

# PIKE'S PEAK NATURE NOTES

(State Conservation Commission)  
McGregor Area State Park,  
McGregor, Iowa



Jack-in-the-pulpit, also known as  
Indian turnip. Used as food by Indians.

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Thunder Moon  
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## HISTORY OF MCGREGOR AREA

Note:- So many ask about the history of the region which comprises the McGregor Area State Park and its environs that this ~~issue of the Park Nature Notes is~~ devoted entirely to the chronological listing of events of this region.

### Prehistoric Times

The immediate ancestors of the Indians who were found in this region when the White Men first arrived, were undoubtedly responsible for the building of the mounds which form such an important interest in this area. Hundreds of mounds are found in northeastern Iowa. More attention will be given to them later.

### Indian History

The region now known as the McGregor Area was originally inhabited by a group of Sioux who came into northeastern Iowa. Later it became Winnebago territory, and still later a small scattering of Sacs and Foxes from the Prairie-du-Chien region were found here. Prairie-du-Chien was recognized as neutral territory to a certain extent, and to it came many people for treaties, for trading with the early Whites, and for inter-tribal gatherings of a more social nature.

When the first Whites came into the Prairie-du-Chien region, they found at what is now the city of Prairie-du-Chien, an Indian chief by the name of Alim. He was chief of the Fox village at that point. Alim meant Big Dog, and so, to the early Frenchmen, this became the plain of the Dog, or, in their language, Prairie-du-Chien. It was natural that with the establishment of a White settlement at this point, the name should have persisted.

### White and Indian History of Historic Times

June 17, 1673, Father Marquette and Louis Joliet came down the Wisconsin river and became the first White Men to see the Mississippi at the junction of the Wisconsin with the Mississippi.



That night they made their supper on Iowa soil, but they went back into their canoes to sleep. With them were five Indian canoeemen.

March 12, 1680, Father Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan friar, and two other Frenchmen, members of LaSalle's party, left the mouth of the Illinois and paddled up the Mississippi. On the 12th of April they were captured by the Sioux, somewhere between Dubuque and Prairie-du-Chien. The following July they were rescued by Sieur de Luth and five other French explorers on the upper river.

In 1682 the Chevalier de LaSalle stated that he had commenced the establishment of a fort at the junction of the Mississippi and the Wisconsin rivers.

In 1685 Nicholas Perrot erected Fort St. Nicholas at the point designated by LaSalle. The fort was used as a storage house for furs.

In 1763, by the treaty of Versailles, this fort became the property of the Crown of England.

Captain Johnathan Carver of Connecticut arrived at the fort and found here a town of 300 Indian families in 1766. Whites had settled here as early as 1755.

In 1769, the land which later became Iowa was transferred from the French to the Spanish government.

In 1773, Peter Pond, a fur trader, arrived at the site of Prairie-du-Chien.

March, 1780, Fort St. Nicholas was burned, probably by the British.

In 1781, Ange, Antaya and Basil Giard bought land at the Prairie and settled there. Later, Giard secured a grant of land in the Spanish territory across the river and settled there. The village of Giard perpetuates his name. He was buried on July 4, 1817 in St. Gabriels' parish, Prairie du Chien.

In 1783 Julien Dubuque arrived at Prairie du Chien. He traded with the Indians at the village and here, on Sept. 22, 1788, he drew up a contract to secure possession of the lead mines sixty miles south of here. The contract was in French and was made with the five villages. Dubuque was known as Little Cloud.

1785 is the date given for the establishment of the White settlement known as Prairie du Chien.

Early in July, 1814, Fort Shelby was captured by the British.

July 20, 1814, Fort Shelby was surrendered by the British to the United States. This fort was the first United States army post in Wisconsin. At the close of the war the fort was burned.

On July 3, 1816, General Thomas Smith of the United States Army established an army post on the site of Fort Shelby and the construction of a new fort to be known as Fort Crawford was begun.

