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# 140 Years Ago This Week
## in the
# BLACK HAWK WAR

**May 6-12, 1972**

*It All Comes Alive in Black Hawk Pageant to be presented Aug. 10-13 at Fort Atkinson's FORT FEST '72*

Word of Black Hawk's "invasion" of Illinois with about 500 Sauk-Fox warriors and some 1,200 of their families reached the lead mining district between the Rock and Ouisconsin rivers early in May.

Col. Henry Dodge, commander of that portion of the Michigan Territory (Wisconsin) militia, immediately organized the miners and settlers for self-defense, and wrote to Gen. Henry Atkinson on May 8: "The exposed situation of the settlements of the mining district to the attack of the Indian enemy, makes it a matter of deep and vital interest to us, that we should be apprized of the movements of the mounted men under your excellency's immediate command."

"Black Hawk and his band," Dodge continued, "it is stated by the last advices we have had on this subject, was to locate himself about 20 miles above Dixon's Ferry, on Rock river."

"Should the mounted men under your command make an attack on that party, we would be in great danger here; for should you defeat Black Hawk, the retreat would be on our settlements."

But Dodge had an additional fear: "There are now collected," he told Atkinson, "within 20 miles above our settlements, about 200 Winnebagoes, and should the Sauks be forced into Winnebago country, many of the wavering of that nation would unite with the hostile Sauks. I have no doubt it is part of the policy of this banditti, to unite themselves as well with the Pottawatomies, as Winnebagoes."

Black Hawk did, indeed, send an express to the Pottawatomies asking for a conference to discuss their joining him in his fight to save his ancestral lands from the whites.

Meanwhile, troops, provisions and boats having been collected, a force of nearly 1,800 moved out after Black Hawk. The regular force, according to a participant, "was charged with the severe and unpleasant duty of dragging up the river our provisions and stores in boats, one keel of 90 tons and one of 30, and five or six Mackinaw boats. It is unnecessary to describe this duty better than to say, that the weather was cold, and that for many days the troops, so employed, had not a dry thread on them, compelled to wade against a rapid stream, dragging or lifting the boats along from daybreak until night."

The mounted militia, moving ahead faster, arrived at the Prophet's village, burned it to the ground, and continued on to Dixon's Ferry. There Gov. John Reynolds, as commander-in-chief of the militia, ordered Col. Isaiah Stillman and his undisciplined battalion to "proceed without delay . . . to the head of 'Old Man's creek' where it is supposed there are some hostile Indians, and coerce them into submission."

Stillman ran into enough Indians to get the Black Hawk War started.

# 140 Years Ago This Week
## in the
# BLACK HAWK WAR

**May 13-19, 1832**

*It All Comes Alive in Black Hawk Pageant to be presented Aug. 10-13 at Fort Atkinson's FORT FEST '72*

The Black Hawk War started Monday evening, May 14, 1832, unnecessarily because Black Hawk had already decided to give up his attempt to regain his lands.

"I concluded to tell my people," he said, "that if the White Beaver (Gen. Henry Atkinson) came after us, we would go back—as it was useless to think of stopping or going on without provisions."

When Col. Isaiah Stillman's battalion of 275 undisciplined mounted volunteers camped nearby, Black Hawk sent three young men with a white flag to set up a council between the opposing forces. He sent another five to watch what happened.

The truce team reported: "When we arrived near to the encampment of the whites, a number of them rushed out to meet us, bringing their guns with them. They took us into their camp."

The Illinois volunteers were psyched up to fight Indians and had been drinking, so when they spotted the other five Indians they took off after them without orders and in great confusion, some riding with saddles and some without. In the melee, they killed two of the Indians; the others escaped to report to Black Hawk.

Back in Stillman's camp, according to the captured Indians, "a party of white men came in, on horseback. We saw by their countenances that something had happened. A general tumult arose. They looked at us with indignation—talked among themselves for a moment—when several cocked their guns— in a second, they fired at us in the crowd; our companion fell dead! We rushed through the crowd and made our escape."

Black Hawk hurried toward the scene with 40 warriors, all the rest of his band being 10 miles further north. "I raised a yell," he said, "and said to my braves: 'Some of our people have been killed! — wantonly and cruelly murdered! We must revenge their death'!"

