INDIAN LIFE IN THE
KALAMAZOO AREA
1795 - 1840

AN INVESTIGATIVE PAPER
by
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PREFACE

The purpose of the following paper is to present to the reader a short but comprehensive survey of Indian life in the Kalamazoo from 1795 to 1840.

Records of Indian life in this area are relatively few; and in some cases those that are found are not to be relied upon. It was therefore, necessary to sift out carefully the correct and pertinent facts before being able to present them to you, the reader, on the following pages.

In reading the paper before you, you will find that Kalamazoo was an important Indian center, here in southwestern Michigan. Here, many of the main trails of the county converged. Fishing and agriculture were carried on with zeal by the Indian inhabitants of this county.

You will find that as a human, the Indian had his faults as well as his good points. You will see how he was tricked and cheated in some cases by the white man, while, in other instances, the white man aided as well as added to the Indian cause.

I hope that you, the reader of this report, will find it as interesting to you as I did in gathering the information to present here on these pages.
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THE INDIAN MOUNDS OF KALAMAZOO COUNTY

Kalamazoo County is the site of several historic mounds, many of which are quite well defined. The one that is in the most public place is that in Bronson Park in the city of Kalamazoo itself. 1

This mound was very old when the United States deputy surveyor came to this location to run out the lines of the Match-e-be-nash-ewish Indian reservation, prior to 1829. The Indians, at that time, seemed to consider it a speaking rostrum. It was first opened in 1832 by Hon. E. Lakin Brown and Cyrus Lovel.

No bones or relics were found; but a quantity of charcoal was discovered. It was measured later by Henry Little and found to be a perfect circle, fifty-eight feet in diameter and of a height at that time, of four feet and nine inches. It is believed that its original height was somewhat greater. 2 Several excavations, at various times, have revealed nothing concealed in its interior save small amounts of charcoal, as mentioned before. But in the early settlement a cellar was dug in the mound so that whatever was contained therein, was then probably taken out and destroyed.

The mound was left in a very dilapidated condition until 1850. On July 4th. of that year, a Mr. A. J. Sheldon once more opened the mound; but the results of this event are unknown. 3 After this opening some appreciative citizens decided to restore it as close as possible to its original form; and it has remained as such up until the present time.

1 David Fisher and Frank Little, Compendium of History and Biography of Kalamazoo County, Michigan (Chicago, 1906), P. 21
2 George N. Fuller, Historic Michigan, Land of the Great Lakes, Also And Account of Kalamazoo County, ed. Charles A. Weissert (Chicago, 1939), Vol. III, P. 123
Two mounds on Section 15 on Gull Prairie were early in evidence; but like many others, the ravages of civilization have taken them out of existence. On Section 14 of the same township were four mounds. Three of these were double the size of the first two, being fully forty feet in diameter. The fourth resembled the smaller ones, having a width of twenty feet. Examinations made in one of the larger mounds show nothing but earth in its composition.

Cooper township contained several mounds. In 1880 a small mound stood on Section 30, in timbered land, and land then owned by A. R. Allen. It was twenty feet in diameter. On opening it human bones, apparently thrown promiscuously together, were found.

These bones were reported as being of more than ordinary size. This probably was the burial spot of victims of battle. Two small mounds were found on Section 16, on land formerly owned by A. D. Chappel. Many bones were found, probably those of battle victims, as three earthworks or fortifications were found nearby. The third mound is described as being on the "Governor Throop farm east of the river," but so far this farm has not been located exactly. Richland township is the site of six mounds.

These mounds were found about a mile north of the city. Four were on Section 14 and two across the highway on Section 15. Three of the first group were forty-one feet in diameter and one less than twenty feet in diameter. The two of the east group were twenty feet in diameter and were exact counterparts of each other. One of the first group was opened in 1837 by Colonel Isaac Barnes but no relics were found. Later, another of this group was opened and human bones were found. There were once one or two mounds in the southern part of

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4 Fisher and Little, Op., cit., 22.
the township, but so far as their location is concerned, that has not been ascertained.

In Comstock township, in section 22, on an island in the Kalamazoo River, was a large mound, diamond shaped, twenty feet high and covering over an acre. In 1831 a maple tree, thirty inches in diameter was found growing thereon. On Section 13 in Comstock township was a circular mound, twenty-five feet in diameter, only raised from the surrounding ground by about thirty inches.

A small mound on Section 30, in Pavilion, on the shore of Long Lake, was opened in 1876, in which were found two human skeletons. The mound seemed to have been built over and around the bodies, and to have once been surrounded by a ditch. An oak tree eighteen inches in diameter was growing on this mound when it was first seen by the settlers.

