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PROFESSOR KATE LANG
COOPERATING PROFESSOR JOHN MANN

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BY ALEX HOWE

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The Black Hawk War of 1832 not only affected the Sauk who fought in it, but also the people who would inhabit the area over the next 170 years. This paper focuses on the long trip of the perception and memory of Black Hawk, from that of a bloody savage to respected leader and Native American figure. Using newspaper articles, books, scholarly articles, park sites, and much more, this paper maps the change of portrayal of Black Hawk from negative to positive, starting directly after the end of the Black Hawk War and reaching from the 100th anniversary of Black Hawk's surrender, to the late twentieth century. Most importantly, this paper shows the connection that the people of the region affected by the war end up having with the memory of Black Hawk.

“On our way down, I surveyed the country that had cost us so much trouble, anxiety, and blood, and that now caused me to be a prisoner of war. I reflected upon the ingratitude of the whites, when I saw their fine houses, rich harvests, and everything desirable around them; and recollected that all this land had been ours, for which me and my people had never received a dollar, and that the whites were not satisfied until they took our village and our grave-yards from us, and removed us across the Mississippi.”¹ – Black Hawk, August, 1832

Introduction

After defeating Black Hawk and removing him and surviving band members west of the Mississippi River, white Americans quickly placed Black Hawk in the pantheon of American Indian “heroes;” the noble savage who had fought bravely to preserve his way of life. The American people displayed this fascination with Black Hawk first by following his 1833 eastern tour of the United States in newspapers and by attending in large numbers a trek undertaken by order of President Andrew Jackson. This fascination with Black Hawk continued for the next century, as Americans named roads, taverns, bridges, restaurants, recreational facilities, schools and even golf courses for him.²

These actions by the American people signified the importance of Black Hawk and the events surrounding him to the region of Wisconsin and Illinois. Their use of his name and image represent in microcosm both the change and continuity of Anglo-American’s perceptions towards Native Americans during the 19th and 20th centuries. Both continuity and changing attitudes regarding the memory of Black Hawk and the Black Hawk War reveal the impact left by the Sauk chief, an impact that discloses how people from the region invoked and honored the memory and name of Black Hawk.

¹ Donald Jackson, ed., *Black Hawk; An Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 141-2.

² The post war adulation of building monuments and renaming structures after Black Hawk was not immediately shown by whites in the area. After his death on Oct. 3, 1838, Black Hawk’s bones were dug up and put on display by an Iowan doctor.

The tragic end of the Black Hawk War in 1832 signaled not only the end of Native American resistance east of the Mississippi, but also a turning point for the states of Wisconsin and Illinois. The West opened to expansion and whites, settling in Wisconsin and Illinois, built their homes near or on sites of conflict during the Black Hawk War. As time passed, the war became an identifying part of the region and the people who inhabited those areas sought to remember it in their own way.

This paper is a history of how Americans remembered the Black Hawk War and how Black Hawk himself came to be portrayed from the end of the war to this present day. That being said, there are some historical works in regard to the Black Hawk War, memory (especially during conflict), and how whites portrayed Native Americans in the past that garner mention.

Shortly after the war, stories began to take shape, penned by historians or participants, looking for any way to describe what had happened during the war. There are five historical monographs on the Black Hawk War and its events that stand out. These works fall into three categories: those that favor the Native Americans, those that favor the Anglo-Americans, and those that try to lend credence to both stories. Benjamin Drake's *The Life Adventures of Black Hawk*, published in 1838, is the first strongly pro-Native American book about the war. It took nearly fifty years before another author wrote from the pro-Native American stance, when Perry Armstrong published his 1887 work *The Sauks and the Black Hawk War*. In 1834 John A. Wakefield published his *History of the War between the United States and the Sac and Fox Nations of Indians*. Wakefield, described by some historians as, "A rabid Indian hater . . . whose narrative

gave the militiamen's side of the story," is an example of an author whose goal was to exonerate whites from any wrong doing.³

Pro and Anti-Native American views continued through the 19th and 20th centuries, until historians began to move away from taking sides in the conflict and began to move towards understanding what precipitated the conflict and the history of its aftermath. Two books that follow this path in painstaking detail are Ellen M. Whitney's *The Black Hawk War*, finished in 1978, which contains practically every letter, military order, journal and document from the war, and the most recent work on the conflict, Kerry A. Trask's 2006 *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America*. While the histories of the war vary between authors and time periods, it is in the latter half of the 20th century that the perception of Black Hawk shifts away from the negative end of the spectrum, paving the way for both deeper historical understanding and signs of remembrance and memory throughout Wisconsin and Illinois.

In recent years a number of scholarly works have explored memory in history, and two books, David Blight's *Race and Reunion*, and Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*, separate themselves from others when dealing with the remembrance of conflicts. *Race and Reunion* explores how memory about the Civil War changed over time, while Fussell's book focuses on WWI and how literature helped to shape the memory of that awful war. The authors explored the role memory plays in history, and how personal accounts, literature, public art, letters, and other factors shaped how we

³ Roger L. Nichols, "The Black Hawk War in Retrospect." *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 65 (Summer 1982): 244

remember these events as we do.⁴ This paper will use some of the same aspects to focus on the remembrance of Black Hawk and the Black Hawk War.

Like Fussel and Blight's works, Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* and Robert Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* represent those publications that deal with the idea of the "Indian." Both focus on the white perception of Native Americans, while Berkhofer also explores the scientific image of Indians as well as the image of Indians in literature, art, and philosophy. The emphasis within these two books is on the way that Indians were and are portrayed by whites, making a connection to the reasons behind the portrayal of Black Hawk throughout the years.

This paper is a history of how Americans remembered the Black Hawk War and how Black Hawk himself came to be portrayed from the end of the war to this present day. As this paper is examining the memory of the Black Hawk War, this is a selective work on a vast topic. Therefore, this paper entails how the war and Black Hawk can be seen throughout this region, showcased by historical markers from several decades, tourist sites, schools, etc., rather than developing a professional historiography.⁵

These markers, tourist sites, etc., can only be explained through the essence of Black Hawk's leadership and by his movements through Wisconsin and Illinois during the early parts of the 19th century. By exploring these aspects of Black Hawk's life and the remembrance of Black Hawk and the Black Hawk War, we can discover how the way people use that memory sheds light on why Black Hawk matters today.

⁴ See <http://common-place.dreamhost.com/vol-02/no-03/author/index.shtml>.

⁵ See David W. Blight's *Race and Reunion* for a particularly fine example of this. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Background Information

The Black Hawk War of 1832 was a conflict that was bound to happen, both because of United State's Indian Policy and Black Hawk's refusal of it. The United States Indian Policy was formulated during the country's first decades of existence, as the federal government searched for solutions to the problems caused by Indians; the most important being that the Indians were here when the white man arrived and formed an obstacle to the westward advance of the white settlers.⁶ By the 1830's the government had established a set of principles which became the standard of American Indian Policy. The fundamental elements of the program were the following:

(1) Protection of Indian rights to their land by setting definite boundaries for the Indian Country, restricting the whites from entering except under certain controls, and removing illegal intruders.

(2) Control of the disposition of Indian lands by denying the right of individuals or local governments to acquire land from the Indians by purchase or other means.

(3) Regulation of the Indian trade.

(4) Control of the liquor traffic by regulating the flow of intoxicating liquor into the Indian Country and then prohibiting it all together.

(5) Provision for the punishment of crimes committed by the members of one race against the other and compensation for damages suffered, in order to remove the occasions for private retaliation which led to frontier hostilities.

⁶ Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1962), 1. Other problems were peace with tribes, authority in managing Indian affairs, restraining aggressive frontiersman, regulating the contact between the two races that grew out of trade, and aid the Indians along the path toward civilization.

(6) Promotion of civilization and education among the Indians, in the hope that they would be absorbed into the general stream of American society.⁷

The Indian policy of the government was expressed in formal treaties made with Indian tribes, but the policy took shape in federal laws that regulated trade and intercourse within the tribes to preserve peace on the frontier.

