

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE INDIANS ABOUT GULL PRAIRIE.

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Ethnologists do not agree as to the origin or antiquity of the Indian races. Some claim that they have existed as a separate department of nations from the earliest ages of the world, that they are as indigenous to this continent as its plants and animals. Columbus found them in great numbers when he landed at the Bahama Islands in 1492. As a species it would seem undeniable that the American Indians were originally created in the form, semblance and with the characteristics of men; that they were undeniably and, we may say, lawfully, in peaceable possession of this continent, and that only by force and bloody wars of extermination were they driven from their homes.

When our pilgrim fathers landed at Plymouth Rock in December, 1620, it is said, "they fell on their knees in devout thankfulness to Almighty God for the preservation of their lives through a long and perilous voyage." Not many months, it may be, thereafter, they having been fed and kept from starvation by these very savages, they mercilessly fell upon the aborigines and put them to the sword.

From that day on, all along the line of settlement, the Christianized, civilized white man as a rule, has characterized the North American Indian as a beastly, unmitigated, bloodthirsty savage, incapable of civilization or Christianization, according to the white man's standard; a cruel, false, thievish, murderous animal, with no genuine human instincts or rights, save that of annihilation. This has been the average orthodox white man's view.

A few more fair minded and mercifully inclined, who believe that the Indian has suffered gross wrongs and abuses, have said that if the Indian had a literature and an historic ancestry, had known the art of printing and of letters, he would have written a different and much more attractive history of himself, would more truthfully have delineated his natural impulses and characteristics, and perhaps shown some redeeming traits. But it was foreordained, undoubtedly, that the Indian was to go.

INDIANS AT DETROIT.

My first acquaintance with the Indians of Michigan began at Detroit in October, 1831, when, as an emigrant boy, I landed from the steamboat William Penn at the foot of Woodward avenue. Numbers of them stood on the banks of the river gazing at us as we came on shore. I had read of Tecumseh and the cruel Indian massacre of the early settlers of the West, and I looked at them with mingled feelings of curiosity and dread. Detroit had been a prominent Indian trading post since its first settlement by the French in 1670. And when we came in 1831 the native Indians were still in full possession of the territory. It was not until 1833, when, by treaty stipulation, they vacated the territory and the various tribes went or were removed west to their several reservations.

Our party of emigrants, mainly a colony from Vermont, consisted of eleven men, three of whom were teamsters, three women and seven children. Leaving Detroit our route mainly followed an old Indian trail or "blazed" trees to guide the way. Forging streams and marshes we were two weeks on the journey with horses and ox teams from Detroit to Kalamazoo county, arriving at Toland's Prairie, November 5, 1831. Our teams were frequently scattered at wide intervals through the woods and utterly defenseless. Not a gun or a dog with any of the wagons to my knowledge. The men, women frequently, and teamsters walked, the children rode with the goods. Nearly every day we encountered roving bands of Indian men, squaws, papooses, ponies and dogs traversing the woods in various directions. They seemed peacefully inclined, making no effort to tomahawk or scalp us. Every Indian had a weapon of some kind, rifle, tomahawk, bow and arrows, clubs and hunting knife. They were usually in full Indian dress, their hair long and braided, a badger, beaver or fox skin worn as a turban and surmounted with hawk or eagle feathers; Mackinaw blanket, deer skin hunting shirt leggings and moccasins ornamented with porcupine quills, wampum belt, turkey call, pipe and tobacco. The men were tall, straight and stern looking, their faces usually hideously and grotesquely painted, well calculated to strike terror to the heart of the timid, pale-faced New England boy, who had read the history of King Philip's bloody wars. The women were short, thickset, mild-mannered, kind-hearted, and of cheerful disposition—good, motherly, hospitable creatures I thought, as I frequently visited their wigwam homes in early boyhood.

Of the leading tribes of Michigan Indians were the Hurons and the Chippewas in the Saginaw valley, the Ottawas—a numerous, powerful tribe in the Grand River district—their chief Noonday, whom I remember quite well, a notable Indian of commanding form, lived to be

100 years old. The Pottawatomies were mainly in this and the Niles district, with Pokagon as their chief; the Nottawas were to the southeast and the Shawnees to the southwest. These different tribes intermingled and intermarried more or less, understood each other's language and used many words in common. Your speaker acquired the language sufficiently well for all practical purposes.

THE BLACK HAWK UPRISING.

