

CHAPTER V

ABORIGINAL TRIBES

The Mound Builders left evidences behind them when they abandoned this part of the state, hence they are called Mound Builders. From the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes are found many mounds. These mounds varied in size from 10 to 400 feet in diameter, and some measuring as high as 100 or 125 feet, but being of different shapes. Of course it has been a long time since those mounds were in a good state of preservation and the shape and size of them are a good deal guessed at.

Part of the largest mounds and fortifications were found in or near St. Louis and some in Ohio and Indiana. In some of those mounds are found bones and evidences of them having been burned, as there are ashes and charred remains to be found. Some of the graves contain human skeletons, some of which are encased in stone sarcophagi with implements of war and various utensils adapted to the use of the Indian—stone axes, no two apparently resembling each other, arrow-heads and spears of different sizes and shapes, drills made for boring holes in stone. It is interesting to think of their knives being made of flint rock, and they even made their saws of the same material. It is quite a curiosity to find one of their pipes beautifully shaved and carved from those stones. All kinds of Indian instruments were made and used by the tribes called Mound Builders.

The cooking utensils made by those people were of clay, and in some cases they did use a cement or marl dug from the marshes, making a combination that they used. Many articles of this kind have been found and stored away as souvenirs and keepsakes, reminding us of the implements made and used by the Mound Builders.

We can recollect some strong evidences of those mounds, some of which were within the boundary lines of Starke County. We have had several places, and not very far from Knox evidence of mounds which have long since become obliterated by the constant use of the farmer's plow. One of which I can mention that comes within the memory of some of us today was located on the northeast corner of Main and John streets in Knox, one at the southwest corner of northwest quarter section 32, in Center Township, one in section 8 in Oregon Township, and several more throughout the county.

The mound builders, as they are generally called, were a very peculiar people and the knowledge they had of converting the stone into

implements such as axes, spearheads, arrow heads, kettles for cooking, vases, water-cups and ornaments was remarkable.

We know of none of the mounds that were fully excavated or thoroughly examined as to what might have been found, or just what they contained, except what evidence was gleaned from a casual survey made of them when this county was first settled by those coming from the East. It was generally supposed that all Indians were of one tribe or family, but later it was discovered from intimate relations with them this theory was incorrect, as they spoke different dialects and their habits were different—thus the conclusion that they were of different tribes. It was one belief that the inhabitants of the American continent belonged to the Mongolian race in Asia.

Since the Europeans came to this continent many habits and conditions of the American Indian have been noticed in the localities where they built their mounds and established their camp life.

One peculiarity of the Indians was to seek the high lands to build their wigwams and erect their villages. When DeSota pitched his tent upon Florida's soil, which has now been almost four hundred years ago, he discovered the different qualities and customs of the Indians in that country and relates that "the Indians try to place their villages on elevated sites, but inasmuch as Florida is a flat and level country they erect elevations themselves, by carrying earth and erecting a kind of platform, two or three pikes in height, the summit of which is large enough to give room for twelve, fifteen or twenty houses to lodge the cacique and his attendants."

LaHarpe, writing in 1720, says of the tribes on the lower Mississippi, "Their cabins are dispersed over the country upon mounds of earth made with their own hands."

The first European explorers through Arkansas noticed similar mounds to those found in Florida.

Indiana, Illinois and Missouri mark the location of many mounds, but they were different from the mounds just spoken of, as they were built upon elevated grounds and the first settlers had no difficulty in locating them, as there would be a deep depression in the ground as though there had been a cellar dug beneath some house long since burned or decayed and only leaving a hole or circular depression in the ground. Those are the kind found in Starke County at the time of the first settlers.

We have no positive proof that there was any difference between what we term mound builders and the Indians. It is a fair conclusion that the Natchez tribe of Indians were a part or parcel of the Mound Builders.

The Indians were divided or grouped into various tribes, although the people inhabiting America prior to its discovery by Christopher Columbus in the year 1492 are thought to be descendants of one and the same stock, although those tribes were very much different in their customs, their language and their habits of living.

The greatest tribe known was the Algonquins, a prominent tribe

of North America, and the Indians of this part of the country are supposed to belong to that great tribe or grand division.