The goal of the Indian Policy was an orderly advance of the frontier. These restrictions on the contact between Indians and whites were necessary to maintain that order. “But if the goal was an orderly advance, it was nevertheless advance of the frontier, and in the process of reconciling elements, conflict and injustice were often the result.”⁸

In 1802, thirty years before the start of the Black Hawk War and as of yet primarily untouched by American Indian Policy, the future of Black Hawk and the Sauk nation looked entirely different than its tragic outcome. Gathering at the main tribal village of Saukenuk every spring, the Sauk nation numbered 6,000 strong, the largest native settlement of any in the upper Mississippi region.

Located in northwestern Illinois near the present day Quad Cities, Saukenuk lay near the convergence of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers. The settlement boasted close to 100 lodges, with multiple families in each, supported by the bounty of the surrounding countryside that supplied more than enough to feed the large community during the spring and summer months. While the waters of the Rock and Mississippi Rivers provided ideal fishing, the rich soil of the bountiful plain along the rivers produced ample

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸ Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 3.

amounts of pumpkins, beans, and there was “enough corn to allow for a surplus to be sold to the traders.”⁹

Saukenuk served not only as the communal and economical center of the Sauk world but also its religious center. Like many Native American tribes, the Sauk placed special emphasis on place, and they viewed Saukenuk as the center of their world. They believed Saukenuk was the place where the four cosmic layers above and below the earth connected, making it a place of extraordinary magical power.¹⁰ The Sauk believed that this power granted continuing fertility to both the fields and the Sauk women and kept the fish catch abundant. Saukenuk was also the place where the Sauk interred their dead, adding to its spiritual connection with the Sauk. It is easy to see how so powerful a place would affect the decisions of Black Hawk and his followers in the future to return to Saukenuk against the wishes of the United States government.

Mà-ka-tai-me-she-kià-kiàk (Black Hawk)

Black Hawk was small—no more than five feet five inches tall, had a hooked nose, a low set mouth and large eyes. Pictured in an 1832 painting by George Catlin , Black Hawk wore a white buckskin suit and several silver earrings. Quill necklaces circle his neck. Perhaps the Sauk brave’s most stunning feature was his hair style, traditional for the Sauk. Black Hawk was entirely bald except for a crest of hair that ran down the middle of his head. The Sauk would use this small tussock of hair to affix either a deer or

⁹ William T. Hagen, *The Sac and Fox Indians* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 6.

¹⁰ Kerry A. Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 3.

elk's tail, and with this tail attached, Black Hawk, according to historian Donald Jackson, "would have fulfilled every Easterner's conception of the Savage Redskin."¹¹

Though held in high regard by the tribe because of his warring abilities, abilities that he had shown at a young age, Black Hawk was neither chief nor shaman of the Sauk.¹² Black Hawk was married to Singing Bird and had several children with her. Black Hawk remained faithful to her, even though according to tribal custom, Sauk men could practice polygamy. Life was good in Saukenuk; the men traded, hunted and smoked while the women worked in the fields and tended to the children. While the Sauk had felt the encroachment of the white man coming during their alliance with the British during the War of 1812, few guessed that their world was soon to be changed by a different force, that of the United States.

Sowing the Seeds of War

In 1804, five Sauk and Fox Indians signed a treaty with William Henry Harrison, the Governor of the Indiana Territory and the future ninth president of the United States, in St. Louis.¹³ The treaty stated that the Sauk and Fox would cede approximately fifty million acres of land in what is today northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. In return, the Indians received two thousand dollars worth of trade goods and an annuity of a thousand dollars. According to William Hagen, one clause in particular, Article "7," was

¹¹ Jackson, 2.

¹² William T. Hagen, *The Sac and Fox Indians* (1958), 8. The Sauk held war in high esteem. Black Hawk wounded an enemy at the age of fifteen and won the right to be called a brave. He led or was a member of many war parties in the subsequent years.

¹³ The Fox were allies and were also loosely aligned culturally with the Sauk.

meant to lull the tribes into a false sense of security.¹⁴ The article stated that the tribes could remain on their land until the government could dispose of it to the actual settlers. The government had no idea when these ‘actual settlers’ might show up, and for almost twenty years the tribes kept their lands to themselves, even though there were some Sauk who did not accept the legitimacy of the treaty.

The Indian—White relations during the early 19th century were tumultuous throughout the United States. In 1811, Tecumseh had lost the Battle of Tippecanoe to the same William Henry Harrison who presided over the treaty talks in 1804. Tecumseh, in turn, allied with the British during the War of 1812, as did Black Hawk and his followers. The Creek War followed in 1813 and 1814 and the first Seminole War took place in 1817. United States policy and settlement pushed Indians westward to gain their territory, moving ever closer to Sauk lands.

The powerful westward push began to reach the Sauk and Fox territories after 1822. Because of the discovery of lead deposits, whites suddenly arrived in multitudes, mining for lead in the region. The American Fur Company also arrived and took outright control of the fur trade by buying out or crushing any native or white competition. Resentment grew among the Fox and the Sauk. A treaty was brokered in 1804 by five Sauk who had not received authority from tribal leaders to do so. In fact, the last signatory of the treaty denied all knowledge of the sale of land, leading to speculation that it was not an honorable treaty.¹⁵ These events lead to mounting tensions during the spring of 1829. Settlers in Illinois complained to the office of Governor Ninian Edwards

¹⁴ William T. Hagen. *Black Hawk's Route through Wisconsin: Report of an Investigation made by the Authority of the Legislature of Wisconsin* (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1949), 2.

¹⁵ Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, May 17, 1829, in Indian Office Files, National Archives.

about the Indian's behavior and the Indians in turn were sending complaints to their federal agent, Thomas Forsyth, at Rock Island. Listening to the potential white voters, Governor Edwards petitioned the federal government to remove the Sauk and the Fox west of the Mississippi. The native people could expect little of the current occupant of the White House, Andrew Jackson, a notorious anti-Indian president who would grant few favors to Indians, and especially those with British sympathies. Jackson pushed for the Indian Removal Act that allowed forcible removal of Indians to west of the Mississippi River. The passing of the Indian Removal Act on May 26, 1830, and less than two months later, the Treaty of 1830, signed by the Sauk and the Fox ceding to the United States forever all their right and title to their lands, signaled the beginning of the end for Black Hawk and his people.

The encroachment of the whites had not only led to mounting Indian-White tensions, but also to dissension among the Sauk. One contingent of Sauk followed Keokuk, a principal war chief in the tribe. The British Band, so-named by Americans because of its pro-British sentiments carried over from the War of 1812, followed Black Hawk. With the signing of the treaty of 1830, Keokuk decided to move on and he and his faction traveled to their new home in Iowa. Black Hawk, however, moved his band back to Saukenuk, an action that the treaty expressly forbade. Governor John Reynolds of Illinois declared this an invasion of Illinois and sent the militia to take care of the nuisance.¹⁶ Ill-prepared for warfare, Black Hawk surrendered and agreed to the terms that they must never return back across the Mississippi without permission. The British Band agreed.

¹⁶ William T. Hagen. *Black Hawk's Route through Wisconsin: Report of an Investigation made by the Authority of the Legislature of Wisconsin* (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1949), 4.

Black Hawk did not comply for long. On April 6, 1832, he led his band, estimated at four hundred warriors and twelve hundred women, children and old men back across the Mississippi and up the Rock River towards Saukenuk. The British Band moved towards a village run by White Cloud, a Winnebago, who claimed to be their ally, but in the end offered no help to the band.