"In a little while," Black Hawk continued, "we discovered the whole army coming toward us in full gallop! We were now confident that our first party had been killed! I immediately placed my men in front of some bushes, that we might have the first fire, when they approached close enough. They made a halt some distance from us. I gave another yell and ordered my brave warriors to charge upon them—expecting that we would all be killed! They did charge! Every man rushed and fired and the enemy retreated in the utmost confusion and consternation."

Eleven soldiers were killed in their retreat all the way back to Dixon's Ferry, and Stillman's Run became history.

Black Hawk said, "I lighted my pipe, and sat down to thank the Great Spirit for what we had done."

Gov. John Reynolds issued a proclamation requisitioning 2,000 additional mounted volunteers.

# 140 Years Ago This Week

*in the*

# BLACK HAWK WAR

**May 27-June 2, 1832**

***It All Comes Alive in Black Hawk Pageant to be presented Aug. 10-13 at Fort Atkinson's FORT FEST '72***

Terror reigned throughout northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin as a result of Black Hawk's stunning upset victory at Stillman's Run, the bloody massacre at Indian Creek, and the widely-scattered surprise Indian raids on outlying settlements.

"Our difficulties thicken on us daily," Col. Zachary Taylor, commanding the regular Army troops, reported to Gen. Henry Atkinson. "The people of Galena are perfectly panic struck," he wrote. Another report said, "Women and children are rushing from all parts of the country to go off in steam boats."

No less terrified were the Illinois volunteers who had become disenchanted about fighting Indians, and whose service time was up. All were mustered out of service on May 27 and 28, except 300 men (including Abraham Lincoln) who volunteered to remain in service 20 days for the defense of the frontier while new forces were gathering. Gov. John Reynolds issued a call for 3,000 to assemble June 10.

The delays caused by the dismissal of one army and the recruitment of another led Black Hawk to observe that he could plant and harvest corn and still keep out of Atkinson's way.

Meanwhile Sylvia and Rachel Hall, the young sisters captured at Indian Creek, were undergoing fears of their own in Black Hawk's camp north of Turtle Village (Beloit).

Rachel reported that almost daily the Indians "led us to the center of the spot they had cleared off to prepare for the dance, near where the white pole was stuck up. Then, placing a blanket upon the earth, and after painting our faces red and glack, ordered us to lie down with our faces toward the ground. They then danced around us with war-clubs, tomahawks, and spears."

When Atkinson learned of their capture, he ordered Henry Gratiot, Indian agent, to "prevail on the head chiefs and braves of the Winnebagoes (at Turtle Village) to go over to the hostile Sacs and endeavor to ransom the prisoners. Offer the Winnebagoes a large reward to effect the object: $500 or $1,000 for each."

White Crow, a Winnebago chief friendly with both Black Hawk and the whites, ransomed Sylvia Hall in exchange for 10 horses, but she rebelled so vigorously when she learned that Rachel was to remain with the Indians, White Crow was forced to give up his own excellent horse to set Rachel free also. They hurried off toward Blue Mound Fort and freedom.

Orders were given to go "express to the nearest Sioux village and (obtain) as many Indians as possible . . . to join Gen. Atkinson." Atkinson had now enlisted the services of the very Indians whom he had originally been ordered to keep from warring with Black Hawk!

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# 140 Years Ago This Week in the BLACK HAWK WAR

*It All Comes Alive in Black Hawk Pageant to be presented Aug. 10-13 at Fort Atkinson's FORT FEST '72*

## JULY 15-21, 1832

While Gen. Henry Atkinson was waiting for provisions from Fort Winnebago (Portage), Black Hawk's 500 Sauk-Fox warriors and 1,200 men, women, and children were starving to death in the swamps between Lake Cos-co-nong and the Rock River rapids (Hustisford).

Black Hawk said, "We were hard put to obtain enough to support nature. We were forced to dig roots and bark trees to obtain something to satisfy hunger, and keep us alive. Several of our old people became so much reduced as actually to die with hunger."