In the spring of 1832, news came by post riders of a formidable uprising of Wisconsin Indians, headed by Black Hawk, a noted Sac chief. Although this outbreak was remote from Kalamazoo, yet it caused great alarm among the early settlers here, for the messenger reported that all the Indian braves in Wisconsin, Illinois and western Michigan were going to join Black Hawk's standard, and with pillage and blood he was going to lead his forces through Michigan on his way to Malden, Canada. Following these tidings came a postrider from Pigeon to Gull Prairie with military orders from General Brown for able bodied men to meet at the house of Col. Isaac Barnes to organize for defense and for volunteers. With my father I went to this meeting, about a mile from our home. The men were drawn up in line, the orders were read and four men volunteered. One I knew, Mr. Oka Town. He died this last winter at Otsego, over 90 years of age. A few days after this I attended a grand council of Indian chiefs held in a mammoth wigwam near the west shore of Gull Lake. This was to ascertain the temper of the Indians of the locality in reference to the Black Hawk insurrection. The chiefs in full dress were seated in a great circle upon valuable robes, mats and skins of animals spread upon the ground. A more dignified, grave, imposing body of men I never saw. The calumet, or pipe of peace, of elaborate, ornamental workmanship was slowly passed around the circle, and each one took a whiff in silence. Then the speeches began in regular order, according to age and rank. It was found that the young men were for war, but the older, experienced sachems counseled peace. Rev. Leonard Slater, Baptist missionary, and two converted Indians, Jonathan Going, and Joseph Elliott, acted as interpreters.

For an unknown period prior to white settlement, and before the acquisition, survey and sale of lands in this district by the United States government, the great Indian double trail from Toledo to Mackinaw crossed Gull Prairie from the southeast, about one-half mile east of the present village of Richland. It was one of the great Indian overland routes from Ohio, Indiana and southern Michigan, to Grand Rapids and Mackinaw, one of their principal trading posts. The Indians usually traveled in groups of twenty-five to fifty, young and old, ponies and

dogs, always in single file, one right behind the other. This trail crossed a tract of wild prairie land my father had purchased for a farm and our first log house stood close by this great Indian thoroughfare.

I shall always remember that memorable spring of 1832. We had just moved into our log house when the Black Hawk war broke out. Strange Indian braves in full war paint and feathers, mounted on fleet horses, riding at breakneck speed, brandishing their tomahawks, whooping and yelling like demons, passed and repassed on the trail nearly every day. There was great alarm, a constant watch was kept. No one felt secure. But news came in a few weeks from the west that Black Hawk had been captured and his band dispersed by General Scott. The fright then gradually subsided.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

Whatever is given here is simply an attempt to relate personal observations and experiences and recall scenes and incidents that happened many years ago. Although a mere lad I fully shared with my father and mother the hardships and privations incident to seeking to establish a new home in an unbroken wilderness—a land peopled with savages.

Keenly alive to the difficulties in the way, sympathizing with my parents in all their discouragements and forebodings, all that transpired seems indelibly impressed upon my memory, not to be effaced so long as life shall last.

We found the interior of Michigan, prairie, oak openings and timber in the primitive undisturbed condition of nature. Not a tree cut, not a furrow plowed; not a fence, bridge, or defined traveled roadway in any direction. A few log cabins had been built here and there on pre-empted claims by the pioneer settlers; usually on the edge of the timber or by some marsh, lake or stream.

Here the Indian, deer, bears, wolves, foxes, turkeys, prairie chickens, quails, partridge, and innumerable quadrupeds, birds, reptiles and other living things harmoniously had their primeval homes.

" All parts of that stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul."

The Indians, undisturbed by the encroachments of the whites, lived in their respective villages and roamed at will, hunting, fishing and trapping furs. Their chiefs had sold the land a short time before to the United States government. It had been surveyed and offered for sale to the settlers in June, 1831. We came into the county in November, 1831.

With stern, stoical resignation and seeming indifference, the Indians were looking forward to the near abandonment of their happy hunting

grounds—the homes and graves of their ancestors for countless generations. My heart went out in tenderness and sympathy for them, as I saw them in 1833, with all their belongings strapped on their ponies or backs, on their sad, silent march to a strange land in the far west. The principal food of the Indians was venison and bear meat, turkey, wild geese, berries, maple sugar, wild honey and fish. They cultivated, in a rude fashion, small patches of sugar corn, beans, squashes and melons. They were expert in killing game, trapping furs, tanning, dressing and handling skins. These they exchanged with the French traders for blankets, guns, powder, lead, hatchets, knives, camp kettles and a great variety of special articles and ornaments, of which latter they were very fond. They made in season large quantities of maple sugar which they stored in bark boxes called mococks.