Brigadier General Henry Atkinson and Colonel Henry Dodge led the forces that would oppose Black Hawk. Atkinson arrived with troops near White Cloud's village and this forced the band to flee further up the Rock. It was there that Black Hawk, after hoping that his pro-British sentiments might garner some help from the British, learned that they were on their own. In response to this information Black Hawk sent a delegation to surrender to the militia under Isaiah Stillman. Distrusting the Indian's white flag of truce, the militia opened fire and killed one of the members of the delegation. Realizing there was no going back, Black Hawk set up an ambush that killed several of the militia, causing a great panic and rout of the white force. The band then headed north into the swamps of southeastern Wisconsin, hoping the thick growth and rough terrain would discourage white pursuit.

After several weeks of hiding and facing starvation, the band headed north and west towards the Wisconsin River. Dodge and the rest of the militia picked up their trail and were soon close behind, finally catching up on July 21, 1832 and attacking as the band prepared to cross the river at Wisconsin Heights. Despite high Sauk casualties --70 in all-- a rear guard diverting action allowed most of the women and children and the main body of the band to cross or flee down the Wisconsin River.

Having split his band, sending some down the Wisconsin River in hastily built rafts and canoes, Black Hawk steered his remaining faction west towards the Mississippi in retreat. On August 1, the band reached the Mississippi near the mouth of the Bad Axe River. What followed was hardly, by any definition, a battle.

At the same time the Band was arriving at the Bad Axe, a chartered gunboat, the *Warrior*, arrived from upstream. Even after the Indians displayed a white flag, the ship opened fire. The Indians returned fire, having little effect until the gunship ran low on fuel and had to retire. The first day of the battle resulted in the deaths of twenty three Sauk. During the night Black Hawk and a group of Sauk left the main party hoping to join with the Chippewa Indians. They soon turned back because of the proximity of the Army and established a rear guard between the Army and the main Sauk body.

On August 2, the U.S. Army finally reached the Bad Axe. Attacked on all sides, many of the Sauk fled towards the river, trying desperately to hide or escape. Lt. Albert Sidney Johnston, Atkinson's Aide de Camp, wrote that “. . . many of them [Sauk] men, women and children fled to the river and endeavored to escape by swimming in this situation, our troops arrived on the bank and threw in a heavy fire which killed great numbers, unfortunately some women and children which was much deplored by the soldiers. . .”¹⁷ The effect of killing women and children that Johnston said was so deplored by the soldiers was not felt by those on the *Warrior*, who upon returning from refueling, opened up with a blanket of fire . The result was a massacre. Most of those who escaped the slaughter on the eastern bank by swimming the Mississippi faced Dakota warriors on the western shore, recruited by the Americans. In the end, the death

¹⁷ Ellen M. Whitney, ed. *The Black Hawk War 1831-1831 Vol. II Letters and Papers, Part II June 24, 1832- October 14, 1834*. (Springfield, Illinois: Illinois State Historical Library, 1975), 1321.

toll counted over 300 dead Sauk. Black Hawk and a few others were able to escape, but he soon surrendered on August 27, 1832. On September 21, a peace treaty signed with the Sauk and Fox corresponded with the capture of Black Hawk. Of the 1200-1500 Sauk who began the flight with Black Hawk, fewer than 150 lived to see the treaty's signing.

The Black Hawk War was the end of conflict between whites and Indians in the region. It not only affected the lives of all involved but also the settlement of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin.¹⁸ After his release, Black Hawk, by order of President Andrew Jackson, took a tour of the east, a journey meant to showcase the power of the United States and to dash any thought of insurrection or hope of regaining Sauk lands from Black Hawk's mind. He never again attempted to take his homeland and died in 1838 on the Indian reservation set aside for the Sauk in Iowa.

Remembering Ghosts

Newspaper Articles and Journals

Less than a year after his surrender, Black Hawk and his son Whirling Thunder, freed from imprisonment and on their way home, toured the eastern United States at the behest of President Jackson, in order to showcase the United States' power. By showing Black Hawk the wonders and size of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, Jackson

¹⁸ Wisconsin became a state in 1848, Iowa in 1846. Illinois had joined the Union in 1818. The original Great Seal of the Territory of Wisconsin, created in 1839, portrays Wisconsin as the isthmus between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. On this isthmus sits the territorial capitol, overlooking a settler plowing his fields. A lone Indian is shown walking towards the Mississippi while the Latin phrase "Civilitas Succesitt Barbarum" (Civilization takes the place of barbarism) is overhead, a strong suggestion that Indians were being pushed westward. Nancy Oestreich Lurie, *Wisconsin Indians: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society Press, 2002), iv.

hoped to show the might of the Republic to Black Hawk, swaying further notions of Native American resistance against the westward push of white Americans.¹⁹

As Black Hawk toured the eastern United States, newspaper articles show the perception of Black Hawk that many whites shared at the time. Articles from the *Commonwealth* reporting on the tour of “the great Indian Chief released from his captivity” show Black Hawk as a noble savage, who fought a war in vain against the might of the United States. President Jackson traveled with Black Hawk for a few days on his way back to the White House, hoping that the image of him traveling side by side with his conquered foe would bring some good publicity, though the stunt ultimately failed. The *Commonwealth* described that Black Hawk “has rather too much of the gentleman about him,” and in some instances attracts almost as great a crowd as President Jackson does. The popularity of Black Hawk in New York was so great a problem for Jackson’s image that it was “resolved that the two great men must no longer travel the same road.” The *Commonwealth* closes the article with an editorial sentence, “wishing that Black Hawk may have the fame of being the last Indian Chief who made war upon the people of Illinois, and that henceforth, “Indian murders,” in *either* sense, may be unheard of.” Black Hawk would not make war upon any people again, and his fame was just beginning to develop.²⁰

During the eleven months that followed his surrender, Black Hawk’s reputation in the east had transformed from that of a bloodthirsty savage to a great chief, even if he

¹⁹ Black Hawk and Whirling Thunder would make a second trip to the east in 1837 with a delegation of Fox and Sac that were meeting in Washington D.C. to broker a peace agreement with the Santee Sioux. According to the *Washington Globe*, the two “had wished to visit the great towns and villages of their white brethren as freemen having been taken through the country as prisoners.” *Alexandria Gazette*, (Alexandria, VA), 6 October 1837.

²⁰ *The Commonwealth*, (Frankfort, KY), 2 July, 1833.

was not considered one among his own people. A poem, printed in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* gives insight to why white perceptions of Black Hawk had shifted. The poem was part of a speech relating to Black Hawk, recited by a Mr. Durant, the pilot of a hot air balloon who put on an exhibition flight for Black Hawk and his party.

*He fought for Independence too-
He struck for Freedom- with a few
Unconquered souls- whose battle-cry,
Was- "Red men! - save your land, or die!"
But fought in vain- for 'tis decreed,
His race must fall, and yours succeed.
Then kindly treat the captive chief,
And let your smiles assuage his grief;
He knows your strength- has felt your power;
Then send him to his native bower.²¹*

In the poem, the words "he," "independence" and "freedom" reveal one reason why American's perception of Black Hawk in the east had changed from killer of innocent whites to noble savage. The emphasis on these words expresses that while inferior as an Indian, Black Hawk was someone with whom whites could identify. Black Hawk, just as Americans had in 1776 and 1812, fought for his people's independence and freedom. While viewed as a futile insurrection in the eyes of whites, this rebellion was an honorable act, one that they could relate to as sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters of the generation who had fought for the same ideals against the British sixty-seven years earlier.

While Black Hawk was receiving adulation as an honorable man and a great chief in *The Commonwealth*, the reality of the situation of the treatment of Black Hawk and

²¹ *The Commonwealth*, (Frankfort, KY), 30 July, 1833.

Native Americans as a whole was evident in a piece picked up by *The Commonwealth*. *The Commonwealth* ran an article from the *New York Courier* regarding how the *Courier* “hits off pretty well the system of making a “lion” out of this old Indian.”²² “Lion” is placed in quotation marks in *The Commonwealth* because *The New York Courier* makes no attempt to glorify Black Hawk at all, but rather spends its time mocking him.