When Col. Henry Dodge and Gen. James Henry returned from Fort Winnebago down the Rock River, they squeezed Black Hawk's band between themselves and Atkinson. Black Hawk fled westward toward the Ouisconsin River, hoping to find safety across the Mississippi.

The troops pursued him down the Rock River, across the Crawfish River near Aztalan, west of Keye's Lake (Rock Lake at Lake Mills) and between the Third and Fourth Lakes (Madison).

The Battle of Wisconsin Heights was fought July 21 (below Prairie du Sac) between Black Hawk's rear guard and the mounted militia.

A participant reported, "While (the Indians) were pursuing (our) scouts up a long slope, the advance portion of our men was rapidly ascending from the opposite side, and . . . we met near the top."

"Here we had barely time to form ourselves into battle order. Our troops were barely faced about, when the enemy commenced firing upon us. We returned the fire with great rapidity, and with deadly aim . . . Considerable firing was kept up by the Indians, who had taken shelter in some underbrush . . . (After a charge by the militia), the enemy were at once dislodged from their hiding place . . . We pursued them to the bottom of the Ouisconsin, where we reached the tall grass, which was wet, it having rained nearly the entire afternoon of that day, and it being now nearly dark, the pursuit continued no further."

Lt. Philip St. George Cooke said of the battle, "After all their boasting, the simple fact was that Black Hawk, although encumbered with the women, children, and baggage of his whole band, covering himself with a small party, had accomplished the most difficult of military operations—to wit, the passage of a river—in the presence of three regiments of American volunteers!"

Jefferson Davis reported, "This was the most brilliant exhibition of military tactics that I ever witnessed—a feat of most consummate management and bravery in the face of an enemy of greatly superior numbers . . . Had it been performed by white men, it would have been immortalized as one of the most splendid achievements in military history."

Black Hawk had this to say: "In this skirmish with fifty braves, I defended and accomplished my passage over the Ouisconsin . . . though opposed by a host of mounted militia. I would not have fought there but to gain time for my women and children to cross to an island. A warrior will duly appreciate the embarrassments I laboured under; and whatever may be the sentiments of the white people in relation to this battle, my nation, though fallen, will award to me the reputation of a great brave, in conducting it."

*FORT FEST '72*

## JULY 22-28, 1832

In the dark early hours of July 22, after the Battle of Wisconsin Heights, Black Hawk tried to surrender for the second time. He shouted out his surrender in the Winnebago language—but the Winnebagoes had left the white camp . . . and the troops thought he was exhorting his braves to further fighting!

Col. Henry Dodge reported his victory to Gen. Henry Atkinson at Fort Cos-co-nong: "Be assured every possible exertion will be made to destroy the enemy, crippled as they must be with their wounded and families . . ."

Black Hawk sent some of his people down the Wisconsin River. "Myself," he said, "and band, having no means to descend the Ouisconsin, I started over a rugged country to the Mississippi, intending to cross it and return to my nation; many of our people were compelled to go on foot, for want of horses, which, in consequence of their having had nothing to eat for a long time, caused our march to be very slow. Some of our old men and little children perished on the way with hunger."

Col. Dodge warned the commander of Fort Crawford (Prairie du Chien), "From their crippled situation I think we must overtake them unless they descend the Wisconsin by water. If you could place a fieldpiece immediately on the Wisconsin that would command the river, you might prevent their escape by water."

Thomas Burnett was sent up the Mississippi to round up all canoes Black Hawk might use. He reported, "I told (the Indians) . . . to come as soon as possible, and bring all their canoes on the river; that if the Sauks should come to that point, they were not strong enough to prevent them from taking their canoes, if they did not kill them . . .; that should they effect a passage to the west side of the river . . . they would be suspected of assisting them, and if it should be known they had done so, they would lose their annuities, and be treated as allies of the Sauks and Foxes. They promised to start for this place . . . and bring all their canoes with them."

One participant reported, "Rafts were forthwith constructed at the Wisconsin, and the army crossed at a small village called Helena, on the 27th (and 28th) of July; and within two hours afterward we struck the trail of the enemy.

"We continued without deviation to follow the trail of the enemy . . . over such country as . . . has seldom been marched over—at one moment ascending hills, which appeared almost perpendicular, through the thickest of forests; then plunging through morasses; fording to our necks creeks and rivers; passing defiles . . . next clambering up and down mountains, perfectly bald, without so much as a bush to sustain man . . .

