

HISTORY OF  
**LOGAN COUNTY**  
ILLINOIS

A RECORD OF ITS SETTLEMENT, ORGANIZATION, PROGRESS  
AND ACHIEVEMENT

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By LAWRENCE B. STRINGER

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*"Local history is the ultimate substance of national history,"—Wilson*

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VOLUME I

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ILLUSTRATED

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CHICAGO  
PIONEER PUBLISHING COMPANY

1911

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ABORIGINEES.

In the transfer of real estate, it is customary to require an abstract of title, showing the successive owners, from its first possessor. A similar interest should attach to the matter of the past occupants and owners of what is now known as Logan County. At different periods in the distant past, Logan County, in common with other portions of the wide Western World, was the home of vast populations. Here, events transpired as great and thrilling as have ever occurred since. Here were victories and defeats, scenes of happiness and horror. Here cities have risen and fallen. Here great peoples have risen, flourished, and utterly vanished, leaving behind them no record of existence but their voiceless graves. Passing over a consideration of the first primitive peoples, as well as what is known as the Mound Builders of a supposed more recent date, all of whom have left no discovered traces of their existence in this section of the state, and whose history is at best apochryphal and visionary, we come to the American Indian, who at the time the first white man, in his birch bark canoe, floated down the majestic Mississippi, was the real lord and owner of the soil of what is now Illinois.

These Indians were divided into powerful tribes, who held their hunting grounds, by the power of the tomahawk and club. Chief among these tribes were the Kickapoos, industrious, energetic, more civilized and cleanly than all their neighbors, but equally cruel, treacherous and unforgiving. From the earliest days, their bitter hatred of the encroaching white race was implacable and they were ever a fierce tribe. Their historical records run back to the first occupation of the St. Lawrence Valley, by the French. Champlain found them along the shores of Lake Huron. From that early day, they proved an intractable people, never forming any lasting alliance with either the French or the English. They reached Rock River from the north, about the same time as the white explorers of Illinois, and from that date remained prominent in all the savage warfare incident to early colonization, roaming, at different periods over nearly every county within the present limits of the state. They were almost among the first to commence war and

the last to submit and enter into treaties. They were in the field against Generals Harmar, St. Clair and Wayne, and were leaders in all the bloody charges at Tippecanoe. For many years, they harassed the exposed settlements, were long the terror of the Illinois frontier and more than all the other tribes combined, retarded the advance of white settlement.

By 1812, the Kickapoo had become fixtures throughout the central portion of the state and their principal rendezvous was along Salt, Kickapoo and Sugar Creeks in what is now the County of Logan. Davidson and Stuve's History of Illinois, page 39, says: "The Kickapoos, in 1763, occupied the country, southwest of the southern extremity of Lake Michigan. They subsequently moved southward, and at a more recent date dwelt in portions of the territory, on the Mackinaw and Sangamon rivers and had a village on Kickapoo Creek and at Elkhart Grove." Parrish's Historic Illinois says: "The principal towns of the Kickapoos were located on Kickapoo Creek and at Elkhart Grove." In fact, Kickapoo Creek, rising in McLean and flowing principally through Logan County, was named in honor of the tribe. Ferdinand Ernst, mentioned heretofore, in his accounts of his travels in Central Illinois in 1819, recites, that after leaving Elkhart Grove, they journeyed northward to Salt Creek, (called by the Indians, the Onaquispasippi River), that they had intended to examine the locality of the Kickapoo town, but were forced to forego it, because unable, from high water, to get across Salt Creek, or as he terms it, the Onaquispasippi River.

Governor Reynolds, in his "Pioneer History of Illinois," in a thrilling account of the kidnaping of certain early settlers, in Kentucky, by Kickapoo braves, and their being carried by their captors to the principal Kickapoo town, located this Kickapoo town, "on Salt Creek, northeast of the Elk Heart Grove, in Sangamon County." Reynolds wrote his history in the fifties and still includes in Sangamon County, the territory now known as Logan, as was frequently done at that time. As this account, (now out of print), gives a chronicle of the first historic event, which connects Logan County with the white race (the same occurring in 1790, the first year after George Washington was inaugurated first president of the United States), it is reproduced here, in Gov. Reynolds's exact words:

"It will be recollected, that James Gilham, Sr., emigrated to Illinois at an early day, and at a still earlier one, he emigrated from South Carolina, and settled on the frontiers of Kentucky. In the year 1790, he had selected himself a residence in Kentucky, and was in the field plowing his corn, with one of his sons, Isaac, then a small boy. The boy was with his father, clearing the young corn from the clods and sods, which the plow might throw on it, while the rest of the family were in the house. Several Kickapoo warriors went to the house and captured Gil-

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ham's whole family, that were not with him in the field. The field was some distance from the house, and he did not immediately discover the disaster. These savages captured his wife, one girl and two sons. What horrible feelings Gilham experienced, when he returned home from his work, as he supposed, to his family and dinner; but discovered his house sacked by the Indians, his family captured, and either killed or doomed to savage bondage; but man was made to mourn.

