

## Ancestral Lands Project

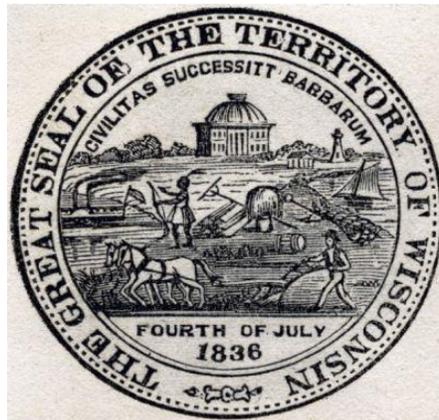
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### **Ancestral Lands of Indians and Immigrants in Western Dane County, Wisconsin in the Early 1800s**

In the early 1800s the US Government forcibly removed Ho-Chunk (formerly known as Winnebago), Sauk-Fox, Potawatomi, and other Indians from lands in this part of Wisconsin which they had held and used for centuries. Tribal people had treated the land as a gift from the Creator for tribal ownership and use. The US Government formally acquired ownership of Indian land through a series of treaties. The US then sold that land to thousands of settlers/immigrants who brought with them the idea that land belongs to individual owners who have exclusive rights to use and to buy and sell. Some immigrants treated the land like any other commodity to accumulate personal wealth, others viewed the land as the basis for family and community well being.

The Indians lost lands and water in western Dane County, Wisconsin, that had provided them with livelihoods for centuries. Immigrant settlers who acquired that same land and water had to survive with few other resources. Over a few decades, there were dramatic changes in the welfare of most Indians and immigrants/settlers and dramatic changes in the ways that people related to land and to each other throughout Wisconsin. For some immigrants, “civility was replacing barbarism” as their view for building of a new society which was summarized in the Great Seal of Wisconsin from 1836. For Indians, their people were facing the threat of death.



The Great Seal of the Territory of Wisconsin in 1836

The Ancestral Land Project is assembling stories about Indian and immigrant interactions mostly concerning land during the period 1820-1870. The initial focus is on specific times and places where Indians and immigrants exchanged goods and ideas and intermarried, before the often violent removal of Indian peoples. We look for stories from western Dane County, starting with what are now the Towns of Vermont, Black Earth, Mazomanie, Cross Plains, Springdale, Perry and surrounding townships. The overall goal of the project is to help people learn from the mistakes and accomplishments of “those who were here before us”, Indian and non-Indian, during the decades prior to the massive immigration of mostly European settlers.

Many Towns in western Dane County have assembled and published histories of their Townships. These histories typically begin with histories of settler “pioneer” families in the 1850s and 1860s. While very informative, they often contain limited information about the original Native American holders of the land and their interactions with the immigrant settlers. This Ancestral Lands Project, coordinated through the Black Earth Historical Society, extends the period covered

by existing Town histories back in time several decades to incorporate stories about Indian/non-Indian interactions before massive non-Indian immigration into western Dane County, Wisconsin, and surrounding areas.

Stories which we are developing presently include:

- Battle of Wisconsin Heights: antecedents and consequences of Black Hawk's insurrection; Wabokieshiek (White Cloud)-the Prophet (from Prophet's Town to four lakes (Madison) to Middleton to site of battle near Sauk City)
- Indian resistance to white land acquisition; "Rush for Grey Gold" from Blue Mounds to Galena); the saga of White Crow and the Hall Girls—County K to Blue Mounds Fort; burial of White Crow in Cross Plains;
- Indian contributions to immigrant transportation networks: Trail marker trees (along 78 and in Blue Mounds State Park) and Indian trails made into immigrant roads and highways (Old Indian Trail, Blue Mounds Trail in Vermont; ridge road –Hwy 18-151);
- Significance and preservation of Indian Mounds (including a new find at Walking Iron Park in Mazo, the Man Mound in Black Earth; other mounds in the area which immigrant settlers encountered);
- Returns of Indian families to ancestral lands after removal: e.g., Malone School site in Springdale Township where Ho-Chunk families returned in early 1900s; Winnie Sawle video about Indians she met as a young girl near Arena/Mazo area; Harrington story of returning medicine man to Wolf mound on Sawle Road.
- Families and land: marriages of immigrants and Indians; Indian and immigrant concepts of home near Peculiar Corners; British Temperance and Immigration Society—Vermont and Mazomanie; Pierre Pauquette in Portage
- The Blue Mounds area: the cultural significance of Blue Mounds for Indians and immigrants; Ebenezer Brigham's tavern and lead mining; the ridge road for Indians and immigrants; legend of the stolen gold; Pow Wows and Pleasure Valley in Blue Mounds.
- Land claims of Indians, settlers and speculators in western Dane County (Towns of Springfield, Middleton, Berry and Roxbury) in the mid 1800s.
- The corridor between the Wisconsin River and Blue Mounds (the valley now followed by County K and connecting routes): mounds, petroglyphs, artifact collections
- Native American foods and medicines which immigrants learned to consume—menu from Wild Berries

Use of this work:

- 1) We are collecting materials around these themes as source materials for people who want to dig into their historical contexts.
- 2) We intend to incorporate the collected stories into web sites such as <https://gatewaytothedriftless.com/> as well as into smart phone "apps" containing GIS based interactive story maps for cell phones which will provide information for students and the public to consult as they visit specific sites.

People presently committed to developing these stories include Dan Brunner, John Donaldson, Harold Miller, David Stanfield and Barbara Borns, with the support of the Black Earth Historical Society, and an advisory committee composed of Steve Kantowitz, Robert Birmingham, Arnold Chevalier, Bobbie Malone, Teresa Barry and Patrick Jung.

We warmly welcome to this effort other collectors of stories about Indian/Immigrant interactions from the early and mid-1800s in this part of what is now Wisconsin.

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