August 7, 1820, Henry Schoolcraft, explorer and Indian agent, visited Prairie du Chien. Then he went down the river and stopped at the Fox village of Chief Aquoqua, at the site of Dubuque's house. Schoolcraft's fine notes on Indian history and lore are invaluable today.

May 23, 1823, the Virginia, the first steamboat to come up the Mississippi river of this region, arrived at Prairie du Chien.

August 19, 1825, a grand council was held at Fort Crawford. Treaties were signed by Sioux, Foxes, Sacs, Chippewas, Winnebagoes, Menominees, Iowas, Ottawas and Pottawatomies. Schoolcraft tells of this gathering. J. O. Lewis, Indian artist painted the council scene. Neokuk, Decorah, Wabasha, White Cloud, Red Wing and many other famous Indians of that period were at the council. All pledged peace. The council cost the United States government \$10,400.

In the spring of 1826 Fort Crawford experienced a great flood and was vacated. This same year, by order from Washington, the garrison was removed to Fort Snelling and Fort Crawford was abandoned. Two Winnebago prisoners were taken with the troops.

In 1826 came Hercules Dousman as confidential agent for John Jacob Astor. He superseded Rolette as partner of Astor. Later, he married Rolette's widow.



In the spring of 1827 there occurred the massacre of the Methode family on Yellow River. The Winnebagoes had heard that the prisoners taken north by the garrison had been put to death. At a council, Red Bird, former friend of the settlers, was appointed to go out and revenge the supposed death of the two prisoners. Red Bird, (Wan-nig-sootsh-kaw), with Chick-hon-sic and Wee-Kaw, set out. June 26, 1827, they killed Ganier and his serving man and scalped Ganier's infant daughter. To save his tribe from the consequence of his act, Red Bird with his companions surrendered to Major Whistler at Fort Crawford.

Early in Sept. 1827, Col. Thomas L. McKenney of the U. S. army and Supt. of Indian trade descended the Mississippi with a party of soldiers in a canoe. They reached Dubuque and visited Dubuque's grave.

Feb. 16, 1828, Red Bird died in prison at Fort Crawford. Pardon had been granted him by President Adams, but he died before the word of the pardon reached him.

August 19, 1829 Zachary Taylor, later president of the United States, became Commandant at Fort Crawford. He remained in this position until 1837.

In 1829 work was begun on the new Fort Crawford under Major Stephen W. Kearney. The new fort was a mile south of the old position.

July 29, 1829 saw an Indian Treaty Council at Prairie du Chien. The Chippewas and other tribes met at Fort Crawford. On August 1st, 1829, a second Treaty Council was held with the Winnebagoes at the same place. By these treaties the government acquired 8,000,000 acres of fertile country.

December 6, 1829, to April 9, 1831, Dr. William Beaumont, post surgeon at Fort Crawford, conducted experiments on digestion with Alexis St. Martin, who had been wounded by gun shot and a hole torn in the wall of his stomach. Alexis St. Martin lived until 1880. William Beaumont died in St. Louis, in 1853. These experiments formed the basis of our knowledge of digestion.

July 15, 1830 saw the making of a treaty at Fort Crawford between the Sacs and Foxes and other tribes. Again the Indians signed away territory.

In 1832 a treaty was signed in which the government agreed to erect buildings for a school with garden and field attached, for boarding and lodging Winnebago children to be taught to read, write, and "figure". Agriculture, gardening, carding, spinning, weaving and sewing were also to be taught. The cost of the school was not to exceed \$3,000. The government wanted to establish the school on the east side of the river. General Street objected. It must be away from fire-water and fur traders who were unscrupulous in their dealings with the Indians. On April 12, 1833, Street was authorized to select a location west of the Mississippi, erect buildings and employ two teachers. He wanted stone buildings. The war department at Washington wanted log buildings, but General Street finally won and the old Mission, (Presbyterian), school and post were built.

August 2, 1832, Black Hawk and his forces were defeated at the battle of Bad Axe, Wisconsin, thus ending the Black Hawk War.