The view of Native Americans as savage and inferior by many whites at the time often appeared in print. *The New York Courier* wrote that during his tour a lady, “one remarkable for her fine hair,” presented Black Hawk with a tomahawk. Upon viewing the ax, the *Courier*’s translator reported that Black Hawk observed to his son, “What a beautiful head for scalping.” Women continued to present gifts to Black Hawk and a bottle of otto of roses came into his possession, from which he drank. Spitting the liquid out, he was reported to yell, “Give me some broth of fire.” The paper goes so far as to say that when a member of the Temperance society approached Black Hawk and asked him to give up his whiskey, Black Hawk asked for his tomahawk and would have killed the member if he had not been stopped.²³ Whether this is the case or not is irrelevant- what it does reflect is that the news media of the day portrayed Black Hawk much like many other people did- as a violent and drunken savage, more a character than a person.

In August of 1832, Black Hawk witnessed the annihilation of almost his entire band of followers at the Bad Axe Massacre. United States forces removed him from his land and imprisoned him far from his home, then marched him towards Washington D.C. the very center of those forces that destroyed his life. It seems absurd that a man who had lived through these horrors and constantly monitored during the tour would make

²² *The Commonwealth*, (Frankfort, KY), 30 July, 1833. “Lion” refers to the term “to lionize,” or to glorify.

²³ *Ibid.*

comments of that nature. What happened was that the *Courier* was playing on white's stereotypes of Native Americans. Many folks were curious about Black Hawk and his tour and every newspaper and periodical was sure to have a story regarding the deposed chief. The *Courier* decided to set itself apart by doing what some in the news media do today- it came up with a more sensationalized story knowing that people would rather buy and read a controversial and egregious report of Black Hawk's conduct rather than a report that portrayed him as the leader that he was. *The Commonwealth* picked up on this selling tactic when it carried the *Courier*'s story, commenting on the *Courier* with its tongue-in-cheek reference to the paper making a "lion" out of Black Hawk. As a white American, changing your perception of Black Hawk to that as a great leader and respected figure at the time was more difficult when he is reportedly ready to attack a member of the Temperance society.

While the newspapers were assessing Black Hawk's conduct and demeanor, a new "science," phrenology, contributed to the situation to allow whites a chance to see how and why these "savages" acted the way they did. The study of phrenology is based upon the concept created by Viennese physician Franz Joseph Gall that the brain's interior is composed of multiple facilities, or "organs." The size of these organs equals their power and the shape of the brain is determined by the development of these facilities. The skull in turn takes its shape from the brain and it was widely believed in the antebellum period that one could, "read the surface of the skull as an accurate index of psychological aptitudes and tendencies."²⁴ In Black Hawk's time phrenologists identified

²⁴ <http://pages.britishlibrary.net/phrenology/overview.htm#whatwasit>.

thirty seven different phrenological developments, ranging from Concentrativeness to Mirthfulness and Causality.²⁵

The unknown author of an 1838 study tried to use phrenology to paint a picture of Black Hawk and the reasons for his actions during the Black Hawk War. He concluded that Black Hawk's organs of Combativeness, Destructiveness, Secretiveness, Cautiousness and Acquisitiveness were very large, and while they always give great energy and force of character, "in a savage state, would give cruelty, cunning, and revenge; would make an Indian the bold and desperate warrior." Black Hawk's head also showed large areas of Self-Esteem, Firmness, and Approbativeness that result in a warlike ambition and a great love of independence and power. His large Self-Esteem organ would "create the most unyielding resistance to ward off all attacks on their peace and happiness, and the most indomitable perseverance and insatiable thirst to revenge all assaults."²⁶

Any contemporary American reading Black Hawk's phrenological profile at the time would have immediately pictured the Indian mentioned in the *New York Courier*, talking of scalping and whiskey, and not of home and his family. Even though the report pays Black Hawk the compliment of having a strong character, placing the size of his brain's "organs" in the context of a Native American immediately strips him of any honor. Surely, Americans at the time concluded one must be a bloodthirsty savage if the Combativeness area is large. And though phrenology is not a science (it was considered

²⁵ Author unknown, "Phrenological Developments and Character of the Great Indian Chief and Warrior, Black Hawk," *Phrenological Journal and Life Illustrated* (November 1838).

²⁶ "Phrenological Developments and Character of the Great Indian Chief and Warrior, Black Hawk," *Phrenological Journal and Life Illustrated* (November 1838). New views on phrenology may be by read in Stephen Tomlinson's, *Head Masters: Phrenology, Secular Education, and 19th Century Social Thought* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2005).

one at the time), one gets the feeling that the author decided to write this article under his terms, whether or not his findings matched his evidence on the perception of Black Hawk. The report, written in 1838, gives the author the benefit of hindsight to the events of the Black Hawk War and liberty to associate the specific traits he chooses to use to deduce Black Hawk's phrenological character. The author already perceived Black Hawk as a savage as is evident by his language use in his report. The author is merely using Black Hawk's situation and assuming that the era's stereotypes of Native Americans applies to the Sauk brave. Even if phrenology were deemed as a real science today, in this age of political correctness it is doubtful that categories such as Combativeness and Destructiveness would be used to describe Black Hawk.

Black Hawk may have garnered respect from contemporary whites as a "noble" savage who wanted to save his people, but in the eyes of most at this time, as evidenced by the phrenologist's conclusion, Americans continued to view him as a savage, a notion that many continued to believe long after his death.

White Americans negative and violent perception of Black Hawk continued past the fiftieth anniversary of Black Hawk's surrender to the end of the 19th century. Not until the early 20th century and the years leading up to the 100th anniversary of the surrender was there a shift in attitude, when a flurry of new articles explored a new interpretation, comprising the physical land and Black Hawk.

The build-up to the 100th anniversary of Black Hawk's surrender garnered a rekindling of interest in the Sauk and his history with Wisconsin and Illinois. Though

there were still strong feelings of prejudice and racism towards Black Hawk and his uprising, newspaper articles at the time were signs that perceptions were changing.²⁷

Two articles that best show the changing mindset of the people who lived in the territory that experienced the Black Hawk War come from the early 20th century. On January 7, 1907, the noted Wisconsin historian Dr. Reuben Gold Thwaites gave a lecture to an audience in Davenport, Iowa on the Black Hawk War, “a border incident that had in it all the elements of a tragic drama.” Thwaites, the Wisconsin State Historical Society’s Corresponding Secretary and editor of the *Lewis and Clark Papers*, argued that it had been “dishonest and dissolute traders and violent squatters,” pushing the Native Americans from their own land that had ultimately forced Black Hawk’s hand. Instead of the blood thirsty savage of 100 years prior, Thwaites remembered Black Hawk as, “one of the most interesting individuals of the race that has been crushed under the Juggernaut of civilization. [He] had strength, manhood and generalship . . . more than this, he was a patriot.” The large audience that night received the lecture with delighted interest. The lecture may have changed the audience’s minds, as Thwaites’ story of the Black Hawk War ‘had never been told in a more interesting manner.’²⁸

While Thwaites’ lecture adds credence to the claim that the public perception of Black Hawk was beginning to shift during the early third of the twentieth century, it is an article from the 1914 *Baraboo Daily News* that shows one of the earlier examples of Black Hawk’s influence on contemporary Americans attitudes toward the land, and its relationship to the events of 1832. Dr. M. M. Quaife, the then secretary and

²⁷ *Milwaukee Sentinel* (Milwaukee, WI) 22 July 1932. Written 100 years and 1 day after the Battle of Wisconsin Heights, the article “Black Hawk Crushed Just 100 Years Ago” describes Black Hawk as the most blood thirsty Indian ever to take a scalp and as a man who would fight settlers under any pretext. No mention is made of the pretenses under which the Sauk lost their land.

