

## WOOD DALE INDIANS

compiled by Mary Lou Mittel

The historic Indian tribes who inhabited the area we call Illinois have been classified into several groups: the Illinois, Miamis, Kickapoos, Pottawatomies, Sac and Foxes, Winnebagoes, the Shawnees.

The Winnebagoes were part of the Sioux Nation which lived along the central and north Atlantic coast. For many years they were pushed further west as their lands were claimed, with and without treaty, by the "white people" as they called all of the invaders. This is ironic because the North American Indians are classified as Caucasians.

When they reached the Wisconsin River this tribe refused to go any further. They eventually made peace with their new neighbors the Menominees. Their treaty proved beneficial to both tribes. The Menominees were established farmers and the Sioux were hunters and warriors.

Tribal names were given as descriptions of where they lived or sometimes unflattering descriptions by their enemies. This particular tribe became known as Winnebago, which translates to "He who lives by the stinking waters". This name was reference to the fact that they lived by the Wisconsin River which was stained brown by the roots of Taminy trees and had a distinctive odor.

The Winnabagoes claimed the area we call Wood Dale, Illinois, for their hunting grounds. Their range was extensive. Pioneer history tells us that their signal-hill was in the triangle of Army Trail Road and Lake Street and Addison Road in Addison, IL. They hunted a large strip of land all the way to the main camp in Beloit, Wisconsin. It was the custom of the hunters to build a camp near Salt Creek at Thorndale Road and burn the prairie thus chasing the animals into the woods where the hunters were waiting. Their continued use of the hunting grounds caused alarm to the first settlers.

When Illinois became a State, 1814, they signed a treaty giving up these hunting grounds. Historians have often wondered if they knew what they were doing when they signed the treaty and then continued to use the area for hunting.

The Winnabagoes were part of the Sioux sun-worshippers and did not believe that any man "owned" the land. The land was there for their "use" and the treaties, to their way of thinking, were simply to allow someone else to use the land peacefully with them.

Their neighbors in Illinois were the Pottawatomies who had established camps in Du Page County. These Indians were to feel the first push of the new settlers because they lived so close to Fort Dearborn, now Chicago.

Blackhawk, War Chief of the Sauk tribe, was to feel the push from the settlers of two States. His territory was west along the Rock River and across the Mississippi River into Missouri.

Blackhawk resented the continued intrusion into his treaty-protected domain and begged the Winnabagoes of Wisconsin and the Pottawatomies of Illinois to help him protect and regain his territory.....they refused.

In 1831 Blackhawk saw white settlers harvest the corn planted by his tribe in Missouri. This was to have been their winter substance.

The following spring, 1832, Chief White Cloud of the Winnabagoes, in an effort to dissuade Blackhawk's anger, offered to share his fields near the Wisconsin River. Although the Winnabagoes were willing to share their remaining territory they choose to honor the treaty which removed them from their Illinois hunting grounds.

Chief Sabbona, of the Pottawatomies, not only refused but, because of an understanding and friendship developed with the settlers, actually sent runners to warn of Blackhawk's approach.

So it was that Blackhawk found himself and his tribe without allies when he entered Illinois from Iowa on his way to Wisconsin. U.S. troops fired on and killed two Braves who were carrying a flag of truce. And the "Blackhawk War" began.

General Winfield Scott brought federal troops to Fort Dearborn and then west to fight Blackhawk. They drove him back to the Mississippi River where he offered to surrender but the troops ignored his plea for a truce. An American gunboat killed most of the women and children who were on rafts on the river. This merciless slaughter wiped out a large part of the tribe.

The battles continued until he was allowed to surrender at Battle Axe (Bad Ax) Wisconsin on August 3, 1832.

Blackhawk was brought back to Fort Dearborn and then to Washington DC He was not treated with the time honored respect accorded defeated Generals, instead he was caged and paraded through the streets for ridicule. He was returned to what was left of his tribe, which had been moved to Iowa. Blackhawk died in 1838 at age 71.

Part of the religion practiced by the Winnebagoes as part of their Sioux heritage required them to make peace with God each day so that, should that day be their last, they were ready to meet God. Each morning the day was greeted with the words Hok a hey. These words were used to greet friends and strangers as a statement of their religious standing. They were to become known across the Nations during the western Indian Wars where the Sioux used them as their battle cry....Hok a hey..It's a good day for dying!