August 27, 1832, Black Hawk was brought before Gen. Joseph M. Street, Winnebago Agent. Black Hawk has been betrayed by two unscrupulous Winnebagoes, One-Eyed Decoré and the Cheater.

General Winfield Scott, sent to Prairie du Chien by President Andrew Jackson to superintend the campaign against Black Hawk, found the trouble practically over when he reached Fort Crawford.

August 28, 1832, Black Hawk, a prisoner of war, was placed in charge of Lieutenant Jefferson Davis of Fort Crawford. The Lieutenant and his prisoner started at once for St. Louis.

The Winnebago Indian Mission was one and one-half miles east of the village of Ion on Yellow River. In the fall of 1833 the contract for stone buildings for the school and post was let. The farm in connection with the Mission was opened in 1835. Joseph M. Street of Kentucky



formerly Winnebago agent at Prairie du Chien, was placed in charge of the new location. In 1834, under Col. Taylor's supervision, the construction of the Winnebago School was completed.

In November, 1834, there was a massacre of Winnebagoes by the Sioux and Foxes on an island near Fort Crawford.

In the spring of 1835, David Lowrey bought oxen, cows and horses in Sangamon County, Illinois, and they were driven to the Yellow River Mission to open the farm. They were in charge of Rev. John Berry.

Early in 1835 General Street was ordered to the Sac and Fox Trading Post at Agency, Iowa.

In May, 1835, a treaty between the Winnebagoes, Sioux and Foxes was signed at Prairie du Chien.

July 4, 1835, the White Swan arrived at Prairie du Chien. There was a gay party and a patriotic ball that night at Fort Crawford. Later, the same evening, Knoxie Taylor, daughter of Zachary Taylor, and Jefferson Davis left on the boat and were married as soon as they reached Galena.

1836 - saw the establishment of the first ferry across the Mississippi at this place. Alexander McGregor was the ferry owner.

In 1836 a council was held between the Sacs and Foxes and Governor Dodge of the Wisconsin Territory. All of Keokuk's reserve was ceded to the United States by the terms of this treaty. The council was held on the banks of the Mississippi above Davenport and was the largest assemblage ever held by the Sacs and Foxes for the sale of lands. By the terms of this treaty the Sacs and Foxes were moved to another reservation on the Des Moines river near Agency City, Iowa.

In 1837 the school at Old Mission was opened. Father Lowry was the principal teacher. There were 40 Winnebago children.

In 1837 Michael Brisbois, a prominent citizen of Prairie du Chien, died. He was buried on the brow of a bluff east of the town, as he had requested, so that he might look down in death upon the grave of a business adversary in the valley.

In 1837 George Catlin visited Prairie du Chien, then came across to Pike's Peak, painting a picture of it. Catlin's pictures of Indians of that day are famous. They are to be seen at the National Museum today in Washington, D.C.

July 4th, 1838, Iowa Territory was created.

In 1842 a print shop was built in Prairie du Chien to which, later John Muir came, serving as printer's apprentice.

In 1843 Hercules Dousman built his home on the site of Fort Shelby. This Mansion is open to the public and is one of the real show places of the Middle West.

December 28, 1846, Iowa became a state.

In 1848 the Winnebago Tribe was removed to northwestern Minnesota.

In 1872 Villa Louis, home of Hercules Dousman, was rebuilt.

In May 1880, a delegation of Sioux on their way to Washington, D.C., stopped at Prairie du Chien and were banquetted at the Dousman Hotel. Spotted Tail and Red Cloud were among the group.

#### Ending Note

Events of very unequal importance are here given, but in the rich traditions of this area, the names and events here given have all seemed important. Romance and drama write in a thousand stories the interesting history of northeastern Iowa.

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"The Iowa State Conservation Commission, and the Works Progress Administration - Division of Recreation, in cooperation with the Iowa State College, present this circular for the information of the guests of Pike's Peak State Park.

"It is prepared for your information in order that the recreational and educational opportunities of an unspoiled primitive area may be more fully appreciated, utilized, and protected."





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