²⁸ Davenport, IA, n.p., 8 January 1907.

superintendent of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, wrote a letter from Madison regarding a recent editorial run by the *Baraboo Daily News*. The editorial raised possible names for a new lake created by the recently-built Prairie du Sac dam. Dr. Quaife recommends that the body of water be called Lake Black Hawk arguing that the physical area shares a strong identity with the Black Hawk War, as well as showing respect for this leader's character as a strong and noble man. Quaife states that Prairie du Sac is close to "where Black Hawk met his defeat and crossed the Wisconsin River not far from the lower end of the lake when formed, that he was heroic character, despite the fact of his enmity to the Americans."²⁹ Arguments followed for other names, including the progressive-sounding Lake Power, appropriately suggested as the lake's primary founding purpose was for water power to drive the turbines of a hydro- plant, but Quaife defended his choice.

Characters as heroic as any celebrated in the annals of ancient Greece and Rome have lived and died within the borders of our state. But no Homer has come forward to immortalize them, and for the most part their fame has gone unsung. The records of our past afford an abundance of meaningful names on which to draw. Those of Indian origin in particular possess individuality and historical appropriateness, and at the same time they are commonly pleasing to the ear."³⁰ (Quaife 1914)

In one part of the article Quaife compares Black Hawk's name to the heroes of ancient Greece and Rome in a way that could not have been conceivable 100 years earlier. Quaife's statement demonstrates how the perception of Black Hawk had shifted from bloodthirsty savage to that of a defeated Indian with noble ideals and finally to a

²⁹ *Baraboo Daily News* (Baraboo, WI) 2 March 1914. The lake is now Lake Wisconsin.

³⁰ *Ibid.* This line represents the practice of "objectification" of Native Americans during the 19th century. For more on the subject see, Carla Roberts, "Object, Subject, Practitioner: Native Americans and Cultural Institutions," *Native American Expressive Cultures Awekon Journal* (1994): 22-29.

hero, taking his place alongside Odysseus and Marcus Aurelius. Quaife continued, arguing that “an alien importation is as unbecoming to the community in the matter of names as an individual in dress or habits or speech.”³¹ In other words, naming the lake after Black Hawk would be of historic significance, but it also would provide a familiarity to the people of the region, and provide them with a physical presence to identify with Black Hawk and what happened almost 100 years earlier. Slowly, a shift in memory was occurring. Quaife’s assessment of Black Hawk’s character shows a more generalized and positive remembrance of an ideal rather than a particular person or series of events.

Historical Markers

After the opening decades of the twentieth century it was apparent that the public perception of Black Hawk had changed. While there were still many people who were prejudiced towards Native Americans, his name began to carry with it a positive connotation. As the 20th century progressed, historical markers throughout Wisconsin began to paint a picture-- with the language they bore--of the shift in public perception of Black Hawk and Native Americans.

Even though perception of Black Hawk was beginning to shift in the 1930’s, the 100th anniversary of his surrender and the prejudice of the time is evident in stone engraved historical markers erected along the Black Hawk Trail, the path that Black Hawk and his band took during their flight from the U.S. Army. Marker 1, erected in 1930, reads:

Black Hawk Trail

³¹ *Ibid.*

At Shallow Pond 115 rods due
South Black Hawk's 700 Sac
Indians Encamped July 31 1832
Soldiers found six decrepit
Indians there and "left
them behind."

Lee Stralling in 1846 found a
handful of silver brooches
there. Hence concluded those
killed were squaws.³²

The language of this marker masks the actions that took place during the chase of Black Hawk's band by the U.S. Army and unmask the feeling of the author toward Native Americans. Using the word "squaw," considered a pejorative term today, hints at level of prejudice associated with Native Americans at the time. Describing the Indians as decrepit conjures up an image of an old dog, pitiful enough to justify putting it down. These Indians, though possibly decrepit, were merely stragglers who had fallen behind, too weak and starving to keep up. They were not "left behind," but were murdered. According to Stanley Miller, "When the army found male stragglers exhausted by famine, it shot and scalped them."³³ This point is driven closer to home by the Dane County Historical Marker 397 "Tragedy of War," erected in 1998 on East Wilson Street in Madison, WI. Upon finding an old Sauk warrior near this point on July 21, 1832, members of the militia shot and scalped the man as he awaited death on his wife's freshly dug grave.

Remembrance of Black Hawk and the War was never far from public consciousness in the region, but as time progressed and perception shifted towards a pro-Indian stance by historians and the general public, signs, like Marker 1, discussed above,

³² "Historical Marker 3," *Black Hawk Trail*, Vernon County, WI: 1930.

³³ Stanley Miller, "Massacre at Bad Axe," *American History Illustrated* 19 (April 1984): 34.

insulted the memory of Black Hawk and Native Americans as a whole, but also embarrassed the whites of the area who confronted the fact that atrocities had occurred in their own backyards.

During the 1950's a new wave of historical markers hit Wisconsin, this time with a more accurate portrayal of what happened to Black Hawk and his band. The marker indicating the spot where the Battle of Bad Axe took place does not venerate the militia and Army for a great victory, but instead tells of how "warriors, old people, women and children, -were shot down or drowned as they tried to make their escape."³⁴ The language clearly describes a massacre, though the "Battle" does not earn that title until the 1970's. Some counties, like the county of Vernon, recognized that the earlier markers erected along the Black Hawk Trail by Dr. Charles Porter contained both valuable historical information as well as language and attitudes that were out of step with the 20th century attitudes towards native peoples. In the latter half of the 20th century the county chose to put a disclaimer on Dr. Porter's markers, reading: "The State of Wisconsin recognizes Dr. Porter's markers as part of Vernon County history but does not condone the language or prejudicial references used on some of the markers. Dr. Porter used descriptive, interpretive language which he researched and felt was acceptable at his time."³⁵ While some markers were left standing with prejudicial language written on them, the state and counties were actively pursuing a course towards a more progressive series of historical markers. These actions demonstrate a desire to effect the memory of past events in light of new knowledge en evolving American values.

³⁴ "Historical Marker 33," *Battle of Bad Axe*, Vernon County, WI: 1955.

³⁵ Dr. Porter was a local Wisconsin historian.

Legislation passed in Wisconsin in 1994 allowed the creation of over 100 new historical markers around Wisconsin during 1995-98. Under the new program, the state unveiled several series of thematic markers. Among those were the Black Hawk War Trail markers. The markers follow the path of Black Hawk and his band and can be identified by the bronze seal of the Sauk leader emblazoned upon them, a historically accurate bust portrait mimicking the Catlin painting of Black Hawk.

The new markers are a sign that the memory of Black Hawk is still alive, though they deal only with the path of the band that Black Hawk led. While the markers give more specifics and there is no perception of Black Hawk as a savage or warmonger, past markers with prejudicial language and false information pertaining to the actions of Black Hawk are still standing.³⁶ According to *History Just Ahead: A Guide to Wisconsin's Historical Markers*, that may soon change: "Historians are now much more attuned to the accomplishments and historical significance of women, of ethnic and racial minorities, and of ordinary people in general . . . the markers program is encouraging sponsors to nominate historical subjects woefully neglected in the past and is working towards updating the language of some of the older markers."³⁷ The continuation of the historical markers program will allow visitors the chance to expand and change their perception of Black Hawk, effectively reshaping public understanding- and memory- of the past.

³⁶ New markers are non-biased and are more specific concerning places and numbers. Though they are more politically correct, the loss of pejorative language leaves the new markers void of any sort of descriptive language in order to appear non-biased. One example is the marker *Military River Crossing*. It reads: "In this vicinity, during the Black Hawk War of 1832, General Henry Atkinson and 1,000 soldiers crossed the Wisconsin River in pursuit of Sac leader Black Hawk and his followers. On July 26th, at the old abandoned Village of Helena, the soldiers dismantled the village's buildings to make rafts for the crossing." "Historical Marker 405," *Black Hawk Trail*, Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center, Hwy. C, Spring Green WI: 1998.