When the first white people came to the town of Climax a mound, to which the appellation of "Old Fort" was given, was to be seen on Climax Prairie, its size being about two-thirds that of the mound found in Bronson Park here in Kalamazoo. North of this mound, in the edge of the timber land on top of an elevation, was circular work including somewhat less than two acres of land. This contained both a parapet and a ditch, the latter having a width from sixteen to twenty feet and a depth of from two to three feet. This enclosure, when first seen by the pioneers, was covered by large trees. Other mounds existed in Climax and a similar "fort," but smaller stood on Section 1. This one looked much like a circus ring.

Just why the mounds were built is an unanswered, and apparently, an unanswerable question. The mounds were built and that is all that research, ar-

archeological or historical, has been able to find out. One theory concerning
the mounds can readily be disposed of: They were not burial mounds. In sev-
en mounds that have been opened on elevated ground, the finding of potsherds,
bits of chipped chert, a flintlike rock, and the indication of fire, all on
what appeared to have been the original surface, would point strongly to their
having been remains of ruins of earth-covered lodges. Earlier explorers men-
tion seeing such Indian lodges in different parts of the Kalamazoo River valley.

In some of the smaller mounds, however, skeletons have been discovered,
but not in such condition as to suggest that the mound was necessarily the or-
iginal place of sepulchre. The bones had evidently been disturbed after their
interment, and in the immediate neighborhood, fragments of pottery and indi-
cations of fire, suggest rather the floor of a prehistoric home, than the
tomb. Since very few of the mounds have been investigated carefully, what
may be concealed under the surface of such a monumental pile of earth leaves
a tempting and most and most interesting question for time to answer.

THE INDIAN GARDEN BEDS

Around the mounds and earthworks in Climax township, there were discovered
by the early settlers, five and possibly more, distinct groups of garden beds.
These beds were found about a mile west of the "old fort" previously mentioned.
They covered several acres. The beds were from six to eight feet wide and from
two to ten rods long. The paths between them were from six to eight inches
deep and from one to three feet wide. The paths were so deep that a plow would
run out of the ground in crossing them. The beds were irregular in shape and
size. A still larger number of these beds were found less than a mile east of
the "old fort." These lay in different angles to each other, as if cultivated
by these people. No one has yet been able to determine the true age of these

7 Ibid., 21.
8 Ibid., 22.
It is said that in the early days of settlement, the beds covered fully ten acres south of the Kalamazoo mound in Bronson Park.

One of these beds was very remarkable in that it was perfectly circular in shape, with paths corresponding with the spokes of a wheel. It was about one hundred feet in diameter and was over grown with burr oak trees when the first settlers arrived. In Schoolcraft, especially on Section 7, were many acres of these beds. Fully one hundred were seen counted on one square mile of land. In Portage township there was a group of beds in Section 12.

About half mile north of Galesburg was another group of beds. One of these beds was of very peculiar shape and was surveyed and mapped.

The size of these mysterious beds greatly varied, some including three hundred acres, others being only four or five acres in extent. These beds are found in many parts of the county, as well as the rest of the state. In some instances they covered the ancient mounds, suggesting that they were made by a later race than the Mound Builders.

THE TREATY OF 1795

The Pottawattomie Indians held title to the lands of Kalamazoo County until the Chicago Treaty of 1821. Before this, at Greenville, Ohio, on July 30, 1795, a treaty of peace between the United States, represented by General Anthony Wayne, and various Indian tribes, represented by a Chief Bad Bird (Match-e-pi-mash-e-wish) brought into the ownership of the whites nearly two thirds of the state of Ohio, a considerable portion of Indiana, and a large

10 Ibid., Vol. III, 125.
number of small reservations within their remaining territory, among the latter being a strip six miles wide, along Lake Erie and the Detroit River, the post of Mackinac, the island on which it stood; the island of Bois Blanc, and a piece of land to the north of the straits, six by three miles in extent, a piece six miles square at Chicago; another of the same extent at Fort Wayne; one twelve miles square at the Maumee Rapids, and various others. The Indians were to be allowed the privilege of hunting upon the ceded lands, and the government and people of the United States were freely to navigate the lakes and streams within the Indian territory. The consideration which the tribe received from the United States was twenty thousand dollars in goods, distributed at the treaty equally among them, and an annuity of nine thousand five hundred dollars in goods thereafter forever. The annual payments were to be divided among the contracting nations as follows: To the Wyandots, the value of one thousand dollars; to the Delawares, one thousand dollars; to the Shawnees, one thousand dollars; to the Miamis, one thousand dollars; to the Ottawas, one thousand dollars; to the Chippewas, one thousand dollars, and to the Kickapoos, Weas, Eel Rivers, Piankeshaws, and to the Kaskaskias, the sum of five hundred dollars each. This treaty marked the first in a series of steps planned by the United States government to lead to the eventual complete evacuation of the Indians from southwestern Michigan.