"The Indians made the family, by signs, remain quiet, so as not to alarm Gilham, in the field. They made quick work of it and started for *the Kickapoo town, towards the sources of the Sangamon River, Illinois.* They cut open the bed-ticks, and took such articles out of the house as they could carry away on their backs. They were afraid to take any horses, lest the whites would follow their trail and destroy them. The country where Gilham resided was thinly settled and before he could get a party to pursue the Indians, they escaped. Mrs. Gilham was so terrified that she was almost bereaved of her mind. After the Indians had taken the house, and the family, the first she recollects was her son Samuel, a small boy, saying: 'Mamma, we're all prisoners.' Gilham and neighbors followed the Indian trail a considerable distance, but could not overtake them. He, on his return, suffered misery and mental anguish that is indescribable. Yet hope lingered with him, that, as the Indians had not killed his people, he would again recover them. Hope never entirely abandons any one, in almost any affliction.

"The Indians steered clear of the settlements and were extremely cautious in their march. They kept a spy before and one behind, on the trail, so that their retreat was guarded, as much as possible, by their numbers. The party suffered from much hunger. The three white children were in great misery, from their hurried march and the want of food. But human nature can endure much and will contrive many expedients, before suffering death. Mrs. Gilham patched up rags around the feet of her children, to save them from the briars and thorn. They traveled over a wilderness, without roads. A mother's love for her children knows no bounds. Sympathy, at last, seized on the warriors, and they treated the prisoners with all the savage kindness and mercy in their power. They were out of provisions and one day they halted to hunt for something, to save them from starving. The children had a small morsel of dried meat to eat, and the grown ones nothing. Two of the best hunters were sent out and one returned with a poor summer racoon. Mrs. Gilham said that the sight of this poor coon caused her more happiness than any other earthly sight she ever saw. She was afraid her children would either perish with hunger or the Indians would kill them, to save them from starvation.

"The party could not hunt, near the white settlement, for fear of detection and if they delayed, the whites would overtake them. This was

the reason of their going so long without food and almost suffering death from hunger. This coon was not dressed in Parisian style, but most of the hair and fur were taken off, and some of the contents of the extreme inside were thrown away, while the balance was put in a brass kettle and placed over a fire. The coon was soon boiled into a nondescript dish, mixed together the meat, bones, hide, some hair, some entrails, claws and feet, of the animal. As soon as this mess was cool, and before, the horn and wooden spoons were in complete operation, and the whole assembly, of white and red skins, got some relief from absolute starvation.

"As they approached the Ohio River, they became more cautious for fear of meeting the Americans on the river, either waylaying for them, or in boats descending the river. They came to the Ohio a small distance from Hawsville, Kentucky, and camped near the river, until rafts could be made on which to cross it. They were detained more than a day in making rafts. Dry logs were procured and tied together, with red elm bark, and the rafts placed near the edge of the water, so that they might be put in the river in a moment and not touch the water before they started over, as they would not be so light, having received some water before. The wily savages were afraid to cross the river in daylight. Mrs. Gilham was much terrified at the idea of crossing the river with her children at night. The party had three rafts. The largest one took Mrs. Gilham and her three children, with two prudent old Indians, to paddle it over. The others crossed in the two rafts prepared for them. The embarkation was in the night, as silent as if they were in a grave yard, and the rafts were paddled over the Ohio with the same secrecy.

"These warriors considered it a great triumph to take these four prisoners and conduct them in safety to the Indian town. In this proportion, they exercised all their talents of bravery and sagacity to accomplish it. But when they had crossed the Ohio, they considered themselves safe and released their watchfulness and caution to some extent. In the country south of White River, in the present state of Indiana, they hunted, marched slow, and lived well, in comparison to the time they ate the coon. They steered clear of the small white settlements around Vincennes, and crossed the Wabash, below Terre Haute. They marched through the present counties of Clark, Coles and Decatur, Illinois, and, finally, after a long and hazardous travel, from the southwestern frontiers of Kentucky, three or four hundred miles, they reached in safety, the Kickapoo town, which was situated *on Salt Creek, northeast of the Elk Heart Grove*, in Sangamon County.