³⁷ Sarah Davis McBride, ed., *History Just Ahead: A Guide to Wisconsin's Historical Markers* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1999), ix.

Language found on historical markers throughout Wisconsin traces the public perception of Black Hawk and Native Americans in general. Markers from a statewide program, which replaced stone markers devoid of any facts of the Sauk side of the Black Hawk War, now tell both sides. These old markers aided the perception and remembrance of Black Hawk as yet another Indian who was forced off his lands and backed into a corner by the United States government, a government that believed in the concept of Manifest Destiny, the divine right to seize all the land to the Pacific Ocean.

More importantly, perhaps, these markers can change the perceptions of how people have come to view Black Hawk and his struggle. Sarah Davis McBride states, “[The] markers commemorate the lives and the sacrifices of those who went before us, inspiring and connecting us to our past.”³⁸ The markers that make the connection to “our” past is what allows the perception of Black Hawk to change over time. Without them our attitude towards Native Americans could be stuck in the 19th century. This “commemoration” can be seen in the increase in markers associated with Black Hawk. This swell of markers remembering Black Hawk correlates to the rise in the number of taverns, bridges, restaurants, recreational facilities, schools and golf courses that people from the region named for him during the later years of the twentieth century.

History and Memory

Viewed as contradictory ways of dealing with the past, memory and history until recently were separate entities. History is viewed as scholarship and thus, only for very few, whereas memory of the past is shared by the whole community. According to David

³⁸ *Ibid.*, x.

W. Blight, “Memory is often owned, history interpreted; memory is passed down through generations; history is revised. Memory often coalesces in objects, sites, and monuments; history seeks to understand contexts in all their complexity. History asserts the authority of academic training and canons of evidence; memory carries the often more immediate authority of community membership and experience.”³⁹ Recently challenged, the dichotomy between these two schools of thought evolved into a burgeoning field that brought these two concepts together to create public history.

“Public history has various functions- economic, political, social, cultural, and educational that preserving historic sites and erecting markers and monuments play for individuals and societies.”⁴⁰ This section explores how these markers and monuments affected the ways that societies and individuals of Wisconsin and Illinois remember and perceive Black Hawk today. This new force of public history, “written across America in bronze, aluminum, marble, and granite and in buildings, is preserved for us today.”⁴¹ It is these different types of media that allow us a chance to see how the white perception of Black Hawk has changed over time, from stereotypes to a more historical representation.

How the Memory of Black Hawk Is Used Today

As the perception of Black Hawk shifted to something that people began to admire, several different media stuck out that portrayed Black Hawk in a way that immortalized him as a proud Native American who stood up for his people and his way of life. Less honorific and more numerous are the ways Black Hawk’s name has come to

³⁹ David W. Blight, “Historians and “Memory”,” *Common-place* 2 (April 2002): 2.

⁴⁰ James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America*, (New York: New Press, 1999), 25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

help consumers recognize businesses. This section will examine the different ways that Black Hawk has come to be remembered throughout Wisconsin and Illinois.

Black Hawk Community College

Black Hawk College is a community college situated within the Illinois State College system. Founded in 1948 as an extension of the University of Illinois to augment the need for classrooms for GIs returning from WWII, the school became the Moline Community College after transferring to the Moline, Illinois school system. When the state began an organized community college system in 1961, Moline Community College implemented a board to come up with a name.

Because the founder's intent was for the college to cover a large geographic area (encompassing 10 counties of Northern Illinois) it would need a common name identified by most of the population. Since the Sauk warrior was born at Saukenuk, only eight miles from the College, the superintendent of the Rock Island County schools suggested that it be called Black Hawk College. One thing the suggestion made clear was that Black and Hawk were two separate words, as they would be in the original Sauk Language. The governing bodies agreed and the college and the name came into existence together in 1962 to form Black Hawk College.

The college is now 60 years old. During that time leaders of the school have maintained careful use of the name and tried to avoid the use of derogatory Native American images as part of its identity. The college's leaders have also maintained contact with the descendants of the Sauk warrior, who live in Oklahoma and Kansas. During the school's 50th anniversary, it conferred an honorary degree upon a descendant

of Black Hawk. This act of naming a university for a native leader is atypical in our nation; most new college names reflect wealthy benefactors or rich alumni. This trend is evident from a report by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which stated that Black Hawk College is the only non-reservation college named for a Native American.⁴²

U.S Army Corps of Engineers Black Hawk Park and Black Hawk State Historic Site

Two other places that use Black Hawk's name are, ironically enough, government funded parks, the same government that forced him off his land 174 years ago. Black Hawk Park, located three miles north of DeSoto, WI, is a recreational park that offers visitors camping, picnicking, swimming, fishing, and boating. One thing that the park does not offer, however, is much of a mention of Black Hawk. Other than one marker and a brochure, one would expect the history of Black Hawk, considering the park's vicinity to the end of the Black Hawk War. An island sitting in the Mississippi River across from the park bears the name of Battle Island, the place where Sauk men, women, and children were mowed down by the steamship *Warrior* while trying to escape.⁴³

The Black Hawk State Historic Site in Rock Island, Illinois, does little better. While the park does have the John Hauberg Indian Museum, which houses a collection of Sauk relics, including Black Hawk's tomahawk and two of his clay pipes, it is still exceedingly Eurocentric. What the Black Hawk State Historic Site does have is a pioneer cemetery, a Civilian Conservation Corps built lodge, an abandoned coal mine, and a bird sanctuary. There is no sign to mark the place where the Sauk had their capital town of

⁴² Bill Hannan, Professor Emeritus of Black Hawk Community College, interview by author, 11 September 2006, Eau Claire, WI, email.

⁴³ Patrick T. Reardon, "In Search of Black Hawk," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago), 24 August 2006.

Saukenuk, especially given the importance of the village to both the Sauk and the role of Black Hawk in the early American nation.

Chicago Blackhawks

Perhaps the most recognizable company that took the name of Black Hawk to use as their own is the Chicago Blackhawks of the National Hockey League. Major Frederic McLaughlin, a local coffee tycoon, founded the Blackhawks when he put up the money the team needed to join the newly formed NHL. According to the team's website, McLaughlin looked towards the past for inspiration for a new name, relating Black Hawk's qualities to the new hockey team.

During World War I, McLaughlin served as commander of the 333rd Machine Gun Battalion of the 86th Division of the U.S. Army. Members of his division called themselves "Black Hawks," in honor of the Sauk Indian, serving as a bust portrait of a Native American, the team's mascot and logo. Around since the birth of the franchise, the image is one of the more politically correct depictions of Native Americans in sports.⁴⁴ The U.S. Army has also used Black Hawk's name as a title for one of their helicopters. The Black Hawk helicopter is a tactical transport helicopter, and like the men of the 333rd and McLaughlin, the army related Black Hawk's name to something positive.

During the 1990's, debates raged between native groups and schools that used native images as mascots or logos. The National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media (NCRSM) was established in 1992 by the American Indian Movement (AIM) to organize against the use of Indian images and names for logos, symbols or mascots in professional and collegiate sports, marketing and the media. The book *Team Spirits* is a

⁴⁴ For all five versions of Indian head logo, see: <http://www.sportslogos.net/team.php?t=7>.

collection of essays written about select schools and teams that use native images for their mascots as well as chronicling the fight to change the mascots and names all together. Among those mascots targeted are Chief Bill Orange of Syracuse, Chief Illiniwek of the University of Illinois, and the Florida State Seminoles. The mascots are not targeted only for their politically incorrectness, but also for the reasons behind them.