The squaws were industrious, patient, ingenious workers—always busy, always happy. They embroidered beautifully hunting shirts, leggings and moccasins with beads, silk and porcupine quills. They also wove elegant mats from wild grass and rushes and made a great variety of baskets.

Among the pioneers it was proverbially said that an Indian was always “buckatah” hungry. Food of any kind never came amiss. Loosening his belt his capacity was simply immense. Wherever he went, from cabin to cabin, he levied heavy contributions upon the wives of the poor, defenseless settlers for “ginshigun,” bread.

ARTIFICIAL EARTH MOUNDS.

Centuries ago, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the great Mississippi valley, artificial earth mounds abounded. There were probably two or three hundred of them in this county alone, one in Bronson park, Kalamazoo. The native Indians knew nothing of their age, origin or purpose. Archæologists agree that the mound builders were a more civilized distinct race; that they mined copper at Lake Superior ages ago. Later there is no doubt that this county was numerously populated with Indians within a comparatively recent time. Remains and signs of large permanent villages were abundant. In the vicinity of these were numerous caches—circular pits about three feet deep dug in the ground, lined and covered with bark for the storage of corn, dried and smoked meat, etc. The Indians had no salt for preserving meat or for food.

In the later years they practiced moving their lodges or wigwams from place to place three or four times a year. Everything the Indian owned was portable, easily transported on the backs of the ponies and squaws. No housecleaning or chamberwork to do. No taxes to pay. If the sani-

tary conditions about his tepee became unhealthy, he simply pulled up stakes, took his squaw and papooses and went to a fresh spot.

The usual mode of burial among the Indians was in a shallow trench dug in the ground. In it the body in full dress was placed, with bow and arrows, hunting knife, venison, pipe and tobacco by side, the whole covered with boughs and bark. Sometimes the corpse was placed upon a frame of poles, elevated six or eight feet from the ground, out of reach of the coyotes and left to decay.

In mourning the Indians painted their faces red and black and their howling and wailing would discount any full-blooded Irish wake.

In the woods near our house on Gull Prairie in 1832, was a rude box above ground, made of small poles, containing the body of an adult Indian in a sitting posture facing the east, dressed as in life, with gun, powder horn, tomahawk, tobacco and pounded corn by his side—a startling sight. It remained unmolested more than a year after I first saw it, until some civilized doctor despoiled the tomb and stole the body away.

In love-making the young Indian braves musically inclined constructed a species of flute from hollow reeds. With these they serenaded and wooed the dusky object of their affections. The tones, weird and peculiar, somewhat resembled the Scotch bagpipe. While not the sweetest music in the world it probably did the business for the Indian lovers.

The Indian mothers usually had their young papooses strapped in a curious frame or box of quaint workmanship and bandaged so tightly—body, arms and legs, that they could only move their heads. I never heard an Indian baby cry or show any symptoms of impatience or restlessness. Neither did I ever witness the act of nourishment; howbeit, they were always plump and well fed. "Straight as an Indian" is a proverbial saying.

THE STORY OF MAUNGWUDAUS.

Some years after the scenes narrated I became intimately acquainted with a noted Chippewa chief. Craving your indulgence a brief sketch is submitted.

In 1840-52 there was an Indian mission of about fifty families, mostly of the Ottawa tribe, located three miles north of Gull Corners. This mission was in charge of Rev. Leonard Slater, a Baptist missionary—Noonday, the venerable chief of the Ottawas, with his baptized daughter Rachel, lived at the mission. There was another missionary station near Green Lake, north of Yankee Springs, conducted by Rev. Mr. Selkirk, an Episcopalian.

During the later years named—1848-52, in company with my father-in-law, Deacon Rockwell May, we kept a general store at Gull Corners,

Richland. The Indians from both missions traded extensively at our store. I knew most of them by name and had a partial knowledge of their language. At the time there was a daily line of stages running from Battle Creek to Grand Rapids—breakfasting and changing horses at Gull Corners.