"What a horrid situation the Indian war placed the Gilham family in. Four with the Indians, and two in Kentucky, in great misery and affliction. Gilham, as soon as he found his family were not killed, but

taken prisoner, his wife and son, Isaac, delay and the Indians obtained allness. The he was registered, Gilham, obtained an honorable title with the Indians.

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taken prisoners by the Indians, took courage, and hoped again to see his wife and children. He sold his improvement in Kentucky, put his son, Isaac, with a friend and set out in search of his people. After much delay and fatigue of mind and body, he found they were alive, amongst the Indians, and made arrangements to purchase them. At last, he obtained all his lost family and they lived together, many years, in happiness. The young son, Clement, could not talk a word of English, when he was regained by his father. In 1815, Ann Gilham, wife of James Gilham, obtained a grant of land of 160 acres, from Congress, as an honorable testimonial of the suffering and hardships, in her captivity with the Indians, as above narrated."

The above quaint narrative is valuable for various reasons. It shows that as early as 1790, the Kickapoo tribe of Indians were in full possession of the hunting grounds of Central Illinois; that the principal town or capital of the tribe was in what is now Logan County, and not elsewhere, as frequently claimed; and that the Kickapoo Indians were not the exceedingly cruel and bloodthirsty tribe, they have been described to be. Mrs. Gilham and her children were undoubtedly the first white people to set foot on Logan County soil, even though under protest; and yet this was thirty years before a permanent settlement, by whites, was actually attempted.

The next record of a white person in Logan County is found in the annals of the Illinois Territory. About 1810, the Indian tribes, including the Kickapoo, had become hostile and were making forays on the scattering white settlers, in the southern portions of the state. Territorial Governor Harrison sent deputations to the various tribes in Illinois, to endeavor to settle, by treaty relations, the unsettled condition of affairs. Davidson and Stuve's History of Illinois, page 256, says: "A mission in charge of Joseph Trotier, a sagacious French creole, of Cahokia, was also sent to the Kickapoos, who inhabited the country *along Sugar Creek, in the northern part of the present county of Logan.* The usual talks or speeches, with many fair promises, from this rather shrewd, but treacherous and implacable nation, were had, which were also written down as interpreted."

Following this, in 1812, Governor Edwards, of the Illinois Territory, arranged a protracted council, with the Indian chiefs and warriors. This was held at Cahokia, April 16th, and was attended by representatives of the Kickapoos, Pottawattomies, Ottawas and Chippewas. The Kickapoo chiefs and warriors, (or what might be called Logan County's representatives), present, were Little Deer, Blue Eyes, Sun Fish, Blind of an Eye, Otter, Makkak, Yellow Lips, Dog Bird and Black Seed; these names being, of course, the English equivalent for the real Indian names. Gomo, of the Pottawattomies, was the spokesman of those assembled. On behalf of the Kickapoos, Little Deer, presented Gomo, in

the following words: "My father, I am of the village of the Great Lick. I give you my hand and wish to be peaceable. You might have heard talk of me and I am well known by all these Indians here. It is well known to them all that I never listened to the Prophet. I am the first chief, who, after the battle of Tippecanoe, went to Governor Harrison with my flag. My father, my chiefs and warriors are here, who all know me to be a peaceable Indian. Gomo will speak to you and we will all agree to what he will say. My father, the people of my village are now anxious for my return, to hear the results of this council. We have reflected on your speech of yesterday and we have consulted together, and Gomo will answer, in the name of us all." This eloquent introduction of the speaker of the day, by one who at that time, before the day of white settlement, was the most distinguished resident of what is now Logan County, is well worth preservation here.

The Cahokia council did not accomplish its desired effect and hostilities broke out later more fiercely than ever. Governor Edwards then raised a small army, among the early settlers, to silence the warring Indians. On the 18th of October, the defenses of the frontiers having been provided for, his crude army of 400 mounted men, took up its line of march. Davidson and Stuve's History of Illinois, gives their line of march, as follows: "The route pursued was upon the west side of Cahokia creek, thence to the Macoupin, which was crossed, near the present site of Carlinville; thence northeasterly, crossing the Sangamon below the junction of the north and south forks, west of the present capital of the state; passing thence *east of Elkhart Grove, crossing Salt Creek not far from the present City of Lincoln* and thence in a northward direction, striking an old deserted Kickapoo village on Sugar Creek." These tenantless bark wigwams were painted up with rude savage devices, representing the red skins scalping whites, and the town was burned to ashes. From this point the "army" moved on to Lake Peoria.