THE TREATY OF 1821

At the Chicago Treaty of August, 1821, the Pottawatomies ceded to the United States all of their lands lying south of the Grand River, with the exception of five small reservations, one of them being in Kalamazoo County and covering the site of the city of Kalamazoo. The Chippewas, Ottawas, and

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and Pottawattomies were represented in force and the latter tribe, as occupants of the land, having the consent of the other tribes, their allies in peace and war, took the leading part in the cession.

The official description of the ceded lands describes it as a "tract of land extending nearly across the state" and "beginning on the south bank of the St. Joseph River of Michigan near the Parc aux Vaches (a short distance above its mouth); thence in a line running due west from the southern extremity of Lake Michigan; thence along the line to the tract ceded by the treaty of Fort Meigs in 1817 (which was far to the east of Kalamazoo County), or if that tract should be found to lie entirely south of the line, then to the tract ceded by the treaty of Detroit in 1807 (the western boundary of which was twenty miles west of Lake Erie and the Detroit River); thence northward along the tract to a point due east to the source of that river; thence west to the source of that river; thence down the river on the north bank to its junction with Lake Michigan; thence southward along the east bank of the lake to the mouth of the St. Joseph River; thence up the river to the place of the beginning."

In consideration of this cession, the United States agreed to pay the Ottawa Indians one thousand dollars a year forever, in addition to one thousand five hundred dollars annually for fifteen years to support a teacher, a farmer and a blacksmith. The Pottawattomies were to be paid five thousand dollars annually for twenty years, besides one thousand dollars a year to support a teacher and a blacksmith. This treaty is of peculiar interest, as these provisions were among the first attempts made by the United States Government to civilize the savages.

This treaty is the basis of all the land titles of Kalamazoo County.

14 Ibid., 11.
The Kalamazoo reservation was called in the treaty the Match-e-be-nash-e-wish reserve. In September, 1827, all of the Pottawatomie reservations mentioned in the Chicago Treaty were exchanged for a consolidated reservation called Nottawasapee, portion lying in St. Joseph County and the rest in Kalamazoo. The Match-e-be-nash-e-wish land was by this exchange, brought into white possession. The Nottawasapee Reservation included one hundred and fifteen sections, sixty sections of it lying in Kalamazoo County and including all of the township of Brady and a short trip two miles wide of the west side of Wakeshima, besides a strip two miles wide on the east side of Schoolcraft township.

The township covering the site of the City of Kalamazoo was surveyed in 1827 by John Mullett and it became township 2 in range 11 west. The reservation remaining was surveyed in June, 1829, by Orange Risdon. By a treaty made at a council held at the Indian Reservation in St. Joseph County in September, 1833, the Pottawatomies, through the kindly influence of gifts from the whites, of military trappings, baubles and inexpensive trinkets of the value of ten thousand dollars, ceded all of the lands still held by them in the state to the United States.

They were to retain peaceable possession of these lands for two years, when they were to remove to a new reservation selected for them by the government west of the Mississippi River. The Indians, however, manifested such reluctance at leaving the state at the end of the two years, that they were allowed to remain for five years longer.


16 Ibid., 26.
POTTAWATOMIE VILLAGES IN KALAMAZOO COUNTY

There were several Indian villages and camps in Kalamazoo County. One, probably the last one to be occupied, was located near Harrison Lake, in Section 13, Prairie Ronde Township. It had a population of about two hundred and fifty persons and was ruled by Chief Sagamond. 17

Another village, existing in 1812, was located on Section 12, of Portage Township. This area had been occupied for a long time by the Indians of the Pottawatommi Tribe, as both a village and a planting ground. This village contained about 600 inhabitants by 1812. Another village, though a smaller one, was located on Portage Creek. The large village was considered the largest anywhere in this section of the country for a long while. At the time of the war of 1812, this village was used as a retreat for the women, old men, and children. It was not approached by the usual trails, and it seemed to be the purpose of its inhabitants to keep its location a secret. No regular trails led to it; the Indians being careful to avoid making any pathway to it from the surrounding country. The warriors in going out from the village or in returning, took every precaution known to Indian cunning, to destroy any traces of their journeyings. Many captives were brought here during the War of 1812. Most of these prisoners were white and were released for the most part, unharmed after the war. 18

Another Indian village once existed on the site now occupied by St. Augustine's Catholic Church. It was ruled by the Indian Chief Match-e-be-nash-e-wish, after whom the Indian reservation in this area was named. Nothing is

18 James M. Thomas, Kalamazoo Directory and Business Advertiser for 1867 and 1868 (Kalamazoo, 1867), pp. 9-10.
known of the chief, except that he was a party to one treaty with the United States Government. This was the Treaty of 1795, signed in Greenville, Ohio. From the various relics found, and the extent of their area, this must have been a considerable village. Probably it was one of the river commercial villages where barter was held.