Chief Bill Orange was an invention of “The Syracuse Orange Peel,” the university’s humor magazine, and played upon the “noble savage stereotype” while Chief Illiniwek was the invention of two students in 1926. The Florida State Seminoles, based on a real tribe that lived in Florida before being forcibly removed, uses a student to portray Chief Osceola, the famous Seminole who led armed resistance against the United States in the 1830s. The student goes onto the field “wearing moccasins, a tasseled leather “Indian” outfit, face paint, and a large bandana, hoisting a large feathered lance and charges down the field riding an appaloosa named Renegade and hurls the flaming lance at midfield.⁴⁵ The main complaint logged by AIM and others focuses on the controversy that the mascots represent symbolic masks that allow whites to “play Indian,” and when worn these masks enable whites to do and say things they cannot in everyday life, “as though by playing Indian they enter a transformation space of inversion wherein new possibilities of experience reside.”⁴⁶ The Chicago Blackhawks careful use of Black Hawk’s name and image are the antithesis of this notion and as such the club’s treatment of native imagery is quite different than other American sports teams.

The Blackhawk’s logo is not a caricature or politically incorrect version of Native American nor does the club incorporate any “playing Indian” into its franchise. Unlike

⁴⁵ Richard C. King and Charles Fruehling Springwood, *Team Spirits* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 130.

⁴⁶ Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 187.

The University of Illinois and Syracuse, the team was named after a real Indian who had ties to the area. The logo itself is a simple bust portrait of an Indian with feathers in his hair, one that has remained virtually unchanged since the logos conception. The Blackhawk's also do not incorporate any "war whoops" or tomahawk chopping action like the Florida State Seminoles. In fact, the team's website maintains a history page where fans can learn about the reason behind the team's name and view the evolution of the logo. It is because of these measures set by the team that Black Hawk's name is viewed as honorific, rather than degrading or stereotypical. The Chicago Blackhawks are not mentioned once in the fourteen separate essays that make up *Team Spirits*, and after several attempts to contact the NCRSM, no replies were made to my inquiry on the status of the Blackhawk's logo. Adam Kempenaar, a member of the Community Outreach and Public Relations department for the Chicago Blackhawks, did return my message; "The team itself has no information as to why we have not come under scrutiny, but it is true that we've never heard of any complaints."⁴⁷

Black Hawk Bridge

The U.S Army Corps of Engineer's Black Hawk Park near DeSoto, Wisconsin, and Black Hawk State Historic Site in Illinois use the name of Black Hawk as a way to connect visitors to the past by using a name that is quickly and positively recognizable. The Black Hawk Bridge in Lansing, Iowa is a perfect example of how a structure can be built that will actually honor its namesake and tie the structure to the landscape.

The Black Hawk Bridge was completed in 1930 as a span across the Mississippi River. The Lansing Journal boasts, "No monument is more commemorative of the

⁴⁷ Adam Kempenaar, Community Outreach and Public Relations, Chicago Blackhawks, interview by author, 15 November 2006, Eau Claire, WI, email.

achievements of men and events than the Great Bridge.”⁴⁸ It stands in steel and stone, defying the elements, beckoning to the past and challenging the future. It continues on to say,

The appropriateness of the Black Hawk Bridge as a memorial to the Great Indian chief is realized from the fact that four miles north of the bridge site, on the Wisconsin side, is located what is known as the Black Hawk battle ground, where occurred probably the most important engagement in the Black Hawk War. This was known as "The Battle of the Bad Axe". All of the territory adjacent to the bridge is rich in the traditions of the Sac and Fox Indians and their Great Leader, and on the right-of-way to the bridge descendants of the old Sac and Fox tribes are now living. Thus the memory of Chief Black Hawk and the rich Indian lore of this great scenic section is perpetuated in the Black Hawk Bridge.⁴⁹

The Iowa-Wisconsin Bridge Company dedicated the bridge with a plaque reading: To the memory of Black Hawk, chief of the Sacs and the Foxes. To his courage, loyalty, and devotion to his people. Born 1767, Died October 31, 1838.

It is hard to find a tribute such as this about Black Hawk in any other place, let alone about any other Native American in the entire country that was dedicated during the 1930s. What makes this case even more special is the fact that this bridge was completed near the time of the 100th anniversary of the war, when many areas that were impacted by the war were remembering Black Hawk as a bloody savage. Local committees convened with the goal to seek state aid to assist in centennial celebrations of the surrender.⁵⁰ The *Brodhead Register* suggested a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the termination of the Black Hawk War which “freed Wisconsin and Illinois from the last terrorism of the Indians of the pioneer days.”⁵¹ Yet it is this bridge that displays the reverence for Black Hawk that would follow in the later half of the 20th century that

⁴⁸ *Lansing Journal*, (Lansing, IA), 15 May 1930.

⁴⁹ *Postville Herald*, (Postville, IA), 15 May 1930.

⁵⁰ *Wisconsin State Journal*, (Madison, WI), 9 April, 1931.

⁵¹ *Brodhead Register*, (Fort Atkinson, WI), 29 December, 1927.

makes this case special, even though Black Hawk is remembered romantically nostalgic in historical memory.

Like the bridge that connects the two states, the plaques help to bridge two times and shake the white perception of Black Hawk as savage. While the rest of Wisconsin was remembering Black Hawk as a killer during the 100th anniversary of his surrender, the plaques on the bridge paint a different picture. The plaques remind all who cross not only of the tragedy of the Battle of Bad Axe, but of the future of the Sauk themselves. The bridge symbolizes the progression of the old white views of the Sauk and Black Hawk, from savages fighting a losing a battle, to that of a people who have accepted their fate, their place in the white world, and who are now living on a reservation across the river. It is because of the bridge's close proximity to these two very different symbols of Sauk culture that the Iowa- Wisconsin Bridge Company chose to perpetuate the memory of Black Hawk in memorial rather than slandering him as a savage.

Public Works of Art

During the romantic era of the 1820s and 1830s, American artists had to transform the poor Indian from a bloodthirsty demon into a noble savage. These artists, including George Catlin, ennobled the Indian in art only because they thought they were only a fast-disappearing phase of history. How much of the painters' canvases include ethnography is hard to say. These portraits replaced the reality that early Europeans knew of Indians, ending up as images and stereotypes for whites. In turn, these images and stereotypes became reality for Native Americans.⁵²

⁵² Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 89.

Starting early in the twentieth century, a new group of artists using a wide assortment of media emerged that would not use the old stereotypes to portray Black Hawk. The media that the artists manipulated to create pieces that honor the memory of Black Hawk vary as much as each artist's specialty does, ranging from paintings to busts to large scale sculptures. The main media, however, were stone and paintings. The largest work commemorating Black Hawk is the fifty foot tall concrete reinforced wonder called the "Eternal Indian," created by the sculptor Loreda Taft in 1911.⁵³ The statue is a Native American, with arms folded, looking over the Rock River, near where Black Hawk lived. The pose made him think of "the Native Americans who were so reverent of the beauty of nature and who probably had enjoyed the same view."⁵⁴ This work shows the beginning shift of attitude towards native people that began in the early 20th century. Taft created this monument as a tribute to project the humanity and civility of Native Americans.

Another tribute to the Sauk brave is a forty foot mural by Richard Haas finished in 1993 that was part of a rejuvenation project of downtown Rock Island, Illinois. Based off of the 1891 statue "Black Hawk" by David Richards, the mural depicts Black Hawk with his cloak wrapped around him, looking towards the horizon. Haas chose Black Hawk because he wanted "wanted a significant, singular presence. The only choice was Black Hawk. Black Hawk is the only personage who I feel has that power and is intrinsically connected to Rock Island." Richards himself forged a connection with Black Hawk. The statue stands with its arms folded at its chest, mimicking the stance that

⁵³ Originally a tribute to all Native Americans, the statue soon became associated with Black Hawk because of its geographical location.

⁵⁴ <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Landmgt/parks/r1/lowdensp.htm>.