"The Indians were under the impression that it was impossible for us to follow them . . . We, each day, made two of their day's marches, passing one or two of their camps. We frequently passed their dead, who, exhausted by wounds or fatigue, had expired and fallen from their horses."

At the end of the week, Black Hawk reached the Mississippi river. Once his desolate band of starving men, women and children crossed to the other side, they would be safe at last. They never made it.

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THE JEFFERSON BANNER

## Aztalan Day Sunday 1968

The Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society is completing preparations for the second annual AZTALAN DAY to be held July 28.

Picnicing will begin at noon in Aztalan State Park. Come early with your picnic basket and barbeque grill. For your dessert the Aztalan 4-H and South Side Eagles will be selling homemade, mouth-watering pie, plus ice cream and pop at their stand.

The program will start at 1:30 when Jeff Dresen, a Lake Mills Scout will sound the Call to the Colors. Local talent will supply music and entertainment. The presidents of several neighboring Historical Societies will speak, and Herman Schmidt, Lake Mills city attorney will bring greetings from the city.

Mike Lange will present a resume of the work done by the archeologists, who have been working at the Park this summer, under the direction of Dr. Joan Freeman and Mr. J. B. Brandon. After the program a guided tour of the diggings will take place. Don't miss seeing the fascinating work being done at Aztalan.

The Aztalan Museum will be open all day, with its collection of Indian artifacts and mementoes of early pioneer days. Come in and see the tools and utensils your great-grandparents used to carve a home out of the wilderness.

The Robert P. Laatsch family of Jefferson will display their collections of antiques at the Park. They are bringing a gas engine that will grind feed, license plates, wrenches, spark plugs, corn planter tops, keys, Rogers 1847 silver spoons and a Kennedy collection.

The Lake Mills Girl Scouts under the leadership of Mrs. O'Etter and Mrs. E. Kracht will again this year, have their first aid tent available for any emergency.

Come out right after church and join your friends for a day at Ancient Aztalan.

THE JEFFERSON BANNER

# 140 Years Ago This Week

*in the*

# BLACK HAWK WAR

**AUGUST 1, 1832**

***It All Comes Alive in Black Hawk Pageant to be presented Aug. 10-13 at Fort Atkinson's FORT FEST '72***

**The Battle of Bad Axe—Part I**
**August 1, 1832**

Black Hawk, war chief of the Sauk - Fox Indians, and the starving remnant of his "British band" of 500 warriors and 1,200 old men, women, and children, arrived at the Mississippi river near the mouth of the Bad Axe (below La Crosse) on August 1, 1832.

General Henry Atkinson with 1,140 troops of the U.S. Army and the Illinois and Michigan Territory (Wisconsin) militia were now right behind them, determined to wipe them out for having crossed the Mississippi in violation of the Treaty of 1804 and subsequent treaties.

**Gunboat "Warrior"**

The first skirmish in the final Indian fight east of the Mississippi was between the Indians who were trying to escape back to their own country west of the river and the gunboat "Warrior," returning from Wabasha's Sioux village.

Black Hawk described the encounter later in his autobiography: "We had been here but a little while, before we saw a steamboat, the Warrior, coming. I told my braves not to shoot, as I intended going on board, so that we might save our women and children. I knew the captain (Joseph Throckmorton), and was determined to give myself up to him.

**Surrender Attempt Fails—Again**

"I then sent for my white flag. While the messenger was gone, I took a small piece of white cotton, and put it on a pole, and called to the captain of the boat, and told him to send his little canoe ashore, and let me come aboard.

"The people on the boat asked whether we were Sauks or Winnebagoes. I told a Winnebago to tell them we were Sauks, and wanted to give ourselves up. A Winnebago on the boat called to us 'to run and hide, that the whites were going to shoot.'

"About this time, one of my braves had jumped into the river, bearing a white flag to the boat, when another sprang in after him and brought him ashore.

"The firing then commenced from the boat, which was returned by my braves and continued for some time. Very few of my people were hurt after the first fire, having succeeded in getting behind old logs and trees, which shielded them from the enemy's fire.