One morning in June, 1850 or '51, a richly dressed stranger of noble, commanding form and majestic features, alighted from the stage at the Judson hotel across the way and went in to breakfast. He did not resume his seat after breakfast and go on with the stage, but soon came across the street to the store. He was upward of six feet tall, erect, well proportioned, of massive build, a Websterian head, remarkably penetrating eagle eye, very intelligent look, perfectly self-possessed, and great ease of manner. He impressed me at once as being a distinguished character—I thought the completest, most perfect specimen of a man I had ever seen. He appeared to be 45 years of age. His complexion was slightly bronzed, but I did not suspect him of being an Indian. He spoke English fluently. He introduced himself as Maungwudaus, a Chippewa chief, whose native home had been in northern Michigan. He had just come from Washington. He said that some twelve or fourteen years before Mr. George Catlin, an eminent American traveler and explorer among the North American Indians, had selected a troupe of superior Indian men and women—ten in number, himself one of them, and had educated and trained them for public exhibitions. They had traveled over all Europe, Mr. Catlin in charge, exhibiting before crowned heads and at royal palaces. Maungwudaus showed me a number of gold and silver medals, presented to him by kings, queens and emperors, and one from President Zachary Taylor, all tokens of personal genius and merit. The Indians under Catlin did not thrive. They pined for their wigwam homes and native woods. The artificial mode of living, diet, clothing, sleep, etc., preyed upon their health. They sickened, and many died. Finally the troupe disbanded, and Maungwudaus came home to America.

He said he wished to organize a company of Indians on his own account. He had heard of Slater and Selkirk missions, and had come to Gull Prairie to see if he could find any suitable material for his band. Did I know the Indians hereabouts? Were there any that I thought would answer his purpose? I told him I knew a remarkably fine looking, Indian woman—Taundoqua by name—partly French I thought, about twenty-five years old; did not know whether she was single or not; but was a prize worth securing. She had been attached to the Selkirk mission but was a frequent visitor at Slater's. We took a carriage and went to the mission. Taundoqua was not there. We left word with an Indian for her to come down to the store. The next day, Taundoqua and a number of Indians came and stopped on the green in front of the store. Maungwudaus saw her through the window. He exclaimed, "Oh, she is

beautiful"—nishiskin—good. He bought a number of presents and sent me out to distribute them among the Indians. Did not go out himself. The Indians came again soon. I introduced Maungwudaus to them. He continued to buy presents, but Taundoqua was very shy.

Maungwudaus remained there a number of weeks. He gave me a detailed sketch of his early life and travels in foreign lands. We became much attached to each other, hunted, played chess, visited the Indians and were close intimate friends. He said he was a Mason of high degree, ranking next to Gen. Cass. He was quite urgent for me to go with him as general manager of the troupe and to give a brief introduction each evening on the stage. I did not go.

TOOK TAUNDOQUA AS A BRIDE.

Maungwudaus and Taundoqua went away together. I received a number of letters from him after he left Richland, all of the most affectionate import, calling me his dear brother, "Pangotigoninne" and signing himself "Kec Kaun, Maungwudaus."

He had an elegant massive necklace of grizzly bear's claws that he wore on state occasions. Some few years after the events narrated, while I still lived at Richland, the good chief honored me with a visit. Being at Kalamazoo on his way to Chicago he stopped off, hired a carriage and driver, and came up to see me, decorated with his medals and grand necklace.

Our meeting was cordial in the extreme. His eyes moistened as he took my hand at parting and said: "Good bye, my dear brother." We have never seen each other since.

Years afterwards I was in Mr. Stanley's studio at Detroit. He was at work upon his famous painting, "The Trial of Red Jacket." I asked him if he had ever seen Maungwudaus? He said yes, and showed me a daguerreotype of my good friend, the Chippewa chief.

Maungwudaus was at the National hotel in Washington April 2, 1850. He made the acquaintance of Hon. Henry Clay, who conducted him into the parlor and introduced him to some fifty or sixty persons, ladies, officers and gentlemen. Mr. Clay said: "I cannot help envying the chieftain his splendid form, ample chest, manly strength, height of stature and dignified face."

The chief called upon President Taylor and presenting him a pair of large snowshoes said: "Venerable father, having traveled in many countries beyond the sea and been welcomed to the hearthstone of chiefs and sovereigns of Europe, I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude to the Great Spirit for His goodness in conducting me back to the home of my fathers; and before visiting my kindred I desire to grasp in friend-

ship the hand of the father of this great people." President Taylor replied: "That he was happy to extend the hand of friendship to such a worthy representative of the Chippewa nation," and expressed a warm personal interest in their welfare. He then presented the chief an elegant silver medal as a token of esteem and remembrance.

Maungwudaus had been ordained as a Methodist minister. He translated the missionary hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," into the Chippewa language. A copy of this with all his letters to me is carefully preserved * * * * The Chippewa nation was one of the large formidable tribes of American Indians of stalwart form and excellent features. They were quite numerous in Michigan, the head waters of the Mississippi, Lake Superior, Hudson's bay and other points in the great northwest. Their language was similar in some respects to that of the Pottowatomies with whom they affiliated and intermarried. In the later years they were peaceful and friendly to the whites, unless wronged and their rights invaded; and this was true of all the other tribes of interior Michigan.