On the northern part of Section 17, Kalamazoo county, there was a camp site where the Indians lived, probably during strawberry season, as large quantities of this plant were found here after the white man came.

On Section 18, of Charleston township, there was once an Indian village. This was probably a permanent site, as numerous corn pits were found by later pioneers. On Section 16, Charleston township, was another site, probably permanent, as a cemetery was located nearby.

On the northwest corner of Section 13, Oshtemo township was an Indian village, permanent in nature.

These Indians made large quantities of maple sugar.

Evidences of a large Indian population in this area are plentifully supplied by the three burial grounds which were found within the present city limits. The first one was discovered in 1834, when excavating for the cellar of the River House. A great number of Indian skeletons and loose bones were unearthed and were thrown into the river. At the same time many kettles, most of brass, were found along with other domestic articles. Many of these relics were carried away by the townspeople as curiosities to adorn their knick-knack shelves.

Another cemetery was located near St. Augustine's church and another near the present site of the Chase block. On Section 11, Portage township, was located an Indian cemetery. On Section 16, Charleston township, was located another one. Two more were located on Section 9, Prairie Ronde township. In one of these

was buried Chief Saginaw (Match-e-pi-nash-e-wish) who was killed at Jackson and 20 brought here for burial.

The Pottawatomie used various types of shelter; but they had one type which they seemed to prefer over others. This was a cabin made of reed mats called "apauois." These mats were probably placed over frames of saplings driven into the ground, bent inward, and lashed together at the top. Dwellings of this sort, about fifteen feet in diameter, were likened to a sugar loaf in shape. The mats were likewise carried by the Pottawatomies on their hunting expeditions, and their cabins were set up every evening.

Through the evidence presented, it would be very proper to conclude that the Kalamazoo area was a very well populated area. The Indians seemed to like the facilities available in this vicinity, thus accounting for the large groups of them present in the county.

AGRICULTURE, HUNTING AND FISHING

The Pottawatomies were, by nature, Indians of peace, with agricultural tastes. They cultivated extensive tracts of land and the "Indian fields" are said to have occupied hundreds of acres. The main crops of the tribes in this area consisted of beans, peas, squashes, tobacco, melons, and an abundance of a very fine grade of corn. The women had complete charge of the fields and did all of the menial work in connection with crop raising.

20 Ibid., Vol. III, 126.
Since the Pottawattomie were so agricultural-minded and raised crops to the large extent they did, little in the way of hunting was done by them. When they did hunt, it was chiefly for deer, in order to procure venison and the hides for clothing. Every autumn the men, women and children went into the woods for the winter hunting.

From time immemorial, the Kalamazoo River, at this place, was a resort for the Indians at certain seasons, it being a highly prized fishing place. There being no dams on the lower parts of the river, made it possible for the sturgeon and larger classes of fish to pass up the river from Lake Michigan. The stream here abounded with fish in the spring and early summer months. At such times, one would find the surface of the river filled with canoes of Indian fisherman.

DRESS OF THE POTTAWATOMIE

The Pottawattomie were very fond of display in their dress. They took great pride in decking themselves in gay costumes and colors. Their ponies were even arrayed with bells, ornaments and fanciful trappings. In the summer the men wore red or blue cloth. In the winter, adding highly ornamented buffalo robes. In playing games, such as lacrosse, they wore only a breechclout and deerskin moccasins. Beside the moccasins, they ordinarily wore leggings of skin or cloth. Strangely enough, they preferred European cloth shirts to their own leather ones, although they often wore the cloth shirt over the leather one, which reached to their middle. The dresses of the women reached in length almost to the knee. Underneath these they wore a sort of petticoat which covered them from the middle down to the midleg. Some wore little bonnets, and others covered their heads when travelling with a sort of cowl attached to their dresses, or with their robes.

Both the men and women greased their hair and painted themselves, the women usually on the face with vermillion; the men painted themselves all over on occasions, such as for lacrosse games, and with all colors. The men also tattooed their bodies with all sorts of figures and designs.