"The Winnebago on the steamboat must have either misunderstood what was told, or did not tell it to the captain correctly, because I am confident he would not have fired upon us, if he had known our wishes. I have always considered him a good man, and too great a brave to fire upon an enemy when suing for quarters."

**Old Indian Trick**

Capt. Throckmorton of the gunboat viewed the same situation differently. "As we neared them," he wrote a friend, "they raised a white flag and endeavored to decoy us; but we were a little too old for them, for instead of landing, we ordered them to send a boat on board, which they declined.

"After about 15 minutes delay, giving them time to remove a few of their women and children, we let slip a six-pounder loaded with canister, followed by a severe fire of musketry; and if ever you saw straight blankets, you would have seen them there."

**Black Hawk Leaves his People**

When the steamboat ran out of firewood, Throckmorton withdrew to Fort Crawford (Prairie du Chien) to fuel up during the night. "After the boat had left us," Black Hawk said, "I told my people to cross (the Mississippi) if they could, and wished; that I intended going into Chippewa country. Some commenced crossing, and such as had determined to follow them, remained — only three lodges going with me." (Editor's Note: About 200 Indians successfully crossed the river before the troops arrived.) The Battle of Bad Axe —Part 2, August 2, 1832.

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# 140 Years Ago This Week

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# BLACK HAWK WAR

AUGUST 2, 1832

*It All Comes Alive in Black Hawk Pageant to be presented Aug. 10-13 at Fort Atkinson's FORT FEST '72*

"Next morning (August 2), at daybreak, a young man overtook me," Black Hawk continued, "and said that all my party had determined to cross the Mississippi—that a number had already got over safe, and that he had heard the white army, last night, within a few miles of them.

"I now began to fear that the whites would come up with my people, and kill them before they could get across. I had determined to go and join the Chippewas, but, reflecting that by this I could only save myself, I concluded to return and die with my people, if the Great Spirit would not give us another victory."

**The Troops Move Into Battle**

The troops moved out at 2 a.m. One participant reported, "On the 2d of August, a little after sunrise, we discovered the curtain of mist hanging over the Mississippi, and the scouts in advance, a detachment of (Col. Henry) Dodge's corps, announced the vicinity of the enemy.

"We were halted for an instant, our knapsacks and baggage thrown off and our packhorses left. We then advanced rapidly into the timbered land, and the occasional shots in advance confirmed the reports of the scouts. This firing was from a select rear guard of the enemy, about 70 in number.

"Our order of battle was promptly arranged under the personal supervision of Gen. Atkinson, the center composed of the regular (Army) troops, about 380 in number, and Dodge's corps, perhaps about 150. The right (was composed) of the remains of Posey's and Alexander's militia brigades, probably in all 250 men; the left, of Henry's brigade, in numbers not far from 400 men.

"The army advanced by heads of companies over two or three miles. At length, after descending a bluff, almost perpendicular, we entered a bottom thickly and heavily wooded, with much underbrush and fallen timber, and overgrown with rank weeds and grass, plunged through a bayou of stagnant water, the men as usual holding up their guns and cartridge boxes, and in a few minutes heard the yells of the enemy, closed with them, and the action commenced."

**Battle of Bad Axe**

Black Hawk described the massacre as follows: "Early in the morning, a party of whites, being in advance of the army, came upon our people, who were attempting to cross the Mississippi. They tried to give themselves up. The whites paid no attention to their entreaties, but commenced slaughtering them.

"In a little while the whole army arrived. Our braves, but few in number, finding that the enemy paid no respect to age or sex, and seeing that they were murdering helpless women and little children, determined to fight until they were killed.

"As many women as could, commenced swimming the Mississippi, with their children on their backs. A number of them were drowned, and some shot, before they could reach the opposite shore."

Indian Agent Joseph Street wrote to William Clark, son of the famous explorer, "The Indians were pushed literally into the Mississippi, the current of which was at one time perceptibly tinged with the blood of Indians who were shot on its margin and in the stream . . . It is impossible to say how many Indians have been killed, as most of them were shot in the water or drowned in attempting to cross the Mississippi."