Richards and his friends would often find themselves in, looking towards the same horizon as they smoked their pipes.⁵⁵

An especially compelling piece of artwork honoring Black Hawk is a bronze sculpture by Jeff Adams. Dedicated on October 13, 2004, the piece, entitled, “Paths of Conviction, Footsteps of Fate,” stands in the Rock River Valley. The significance of the sculpture is that it has Black Hawk and Abraham Lincoln extending from the same base. Both men had participated in the Black Hawk War and Adams felt the sculpture showed the personal conviction, struggle, and fate shared by Lincoln and Black Hawk.⁵⁶ Adams chose not to focus on one point of Lincoln’s life for his rendition but rather concentrated on revealing the great man’s spirit. The Black Hawk figure, though, has a more particular meaning. The Black Hawk figure “sits on an incline, symbolic of the precarious position of the Native Americans during the white settlement of the prairie.”⁵⁷ The incline that the figure of Black Hawk rests at could be marked as a highpoint for the Sauk leader and his people. Six years after the end of the war, he would be dead, buried on a reservation in Iowa, far from his holy ground of Saukenuk.

Though dead, constant art work of Black Hawk emerged from studios in Wisconsin and Illinois from artists eager to honor his memory and positively portray the Sauk brave. Yet the desire of Americans to honor his memory continued beyond laudatory art work into other arenas of public life. Naming buildings after Black Hawk was one such arena.

⁵⁵ David Richard’s statue can be found at the Black Hawk State Historic Site in Rock Island, Ill. and can be viewed at http://www.wiu.edu/art/public_art/html/bhawk.html.

⁵⁶ <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/art/oregon.htm>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Re-naming Gompers Middle School

In 1991 the Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District called for five middle schools to be re-named because the schools belonged to a larger number of schools in the district which honored white males as part of their monikers. One other reason for the re-naming of the schools in honor of minorities was the district's increasing minority student body, which rose from 6.2% in 1976 to 22.4% by 1992.⁵⁸ The board directed that the schools come up with names that "reflect an African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and/or woman" that had had an impact on Wisconsin.⁵⁹

Many in the communities which would be affected by the name changes thought that by changing the names of the schools, the schools would lose their identity that connected them to the communities they served. In order to stop any controversy before it started, the school board decided that the five schools it would choose to be re-named would be those that had adjoining elementary schools. The middle schools would be re-named to honor the minorities chosen, while the elementary schools would keep their present names to maintain the identity of their respective communities. There were whisperings that the re-naming of the schools was purely out of political correctness, and some feared that there would be heated arguments over which names would be chosen for which school. To combat this, the school board allowed the separate schools to involve students, faculty, and members of the community to nominate and choose each school's new name. In the end, the process actually helped educate the students and the community by, "learning the stories of the people and discovering new parts of their state

⁵⁸ Dee J. Hall, "School Name Changes on Agenda," *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison, WI), 16 December 1992, sec. 1D.

⁵⁹ Dee J. Hall, "Committee to Send New School Names to Board," *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison, WI), 29 January 1993, sec. 1C.

and city's history."⁶⁰ As a result of this process, Madison residents widely applauded the move. "By renaming the schools, the district has recognized the contributions women and minorities in our community have made to our culture and our history. It's time that our public institutions recognize that this is not an all-white world where only white men make the important decisions and accomplish the tough jobs."⁶¹ The five middle schools, Marquette, Orchard, Schenck, Van Hise, and Gompers, would be re-named for Georgia O'Keefe, Akira R. Toki, Annie Greencrow Whitehorse, Velma and Harry Hamilton, and Black Hawk, respectively.⁶² It was an honor for all whose names would now be remembered as part of Madison history, but perhaps it was most an honor for Black Hawk, considering the scope of the man whose name Black Hawk's replaced on the façade of the middle school.

Samuel Gompers, the founder and first president of the American Federation of Labor in 1886, provided the inspiration for the original name of the middle school. Gompers was one of the first people to work on the aspect of labor unions. Once a member of the Cigar Makers International Union, Gompers introduced a hierarchical structure and implemented wage programs for strike and pension funds to unions. Gompers, whose philosophy centered on higher wages, benefits, and job security, concluded that "One of the main objects of the organization is the elevation of the lowest paid worker to the standard of the highest, and in time we may secure for every person in the trade an existence worthy of human beings."⁶³ Ahead of his time, he stated in 1894

⁶⁰ *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison, WI), 8 February 1992.

⁶¹ *Capital Times* (Madison, WI), 11 September 1993.

⁶² O'Keefe was an artist and a native of Sun Prairie, a town just outside of Madison. Toki was a decorated WWII soldier, while Whitehorse was Winnebago elder. The Hamilton's were African-American community leaders from Madison.

⁶³ Bernard Mandel, *Samuel Gompers; A Biography* (Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press, 1963), 22.

that, “the working people must unite and organize, irrespective of creed, color, sex, nationality, or politics.”⁶⁴

Gompers, who had ties to the Wisconsin Progressive Party’s Sen. Bob LaFollette during LaFollette’s 1924 Presidential campaign, was the perfect fit for a name to be used for a middle school in Madison. Madison is a historically progressive city with relaxed views on race, gender and sexual orientation. It is constantly moving forward, and it is a testament to the change in perception of Black Hawk that the school board would accept his name to replace that of man whose progressive spirit embodies that of the city. Ironically, it was because of the tradition of the progressive spirits of Gompers and LaFollette that the Madison School Board proposed the name changes. Black Hawk had made that final transformation to a person of respect, who would be remembered not as a savage or an aggressor to the white settlers of Wisconsin’s past, but as the 19th century Indian leader who fought displacement by white settlers in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Conclusion

The Anglo telling and re-telling of Black Hawk’s story offers a case study into the way that dominant white culture perceives and represents native peoples in the regions that they once inhabited. Pushed aside by a country hungry for land and with Manifest Destiny and military power on its side, Black Hawk, ignoring a treaty that stole his ancestral lands, crossed the Mississippi to feed his people. These actions inevitably forced Black Hawk into a conflict with the United States. After being chased by the U.S.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

Army and losing men, women and children to starvation for more than a month, all but 150 of his once 1500 strong band were massacred at the Battle of Bad Axe.

Since Black Hawk's surrender, white perceptions labeled the Sauk brave as a blood thirsty Indian, a noble savage, and finally a respected and idolized member of regional and national history, a Native American who is remembered as a tragic figure who led his followers on a futile attempt to return to their native soil. Today, numerous historical markers, monuments, bridges and schools are a testament to the level of respect for Black Hawk, showing how closely people of the region associate with the Sauk leader. Kerry A. Trask writes that that association, "that imagined connection enables such people to fantasize and feel better about themselves."⁶⁵ It is perhaps only through this "imagined connection" that whites were able to finally shake the feelings of guilt and prejudice and give the respect and honor to Black Hawk that he deserved.

What we as a society should remember about Black Hawk and the Black Hawk War has nothing to do with his immortalization in recreation and municipal sites. It is necessary to remember that what happened to Black Hawk and his people was tragedy that could have been avoided. Even while we continue to pay respects to Black Hawk, the real story of what happened stands awkwardly by, suggesting brutality and greed. In 1989, the Wisconsin State Assembly issued a formal apology to the descendents of the Sauk and the Fox for what happened during the Black Hawk War.⁶⁶

After Black Hawk died in 1838, a Dr. Turner robbed his burial site and sold the remains.⁶⁷ The remains of Black Hawk eventually ended up in the museum of the

⁶⁵ Kerry A. Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 308.

⁶⁶ State of Wisconsin, 1989, Assembly Resolution 16.

⁶⁷ *The Register and Leader*, (Des Moines, IA), 10 March, 1907.

Geological and Historical Society in Burlington, Iowa. In 1855, a blaze engulfed the museum, and along with it, the remains of Black Hawk. The way that people have used the memory of Black Hawk and how he is perceived have progressed from the degrading and stereotypical to the positive since the prejudicial days of the 19th century. It is important that this trend continue so that future generations can understand what Black Hawk endured to reach this level of importance throughout Wisconsin and Illinois, without forgetting the events that forced him to become a fugitive in his own land.

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