As compared to other tribes, the dress of the Pottawatomie was by no means very fancy. They seemed to pride themselves in just wearing the essential commodities along with a few intricate or fancy designs, in order to set the garment off.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

The matter of Indian manners and customs is handled in a very graphic fashion in a letter received by Henry Bishop, of Kalamazoo in 1880. A. H. Scott, the writer, was then a resident of St. Joseph, and was probably as conversant with Indian life as any man in the county. I will quote this letter as seen in the Kalamazoo Telegraph of January 14, 1880, as follows:

"I came to Kalamazoo county early in June, 1833, as a member of the family of James Smith, in the company with his brother Addison" "Hosea B. Huston and E. Lakin Brown carried on the merchandising business under the name of Smith, Huston & Company, and had two stores, one at Schoolcraft and the other at Kalamazoo (or rather Bronson, as it was then called). I soon picked up enough of the Indian language to enable me to trade with them. They then owned a reservation of land ten miles square, which took in the eastern part of Gourdneck Prairie, and had a small village or collection of wigwams in the

in the grove just east of the prairie, on the farm now owned by James N. Neas
smith, Esq. The wigwams were all built with a frame of poles, covered with
elmbark, with the exception of the wigwam of the chief Saginaw, which was built
for him by his friends among the early white settlers, of logs and covered with
oak shakes. You wish me to inform you how they received the first settler,
how they lived and how much they mingled with and how they traded with the white
men. First, I think, as a class, they received the early settlers very kindly,
and were inclined to live peacefully with them. Second question, how they
lived. Deer were plenty in those days, and, as they were good hunters, they
had no difficulty during the greater part of the year in supplying themselves
with meat. They also used the flesh of the raccoon, muskrats, etc., for food.
Fish were plenty in the rivers and lakes. They understood how to catch them
both with spear and with hook. They raised corn on land that some of the early
settlers plowed and fenced for them. In their season, wild fruits, such as
blueberries, blackberries, etc., were obtained by them for food, and also to
'swap' with the white man for flour, salt, sugar, etc. Third question, How
much they mingle with the white man?

In our stores and dwellings and cabins of their acquaintances they made
themselves very much at home.

The squaws and pappooses would come in crowds and sit down on the floor
never taking a chair) till they were so thick that you could hardly find a
place to put your foot. They turned out en masse on all public days and at
horseraces and shows. They were greatly delighted with circuses.

Shooting matches and foot races they took great delight in. In answering
the fourth question, How they traded with the white man, I answer that the
trade with the Indian at that early day was mainly an exchange (or they call it
'swap') of their furs, venison, dressed deerskins, moccasins, blueberries, black-
berries, cranberries, etc., for flour, salt, tobacco, powder, lead, sugar and
all the articles that the Indian use to clothe themselves.
I never knew an Indian to offer to sell to white people any part of the carcass of a deer except the ham. The price for a ham of venison was always two shillings, no matter how great or small it was.

Whenever we sold a squaw any goods that had to be made up into any of their garments, a needle and thread for each garment must be given. Only the goods for one garment would be bought or swapped for that time. It required a good knowledge of their ways and much patience to be a successful dealer with the Indians. We frequently sold them goods on credit, and found them about the same kind of paymasters as the ordinary white man; some paid promptly, some after a long time, and some never paid. They would have been splendid customers if they had been blessed with plenty of money; but they were poor and shiftless, and I may say with truth, a vagabond race, and consequently their trade was of no great value. They received an annual payment from the government, which was mainly in necessary goods for their use and comfort, and a small amount of silver money; the money was gone, and in most cases did them no good, but the goods furnished by the government was just what they needed, and added greatly to their comfort.

"In regard to the personal characteristics of any noted Indian, etc., I would say that the best specimen of an Indian that I ever saw in those early days was Saganaw, the chief of all the Pottawattomies in and about Kalamazoo County. The name 'Noonday' was probably his popular appellation.

He was a man of great good sense, of bearing, of great integrity, and in every way a dignified gentleman. He was called a great orator by his people. He was true friend of the whites. I have heard him make speeches to his people, and, although I could not understand him, his manner and voice were very interesting, and the effect of his speech on his people was very great."
"Saramaw was the only Indian that I ever saw who was polite and attentive to his squaw. When they came to the store at Schoolcraft to do their trading, he would help her off her pony, and place his hand on the ground by the side of her pony, and she would place her foot in it, and he would lift her with apparent-ly great ease into her saddle, and no white man could have shown more respect and politeness. If he wished for any credit at the store, he had it, and paid it promptly. Any Indian that he told us it was safe to trust was surely to pay us.

He always told us never to trust his son, Cha-na-ba, who was a very worthless fellow.