**Battlefield Amputation**

Capt. James Estes recounted, "During the fight on the mainland, an Indian woman was killed. She had a young child at the breast, and the deadly bullet had passed through and shattered the arm of the infant, and penetrated the left breast of the mother. Dr. Addison Philleo, of Galena, surgeon of the volunteers, amputated the child's arm, on the ground; during the operation, a biscuit was given to the infant, which ate it, apparently unconcerned, and insensible to pain."

John Wakefield participated in the battle and shared the shame with others that women and children had been killed by the troops. "If they had shown themselves," he wrote, "they would have come off much better, but fear prevented them; and in their retreat, trying to hide from us, many of them were killed . . . but not intentionally by any man . . . We all well knew the squaws and children could do us no harm, and could not help what the old Black Hawk (age 65) and other chiefs did."

**The "Warrior" Returns**

The gunboat got back to the battle at 10 a.m. Capt. Throckmorton wrote, "The next morning, before we could get back again, on account of a heavy fog, they had the whole army on them. We found them at it, walked in, and took a hand ourselves. The first shot from the Warrior laid out three.

"I tell you what, Sam," Throckmorton wrote, "there is no fun in fighting Indians, particularly at this season, when the grass is so very bright."

Capt. Estes described the scene from the Warrior: "There are two islands in the Mississippi near the mouth of the Bad Axe; our troops had driven many of the Indians on these islands, and the steamboat opened fire with a six-pounder upon them. Having passed the large island, our troops were discovered on the mainland, and two small boats were sent . . . to the shore to bring them over to the islands.

"The boats made a few trips," he continued, "and landed Col. Zachary Taylor and his whole command, about 150 men, on the large island. Here a severe fight took place, and all the Indians found on this island were killed, except one who swam across the slough, and got on shore, on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, and escaped: two Indians were killed in the top of a tree. Upon the small island, several Indians were also killed . . ."

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### Atkinson Boards the "Warrior"

Capt. Estes continued, "During the fight, and about the close, Gen. Atkinson came on board the steamboat, and remained there until the close of the battle. The firing was very severe on the boat from both of the islands and the shore also, when it arrived at the head of the large island.

"The pilot's house being above the upper deck, was much exposed, and several balls had passed near it; the steersman, somewhat alarmed, left the wheel, and instantly afterward a shot passed through both sides of the house, in the direction where he had been standing . . ."

### Absolute Slaughter

One historian summarized the Battle of Bad Axe by writing, "The troops rushed on, the Indians were attacked in front by fire from the steamboat, and on all sides and in the rear, by an exasperated foe; the endeavors to escape by swimming the Mississippi, made by many women, with their children on their backs, resulted merely in a different kind of death from that which the men were destined to receive; and the battle was soon over, after having become an absolute slaughter on the one side, and a totally helpless resistance on the other."

**The Galena Gazette** at the time reported, "The battle lasted upwards of three hours. About 50 of the enemy's women and children were taken prisoners, and many, by accident in the battle, were killed. When the Indians were driven to the bank of the Mississippi, some hundreds of men, women, and children, plunged into the river, and hoped, by diving etc. to escape the bullets of our guns; very few, however, escaped our sharpshooters.

"The loss on the side of the enemy can never be ascertained, but according to the best computation, they must have lost upwards of 150; our loss in killed and wounded was 27."

### Mere Skeletons

Capt. Estes observed, ". . . during the 11 days which had elapsed from the time of the crossing of the Wisconsin (river) until their arrival on the banks of the Mississippi at Bad Axe, the Indians had most severely suffered from imperious hunger, and incessant fatigue in their hasty retreat; in fact, they were nearly starved, as was universally admitted by their conquerors."

Indian Agent Street said, "The prisoners are the most miserable looking poor creatures you can imagine. Wasted to mere skeletons, clothed in rags scarcely sufficient to hide their nakedness, some of the children look as if they had starved so long they could not be restored."

As the only war ever fought in Wisconsin was brought to an end, Gen. Atkinson reported to his superiors, "I cannot speak too highly of the brave conduct of the regular and volunteer forces engaged in the last battle, and the fatiguing march that preceded it."

Black Hawk fled north.