From all of the above interesting Indian history, it can fairly be deduced that the principal Kickapoo Indian town was in Logan County, was located on Salt Creek and its site was probably slightly west of and probably including the present Lincoln Chautauqua grounds. The nearest to an actual eye witness of this location was Ferdinand Ernst, referred to before, who in a recital of his travels in 1819, describes Elkhart Hill, and then continues: "We continued our journey northward (from Elkhart Hill) and soon reached the charming banks of the Onaquispasippi, (the Indian name for Salt Creek). Alas, the river was too high to be crossed on horseback. Here a passable road runs northward to Fort Clark on Lake Peoria," and then he adds, "unable to get across the river (Salt creek), we were obliged to forego examination of the locality of the Kickapoo town and we started on our return jour-

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ney." It will thus be seen that the Kickapoo town was on the north bank of Salt Creek, across from where Ernst stood, which he could not reach on account of the high water in the creek, and this point was near the road running "northward to Fort Clark on Lake Peoria." Seven years before, Governor Edward's small army had passed this same way, from Elkhart Hill to Fort Clark. They had crossed Salt Creek, as stated by Davidson and Stuve, "near the present City of Lincoln." Later, the road made by Edward's army became known as "the Edward's trace." The state road from Springfield through Logan County to Peoria, known as "the Fort Clark road," followed the old Edward's trace. This state road followed a county road, previously laid out in 1825, by the Commissioners of Sangamon County. The commissioners in their order of laying out said road, began the same at Springfield, "thence to the Sangamon River at Chapman's Ford, thence by Phillip's old store, thence by the old trace to Judge Latham's, thence by the old road to McClure's ferry on Salt Creek, thence to Robert Musick's on Sugar Creek, thence to the county line, in a direction to Fort Clark." "Edward's trace," the state road and the county road running from Springfield to Fort Clark, therefore undoubtedly crossed Salt Creek at McClure's ferry. As near as the writer can ascertain, McClure's ferry was located on Salt Creek, on what is now known as the Spitzbarth land, west of the present Lincoln Chautauqua grounds, and west of the old Primitive Baptist Church. And in this same locality or thereabouts, Ernst, by his testimony, substantially locates the Kickapoo town.

It will also be remembered that Gov. Reynolds, in his pioneer history, locates the Kickapoo principal town, to which the Gilhams were carried, as "on Salt Creek, northeast of Elk Heart Grove." There were no doubt other Indian villages in the county, all more or less transient, as Indian villages usually were. There was no doubt an Indian village at Elkhart Hill, another on Sugar Creek, another on Kickapoo Creek, near where the Champaign and Havana branch of the Illinois Central Railroad crosses the same, for here Indian mounds are found and the plow frequently turns up Indian beads and trinkets on adjoining farms. Many Indian mounds are also to be found near Lake Fork, and Rocky Ford was a frequent Indian habitat. But the firmly established Kickapoo town, the capital of the tribe, known among the Indians far and wide, from Michigan to the Big Salt of Kentucky, was undoubtedly located as aforesaid.

No more beautiful or logical site for an Indian town could be found. The high rolling bluff commanded a view of a great extent of country on every hand. At their feet, the Onaquisapasippi, where the Indian could fish and canoe, rolled onward to the sea. The heavy timber furnished the exact sort of home fitted to the Indian mind. On Salt Creek, there were various "salt licks" and from these the creek derived its



name. Here the wild animals came for miles around, to satisfy their taste, by slowly eating the salty earth and here the Indian hunter was always sure to find wild game. It will be remembered that Little Deer at the Cahokia Council stated that he was from the village of the Great Lick. It is even possible that this was the Indian name of the Logan County Kickapoo town.

The beginning of the end of the Kickapoo, in Logan County, occurred July 30, 1819. Prior to that, they were the rightful owners of the soil and claimed all that scope of country south of Kankakee River, east of the Illinois River and north of a line drawn from the mouth of the Illinois to the Wabash. This, they claimed as their property, by descent from their ancestors, by conquest from the Illinois and uninterrupted possession for more than fifty years. The treaty, by which they ceded the above tract of land, to the United States, and retired forever from the home they loved so well, was made at Edwardsville, on the date above given. The negotiations on the part of the United States were made by August Choteau and Benjamin Stevenson. The Kickapoos were represented by Pemoatan, Penasee, Keetatta, Shekoan, Mawntoho and eighty dusky chiefs and warriors, with their plumes, paint and wampum, acting for themselves and their tribe. Reluctantly and substantially under duress, they made their scrawls and marks to the instrument, by which they sadly gave up forever their old time home, the graves of their ancestors, their fertile fields and hunting grounds. The land ceded by them is estimated to have contained ten million acres. For this, they were to receive \$2,000, in silver, annually, for fifteen consecutive years, at their new location on the waters of the Osage River, the government guaranteeing them peaceable possession of their country on the Osage and to restrain all white persons from hunting or settling thereupon. The government also agreed to furnish boats to transport their property down the Illinois River, and to select some judicious person to accompany them in their journey through the white settlements.