"In regard to the number of Indians that lived in Kalamazoo county and vicinity at that early date, I cannot make any estimate that would be of value. They were continually coming and going and scattered about in little squads. In regard to the effect it had on the character of the Indian to closely associate with the white race, I have no doubt the effect was bad. He seems (as many writers have said) to take in all the vices of the white man and reject all the virtues. Whiskey, the great demoralizer of the white man was and is the principal factor in the destruction of all that is good in the Indian character, when he comes in contact with the race.

"The longer the Indians remained here among the whites, the more worthless they became. Game became scarce, they were too indolent to work, and they became drunkards and beggars. The great end and aim of most of them was to get whiskey to get drunk with, and as it cost them only twenty-five cents per gallon, they generally got all they wanted. When they purchased whiskey they usually announced that they were going to get 'squibby' (drunk).

The quality of the whiskey sold to the Indians was very bad, having been watered and drugged for their especial use. I recollect, in 1833, that
some Indians came to Schoolcraft from Kalamazoo and made bitter complaint to Addison Smith about H. B. Huston. They said that he put so much 'bish' (water) in his whiskey that it made them sick before they could get 'squibby' (drunk).

As to myself, I sold no whiskey whatever to the Indians, except during the first two or three years after my arrival in Schoolcraft. "

The contents of the above quotation quite vividly describe typical Indian life in this area during the 1830's. It is without a doubt the best description of Indian lore in this area found up to this time. Though short and concise, it, nevertheless, presents the picture quite adequately.

Marriage among the Pottawattomies was very interesting, in that they practiced polygamy. It persisted among them long after it was dropped by other tribes. This also was a cause of the resistance offered to the efforts of the missionaries to convert them.

One feature of their marriages which excited comment was the large number of marital alliances with other tribes. It is reported that they took wives from among the Winnebago and in turn gave them their own daughters to be married. Intermarriage with Peoria was also reported. Thus, these references indicate that residence was "patri-local" and descent was "patrilineal.

The Pottawattomie liked to play games to amuse themselves. Their favorite game was that of Lacrosse. In playing this game they sometimes formed little leagues with the various tribes in the area. In this way, only the more competent players of the village were chosen to play on the team. The rivalry was intense but very rarely did arguments break out to spoil the atmosphere of the game. The game was usually played in a large open area and was attended by large crowds of Indians.

25 The Kalamazoo Telegraph, January 14, 1880.
Dice was another favorite game of the Indians; and this game the men would play for hours on end.

Perhaps the favorite past time of the Pottawattomie was that of dancing. In the evening the women and girls danced. They adorned themselves liberally with grease applied to their hair. Then they put on white chemises and painted their faces with vermillion, also putting on all the porcelain beads they possessed, so that after a fashion, they looked very well dressed.

They danced to the sound of the drum and of the sisyquoy (rattle) which is a sort of gourd with pellets of lead inside. There were four or five young men who sang and kept time by beating the drum and the sisyquoy, while the women danced to the rhythm and do not miss a step. This was a very pretty sight; and it lasted almost all night. Often the old men danced the 'medelinne'; they looked like a band of sorcerers. All this is done at night. The young men often danced while they recounted their exploits. On such occasions they also danced the scout dance. They were always well adorned when they did this.

The Pottawattomie, undoubtely, had more manners and customs than the ones aforementioned. However, it seems that little can be learned of these other rites. The record of them have been lost or the Pottawattomie in leaving this territory took the other mores of their society with them mentally, thus leaving us no written accounts of them.

THE SIX MAIN INDIAN TRAILS OF KALAMAZOO COUNTY

The Indian trails in Kalamazoo county when the first white men arrived were very numerous. There seem to have been six main trails. The principal trail was that which became known as the Washtenaw Trail, which crossed the

27 Ibid., 270.
state from east to west, nearly on the line on the Michigan Central Railroad. Along this trail were Indian villages at Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Gull Prairie, Kalamazoo, Schoolcraft, South Haven and St. Joseph.

The first of the six county trails was the one leading from Carey Mission at Niles to Thomas Mission on the Grand River. This trail crossed the northwest part of the county. It entered the county near the northwest corner of Section 31, Oshtemo township, crossed the township to the southeast corner of Section 13, turned north and followed the north and south section line to almost the east quarter post section of Section 12. The trail is here lost for four miles, but commences again on the west side of Section 19, Cooper township, and follows a northerly direction across Sections 24, 13, 12 and 1.

What appeared to have been one of the principal trails ran across the county in a northeasterly direction. It entered the county near the southwest corner of Section 30, Texas township, turned southeast across Section 31, then partly east for two miles to the north end of Mud Lake, thence northerly, passing the present Texas corner about one-half mile west, thence northeasterly between Crooked and Bass Lakes, leaving Texas township near the northeast corner of Section 1, thence across Sections 35, 36, and 25 of Oshtemo township, and follows the present Michigan Avenue to its junction with the present Oakland Drive. It is presumed that from this point it followed easterly a trifle north of Kalamazoo Avenue; but no authentic record actually places it there. The actual record again starts at about a quarter of a mile southwest of the old ford near the French trading post as located in 1821, in what is now Riverside Cemetery. The trail then passes northeasterly and south of a chain of small lakes in Kalamazoo, Comstock and Richland townships.