The Miami confederacy of Indians was organized for the defense of the Indians who occupied this territory. Farther east were the Onondagas, Cayugas and the Senecas. Several tribes united in making up the Miamis—as the Eel River, Piankashaws, Weeas and some others. It will be observed that the Miamis held dominion over the northwestern part of Indiana, for we find from history that “the Miamis had settled along the headwaters of the great Miami, the Maumee, the St. Joseph of Lake Michigan and the Upper Wabash River and its tributaries,” although the Pottawattomies are credited with occupying the northwest part of the state. Although the Kankakee River is not mentioned in this connection, it is, however, a certain fact that those tribes mentioned were sole possessors of this river, as it lies within the territory just described.

One peculiar method those Indians had during their warfare was to surprise their enemies by covering up their trails when on the warpath. They were stoical, treacherous, grave, cowardly, and would aim to do most of their fighting concealed and by cunning methods of warfare. Hard suffering inculcated a form of bravery, and they would hunt or fish and fight, while the burden of work rested with the women folks. It seemed as though they cared but little for a permanent place of abode, as they roamed the woods and prairie lands over. This appeared to be the custom of the earliest Indians. It is certain that in after years they did become more reconciled and built small villages, their huts being built of logs or poles, some of which would be set in the ground and interwoven with straw or grass and covered with bark peeled from the trees. They held exclusively to their one symbol of peace, and that was their pipe, which one of their number would light and each one would smoke from it, passing it from one to another, thus manifesting a form of peace pact that has always held good among those tribes.

It was a common thing for those Indians to march in single file. Sometimes a hundred or more would be in one continuous line, and when they would give the war-whoop they would make the whole country around echo with their voices.

A Shawnee chief by the name of Tecumseh, not being satisfied with the land ceded to the Miamis and Pottawattomies in Indiana, set about to form a confederacy, taking in all the tribes of the Northwest. He made a compact in which it was stipulated that no tribe could cede any of their land without the consent of all the tribes. While Tecumseh was busily engaged in forming his confederacy, his brother, Law-le-was-i-kaw, the Prophet, engaged in hostilities and attacked General Harrison at Tippecanoe on the 7th of November, 1811, and as I have said before, the Indians were defeated, which completely shattered all hopes for Law-le-was-i-kaw to establish his much desired and long-looked for authority. Tecumseh accused his brother of cowardice and never forgave him. Tecumseh upon the breaking out of the War of

1812 affiliated with the British, but was killed October 5, 1813, at the Battle of the Thames and his brother went west of the Mississippi, but died in the year 1834, twenty-one years after the death of Tecumseh. The Indians always maintained that the land belonged to them. It was, however, the aim of the United States to buy the land and acquire it by treaty, yet the Indians were in some cases compelled to sign treaties and cede their land against their will, or forced to give up their land and take up their claims in a country farther west.

In a message to Congress which he submitted on the 3d day of December, 1830, President Jackson said: "It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government steadily pursued for thirty years in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlement is approaching a happy conclusion. Two important tribes have accepted the provisions made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed their example will induce the remaining tribes to seek the same obvious advantage.

"Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers, but what do they more than our ancestors did or their children are doing now?

"To better their condition in an unknown land, our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects.

"Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions. Does humanity weep at the painful separation from everything animate and inanimate with which the young heart has become entwined? It is rather a source of joy that our country afford a scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body and mind, developing the power and faculties of the men in their highest perfection. These remove hundreds and thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase lands they occupy and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. Can it be cruel in this government, when by events which it cannot control, the Indian is made discontent in his ancient home, to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? How many thousands of our people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing west on such conditions?"

In his message to Congress one year later, President Jackson said: "My opinion remains the same, and I can see no other alternative for the Indians but that of their removal to the west or a quiet submission to the state laws." In 1837 about one hundred Pottawattomie Indians began to emigrate, and the old Chic Naswaugee stood upon the shores of the lake with tears flowing down his cheek as he bid farewell to the old hunting grounds. There were 860 Indians enrolled in all, under command of Chief Menominee. Their main village was at Twin Lakes, now in Marshall County, but the same tribes often scoured the country between that lake and the Kankakee River, thus passing through and over our immediate neighborhood.

The Indian marriage vows were very sacred, a violation of which

meant banishment or death. One of the Pottawattomie chiefs was born near Chicago, and according to a dispatch published in the Inter Ocean, October 24, 1912, he died at the age of 120 years. Almost one hundred years have elapsed since the Indian possessed this land. No longer is heard the war-whoop of the red man. What a change has been made since that time, transforming the unbroken forest occupied by the Indians into fertile fields of golden grain, and where the hut or wigwam then stood is now occupied with fine buildings and towns have sprung up with their high church towers pointing to the skies, surrounded by a peaceable and industrious people, tilling the soil and living at rest with all men.