Ferdinand Ernst, before referred to, was present at the making of his treaty, at Edwardsville. Of the event he says: "The most remarkable curiosity, which met me at Edwardsville, was the camp of the Kickapoo Indians, who were sojourning here, in order to conclude a treaty with the plenipotentiaries of the United States, whereby they renounced all rights and claims to the lands on the Sangamon, Onaquispasippi, and in the entire State of Illinois, ceding the same to congress and to immediately vacate the State of Illinois. Their color is reddish brown; their face irregular, often horribly colored with red paint; their hair is cut to a tuft, upon the crown of the head and painted various colors. Very few are clothed. In summer, a woolen covering; in winter, a buffalo skin is their only covering. They seem to be very fond of ornaments,

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as of silver rings about the neck and arms. They likewise carry a shield before the breast."

Proclamation was made of this treaty January 13, 1821. By 1822, only 400 Kickapoos were left in Illinois. As the white settlers began to come in, these gradually withdrew, until by 1836, none were left. After the establishment of Indian agencies, Indians of other tribes, principally Delawares and Pottawatomies, would occasionally pass through the country, for a number of years following the withdrawal of the Kickapoos, and many of the Kickapoos themselves remained for years, along the creeks and about the timber, loath to leave their old home. In passing through, these Indians of other tribes would stop a day or two, near the creeks, and hunt, in order to obtain a supply of food, principally deer meat.

Referring to the Indians, C. C. Ewing, an early settler in the county, in an interview, said: "The Indians about our place were of the Kickapoo tribe. The government permitted them to remain and hunt, after having treated with them for their lands. These savages were a fearful sight to us boys, they being the first we had ever seen. Some were painted different colors; others had heavy rings in their ears, or had notches cut in them. Their camp was close to our place and we visited them frequently. They were quite friendly and we could easily learn their peculiarities. They would spread their deer hides around their wigwams and cut the venison in small slices and place these on the hides to dry in the sun. Their dogs, which were numerous, had first choice in these pieces and were generally undisturbed. When a deer would come in sight, the entire squad of braves would rush for their ponies and ride pell-mell after it, shooting from the backs of their ponies. As soon as the deer fell, it would be slung across the back of a pony, trained to the purpose and brought to camp. When their dinner was prepared, of venison and soup, the warriors arranged themselves around the pot in a circle, spoon or ladle in hand. The chief placed himself in a prominent position, and amid deep silence, pronounced a harangue in the Indian tongue, which we supposed was saying grace. The moment he concluded, each Indian rushed for the pot, as if on a race for life, and rapidly began to devour its contents."

After the Kickapoo retired to the Osage County, the tribe could not be kept intact. Some settled down to cultivate; more rambled off, to hunt on the grounds of southern tribes, entering Texas and Mexico. They were sent out of the Chickasaw country in 1841, but were allowed in Creek territory for some time. In 1838, the agency band had dwindled to 725; in 1839 to 419. In 1845, it had increased to 516 and these were in a thriving condition, raising enough vegetables and grain, to support themselves and supply Fort Leavenworth. They refused to be Christianized, by any sect. A leading chief, one Kennekuk, set him-

self up as a prophet and had quite a following. He was said to have been unusually eloquent. In 1854, they were removed to a reservation, in Atchison County, Kansas, part of their large tract being ceded for \$300,000. Soon after, the tribe lost by smallpox and by 1863, there were only 343 on the reservation, the southern or wild band only appearing when the annuities were to be paid. Soon after, the Atchison and Pike's Peak Railroad bought part of their lands at \$1.25 per acre. In 1865, thirty families took land in severalty, 160 acres to each family, and seventy-nine families took their land in common. The roving Kickapooos numbered about a thousand in 1873, when about 400 returned from Mexico and were placed in the Indian territory. In 1873, there were 274 at the Kansas reservation and there were 46 children in their schools.

The Kickapoo Indian, like all others of his mysterious, untraceable race, has contended against fate; his once mighty power is broken, the charm of his ancient glory is among those things that are past and this country, once his country, with its limpid streams, its enchanting forests and its magnificent plains, knows him no more. Pursued to his retreating footsteps, by the onward march of civilized man, he sees the final extinction of his race, under the crushing decrees of inevitable destiny. The murmuring streams of the valley, the requiem winds of the surviving forests tell of his wrongs and unite in tones of mournful cadence, in condemnation of his fate. "Lo, the poor Indian."

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