On Section 22, Richland township, it turned nearly east, passing about one-half mile south of Richland. Passing through what is now Yorkville, it headed around the southeast arm of Gull Lake, then passed east for about three miles, where it turned northeast, on Section 22, Ross township, going around the South end of Stoney Lake; after making a swing to the north it passed east for about one mile on Section 14, Ross township, then turned southeast again and left the county near the southeast corner of Section 24, Ross township. A branch of this trail left it near the southeast corner of Section 32, Richland township, and ran nearly east to the northeast corner of Charleston township, where the record is lost, as the deputy United States surveyor in Charleston township left no record of Indian trails.

Another principal trail entered the county either in the southeast corner of Prairie Ronde township or near the south line of Section 7, Prairie Ronde township (the records, so far, are very scant), across Prairie Ronde township until the trail passed out of this township at the northeast corner of Section 25. From this point the record is complete across Brady, Pavilion and Climax townships, leaving the county at the southeast corner of Charleston township. On this trail were built three villages, Vicksburg, Scotts and Climax. This trail passed directly through the numerous fortifications, garden beds and mounds that were found by the early settlers on Climax Prairie.

Another trail that was very well marked in the early times started from the French trading post, skirted the hill along the northerly bank of the Kalamazoo River and then followed the present location of the Territorial road through Comstock and Galesburg, where the record is lost again, in Charleston township.

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A north and south trail entered the county on the south line of Section 33, Brady township, thence northwesterly, passing the present site of Vicksburg about three-quarters miles east, thence northerly, passing between Austin Lake and Long Lakes, thence following the present location of the Portage Road and Portage Street to the southeast corner of the Mash-be-mash-i-wish reservation at about the present location of Oak Road. From here north the records are mor or less tradition. It is known, however, that it passed through Kalamazoo, crossed the ford at the trading post and passed north along the east bank of the Kalamazoo River.

A trail that was mentioned several times by the early settlers originated in Prairie Ronde, near an Indian village, near Harrison Lake, crossed the southeastern part of Texas township, thence northerly through the westerly side of Portage township, and entered Kalamazoo township by Section 32 and entered Mash-e-be-mash-i-wish reservation near its southwest corner and tradition says it followed what is now known as Oakland Drive to the village of Kalamazoo.

This trail passed the British Forge of 1812, on what was known as the Axtell farm. Other trails in this region were the Canada Trail and the Great Sauk Trail. However, since the records of these two were lost, little is known of them or where they went.

One unnamed trail also passed through Kalamazoo in a north and south direction. It came from what is now Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and terminated at Grand Rapids.

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It is reported that at one time eighteen trails converged here, thus making Kalamazoo a trail center of southwestern Michigan.

By the time the first white settlers reached this region they found the Indian trails in some cases, to be as much as two to three feet below the ground level in depth. This evidently indicates the heavy use that the Indians made of these trails.

There were many other trails; but they seemed to be, for the most part, entrances to village sites or cross trails, connecting up with the main trails.

THE TRADING POSTS

Although there were probably more, only three different trading posts are on record as being in the Kalamazoo area.

A Mr. Rix Robinson, an employee of the American Fur Company, states the following concerning the first post in this area: "The first trading hut at Kalamazoo was on the north side of the river, and was erected in the fall of 1823, by an old Frenchman by the name of Numaiville, who traded there that fall and during the winter of 1824; and in the spring returned to Mackinac. In the fall of 1824 Mr. Robinson, under whose supervision the old trader worked, had a more substantial building erected. He kept the old man as clerk for a number of years, while he ran his own post at Grand River. It is said that this old Frenchman could not read or write a single word; but could keep the accounts by hieroglyphics or imitation pictures, and rehearse them to Mr. Robinson in the spring with almost exact accuracy in the name of the article of price. Mr. Robinson says that he continued to occupy the post here with different clerks
until 1837, when he closed up his Indian trade. Mr. Robinson generally visited the post here once, and sometimes twice, during the winter but never more than a day or two at a time.

He sometimes kept men here to trade the whole year round; but generally only during the fall, winter and early part of the spring.

This little trading post, built partly of logs and partly of bark, stood not far from the ferry, within the enclosure and near the southwest corner of Riverside Cemetery.

