reputation as a drunkard. In fact, in 1839 (9 years before Keokuk died) a newspaper ran a story saying that Keokuk had died after a night of drinking. This report was later refuted in an article entitled, “Keokuck not Dead”. The initial report stated that Keokuk had been “shot dead”, but the republished report states that he was merely “shot in the neck by a rum bottle, and was merely dead drunk.” The paper reports that he had lost his power and influence with his tribe due to his “beastly habits of intoxication.”

It was Keokuk’s standing with the United States government that allowed him to have access to more than his fair share of whisky.

Today, Saukenuk is modern day Moline, Illinois. The city has a population of around 43,000, and is the birthplace of John Deere. Long forgotten are the bodies of Black Hawk’s ancestors. Moline is also home to the ironically named Black Hawk Community College. Keokuk’s son, Moses converted to Christianity late in life.

These are all examples of the change that the white settlers brought when they came in search of gold. The settlers had a simple goal to achieve wealth, but in order to procure this wealth, the Native population suffered. With this knowledge, I do not get the same sense of pride when I think about the mining heritage of my hometown. A painful part of history is coming to terms with the bloodshed.

---

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Coons, John R. Papers, 1833-1853. Platteville Area Research Center, Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

Forsyth, Thomas, Manuscript Collection, 1804-1833. Archives Main Stacks, Madison, WI.


Henry, William, Papers, 1823-1849. Archives Main Stacks, Madison, WI.

Hollman, Frederick, Undated Autobiography. Platteville Area Research Center, Karrmann Library. University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

Johnson, Esau, Reminiscences, 1882-1884. Platteville Area Research Center, Karrmann Library. University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

Meeker, Moses. Reminiscences, undated. Archives Main Stacks, Madison, WI.

Rountree, John. Papers, 1826-1907. Platteville Area Research Center, Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Platteville, WI.

Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey. Lead and Zinc Mining Photographs, ca. 1910. Archives Visual Materials Holdings, Madison, WI.
Secondary Sources


This article looks at the technological changes in lead mining and smelting, and also focuses on Native American involvement in lead production.


Provides an excellent chapter on Sauk Chief Keokuk.


This a look at the challenges that Cornish miners faced when trying to settle the lead mining district. This article examines the transition from lead mining to agriculture.


Examines the settlement and key figures in one of the major lead mining counties.


These are the works of an amateur historian who looked at the family letters and historical accounts.


This book has a section devoted to lead mining in Wisconsin, which should give more information on the history of the area, and lead to more sources.

Examines the build up to the Black Hawk War to the aftermath.


This article focuses on the immigration of miners from northern England into the lead mining district, and the technology used to create wealth.


Written in 1899, this account offers the history of the lead region. The book looks at the characteristics of the miners and the region.


Examines the life and times of a Wisconsin pioneer.


Examination of the federal policy of land distribution in on the lead mining frontier.


Contains illustrations and historical text surrounding both lead and zinc mining in Southwestern Wisconsin. Available at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville.

A concise look at one of the central lead mining towns of the 19th century. Provides many images of prominent figures and locations around the town.


This article looks at how the gold rush of 1848 affected Wisconsin and the lead mining industry as many Wisconsin miners left for California.


A report that includes both historical information and geology of Southwestern Wisconsin. It also examines the physical geography of the region.


Offers a fresh perspective about the Black Hawk War. Makes the argument that is was more than just settlers versus the Sauk and Fox.


A collection of essays about the effects of alcohol on various Native American tribes.


This book was prepared in cooperation with the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, the Iowa Geological Survey, and the Illinois State Geological Survey. Contains maps and history of the lead mining district.

Contains four parts that examine these tribes. Includes a treaty, and Thomas Forsyth’s examination of the Sac and Fox.


Examines the reaction of the Native Americans when miners began to settle the region.


Examines the foundations of Indian lead mining in the southwest region of Wisconsin, and the influence that the settlers had on the Native Americans.


The story of a man who was a true pioneer. Examines his time in Wisconsin while relations between Indians and settlers were at fever pitch.


The autobiography of a man who settled in Platteville, Wisconsin. He was involved in the Black Hawk War, and the government of early Platteville. This source will provide information on what life was like in the lead mining frontier and in the Black Hawk War.


Meeker arrived in Platteville in 1823 and engaged in the lead mining that was taking place. He writes his recollections of the time period, and about his interactions with the Ho-Chunk, Sauk and Fox Indians.

A single volume book on the history of Wisconsin. It includes a section devoted to the lead mining region.


Features an article on the settling of the lead region, and helps define the lead mining district. The article also contains a rich bibliography that helped locate sources.


This dissertation is a detailed look at those living in the driftless area of Wisconsin. Includes maps and charts about the inhabitants of the area.


Examines the affect that settlers had on when Wisconsin became a state.


A study of the settlers of Wisconsin, as taken from diaries and letters of the immigrants.


One of the most cited and complete works that focuses on the history of the lead mining district.


Offers a look into the historiography of how the era of the lead mining district was written about.

Examines the conflict that arose due to the settlers impeding on Native American’s land. The book includes stories of specific conflicts, and the key figures of the era.


Provides overview of control of the Driftless Region from Revolutionary Period to when Wisconsin became a territory.


This looks at the lives of the English immigrants and how they adapted to living in Wisconsin.


This atlas has a plethora of maps, and also provides a short written history of the area.


Contains key events and figures in Wisconsin history during the territorial years. Contains images.


An examination of the relationship between Wisconsin Native American tribes and French.

A geographical analysis of one of the most important areas during the lead mining era. It includes maps and illustrations.


Looks at the federal leasing policy of the lead district.


This book offers a look at the different frontiers in Wisconsin history. Chapter 6 is entitled “Miners, Indian Wars, and a Frontier Transformed”.