Following the old Frenchman here in Kalamazoo was a trader by the name of Gurdon S. Hubbard. He stayed here until 1827, at which time he left the trading business entirely to go into the meat packing field in Chicago. No records are left to tell us of his trading days here in the Kalamazoo area. 31

The last trader in this area that we have any record of is Jean Baptiste Recollet. No accounts are left to tell us of his trading activities here in Kalamazoo. It is known that he stayed here until around 1832, when he suddenly left, for no apparent reason. It is said that he received news that his two daughters were drowned in a boating accident at Mackinac. These two girls were all that he had left to live for. Recollet had saved for years to send the girls to an exclusive finishing school in Canada.

So, evidently the news of their accidental death left the old man so grief stricken that he quietly packed up and left this area to seek his fortune.

33 Ibid., Vol. III, 148-149.
elsewhere; and at the same time try and forget his great loss.

Although it is not verified positively, a Mr. Lephart is supposed to have come in to run the trading post here after Recollet left. Word has it that he stayed here a number of years. His trade was supposed to have been extensively in tea and ammunition.

Most of the stock for the trading posts here in the Kalamazoo area was brought here from Detroit on packhorses. Other goods were brought down from Mackinac in Batteaux. The goods consisted mainly of ammunition, tobacco, blankets, clothing, beads, hats and caps, steel traps, spears, hooks, a small assortment of boots and shoes, and a generous supply of the white men's fire-water.

**EFFORTS TO CHRISTIANIZE THE INDIANS**

Prior to the settlement of the St. Joseph, Grand River and Kalamazoo valleys by the whites, an effort had been made by the missionaries of the Baptist denomination to convert the Indians to Christianity, and induce them to follow agricultural pursuits. With this object in view, the Rev. Isaac McCoy, in 1822, established a Mission for educating and christianizing Indians at Niles, and soon after made an effort to establish a like school at Grand Rapids, in aid of which Governor Cass lent his influence and hearty cooperation and grants of lands and treaties were made to secure the object. In 1826, the Rev. Leonard Slater joined Mr. McCoy and was soon after put in charge of the Mission at Grand Rapids. Agricultural implements were purchased, cattle were introduced, blacksmiths and white farm laborers were employed, and for a period of nearly ten years, the most persevering and well directed labor was performed to make the Indians of the area a civilized and Christian people. But through the indolence and indifference of the Indian to this desirable change, added to the evil influence of bad white men,

and the effort culminated in the final removal of nearly all the tribes to the far west.

**HOW KALAMAZOO GOT ITS NAME**

On Tolland's Prairie (Galesburg) there had once been a village; and it was here that the origin of the name of the river "Kalamazoo" arose. Schoolcraft and other authorities say its etymology is Kih-Kalamazoo, "it boils like a pot," or the "boiling pot," from the numerous small eddies on its surface.

On the other hand, Indian tradition has it that many moons ago a wager was made than an Indian could not run to a certain point of the river and return ere the water then boiling in a little pot on the fire should have boiled out. The race was made; the result has not been handed down to us; but the beautiful river was ultimately given the name it now bears so proudly.

**EVICTION OF THE INDIANS FROM THE KALAMAZOO AREA**

In 1840, the Indians were removed from this state to some place west of the Mississippi River. To aid in the removal of the various tribes of this area the government sent in federal troops. These troops were put under the command of a civilian named H. E. Rice. At various Indian villages camps were established; and at each the troops conducted the regular western cowboy "round-up" operations to capture the Indians. The fated children of the forests were dragged like steers into an enforced temporary captivity, all of their home ties being relentlessly severed. On their way westward, those going from this part of the country encamped here on the grounds north of the Central Depot, and were visited day and night, by the curious inhabitants of this village. The Indians listened attentively, each day to speeches from their

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36 Ibid., 9.
orator and held their councils. They remained nearly a week at this place, and were joined by other parties from the counties north and west. On their departure, they struck their tents, loaded their valuables on their ponies and marched away, in single file, all taking off their headgear, and holding up their right hands as they passed by the residence of Judge Ransom, for whom they entertained a high respect. These Indians were mostly of the Pottawatomi and Ottawa Tribes, and with the exception of a few stragglers left behind, and those belonging to the different missions, the county was very nearly cleared of them. Many of them came from as far away as Hillsdale County, and as close as St. Joseph County. Thus, with the ending of the Indian population in this area the great saga of an era came to an abrupt end. The Indian of this region, along with his many brothers all over the country, must have known that the advent of the white man and his desire to push farther and farther across this country of ours, would soon result in their being literally shoved off of a continent that they had called their home for centuries. Yet, they took all of this abuse and punishment in their silent taciturn way and calmly waited for oblivion to swallow them up.
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