

A detailed oil painting of Black Hawk, a prominent leader of the Sauk and Fox tribes. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a large, elaborate feathered headdress with black and red feathers. He has two dark circular marks on his forehead and is wearing a gold collar and a necklace of dark beads. The background is a soft, light blue and white wash.

SECOND EDITION

BLACK HAWK
AND THE
WARRIOR'S PATH

ROGER L. NICHOLS

WILEY Blackwell

Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path

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SECOND EDITION

Completely updated and expanded, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path* is a masterful account of the life of the Sauk warrior and leader, and his impact on the history of early America. Black Hawk chose the warrior's path for over 40 years, leading groups of Sauks against other tribes, white pioneers, state militiamen, and US Army regulars. His final stand against the United States in 1832, in what became known as the Black Hawk War, proved to be disastrous for his people and ultimately opened the Old Northwest to a torrent of white settlement. The period between 1760 and 1840 is brought to life through vivid discussion of Native American society and traditions, Western frontier expansion, and US-Native American politics and conflicts. Accessibly written by a noted expert in the field, students will understand key themes and find meaningful connections among historical events in Native American and 18th century American history.

This second edition includes: 1 new map, 16 new images, a revised bibliographic essay incorporating the latest research, a timeline, and 8 concise, reorganized chapters with key terms and study questions. The ideal supplement to any study of Native American or early US history, this biographical narrative is an engaging introduction to one of the most tumultuous periods in US history.

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Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path

Second Edition

Roger L. Nichols

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To Mathew and Amy Hawk

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Preface

Writing this is a pleasure because it means that at least the book's prose is ready for production. My special thanks goes to Andrew Davidson, former senior editor for history at Wiley. He instigated the project, and added an encouraging editorial hand along the way. All history depends on the work of others, and this new edition has benefitted from at least ten new books on topics related to it written since the first one appeared. Professor Kevin Gosner, chair of the History Department at the University of Arizona, helped by providing office space for me as an unofficial "writer in residence" for some semesters. At Wiley, Allison Kostka, senior project editor, effectively took charge early in the process. Other Wiley staff whose help I am aware of are Roy Kelsey, Julia Kirk, and Maddie Koufogazos.

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Roger L. Nichols
Tucson, Arizona

Timeline

1804	November 3	Treaty surrenders Illinois land
1805	Fall	Zebulon Pike locates sites for forts
1808	Fall	Construction of Ft. Madison begins
1809	Summer	Sauk raids at Ft. Madison
1812	Summer	William Clark takes chiefs to Washington
	September	Attack at Ft. Madison
	Fall	Black Hawk and other Sauks join British
1813	Summer	Fight alongside British
	Summer	Some Sauk villages move to Missouri
	October	Keokuk becomes Saukenuk war leader
1814	July	Attack John Campbell's boats on Mississippi
	September	Defeat Zachary Taylor's troops
1815	October	Treaties of Portage des Sioux
1816	May	Sauks sign Treaty of Portage des Sioux
	Summer	Construction of Forts Armstrong and Crawford begins
1816–1831		Annual visits to British at Ft. Malden
1817–1831		Intertribal raiding continues
1822	Spring	White miners enter lead region

1824	Summer	William Clark takes chiefs to Washington
1825	Summer	Treaties of Prairie du Chien signed
1827	Summer	Squatters arrive at Saukenuk
1828–1832		Development of the British Band as separate group
1829	Fall	Land at Saukenuk sold
1830	May	Mesquakie peace chiefs massacred
1830	July	New Treaty of Prairie du Chien
1831	June	British Band forced west across Mississippi
1832	April 4	British Band returns to Illinois
	April 8	Gen. Atkinson brings troops north
	May 14	Battle of Stillman's Run begins the war
	May 20–	Frontier raiding
	May–July	Army and militia hunt for Indians
	July 19	Dodge and Henry find Sauk trail
	July 21	Indians successful defense at Battle of Wisconsin Heights
	August 1	Steamer <i>Warrior</i> attacks British Band at Mississippi
	August 2	Battle of Bad Axe—British Band destroyed
	August 27	Black Hawk and other leaders surrender at Prairie du Chien
1833	September 10	Black Hawk imprisoned at Jefferson Barracks
	April	British Band captives sent to Washington
	May 1	Imprisoned at Fort Monroe
	June 4	Released and sent on tour of eastern cities
	June 30	Begin return to Iowa
	August 3	Brought to Fort Armstrong
	August 5	Released to civil chiefs
	Fall	Dictated autobiography to LeClair
1838	October 3	Black Hawk dies

Who is Black Hawk? 1600–1804

General Edmund P. Gaines, a veteran frontier soldier, had issued the call for an urgent council. His orders directed him to move the troublesome segment of Sauk and Mesquakie Indians, known as the British Band, out of Illinois and west across the Mississippi River into Iowa. As Gaines and his aides waited, Indian leaders arrived at the Rock Island agency house. Keokuk and Wapello, two of the principal chiefs, and their followers, entered the meeting place, crowding it to the doors. Then Black Hawk and his partisans appeared. Armed with their lances, spears, and war clubs, and carrying their bows strung with arrows at the ready, they marched up to the door chanting a war song. Seeing that the supporters of his competitor, Keokuk, had already filled the room, Black Hawk refused to enter. Instead, the taciturn warrior waited until General Gaines had ordered some of the others from the room. Then Black Hawk and a few of his adherents stalked into the chamber.

Gaines had remained seated until the latecomers filed in and then rose to address the tribal leaders. Although aware that some of his listeners carried more than the usual number of weapons into the



Figure 1.1 Black Hawk: Charles Bird King, 1833.

Source: New York Public Library.

council house, he had taken no notice except to increase the guard quietly. As he spoke, the general reminded the Indians that nearly three decades earlier they had sold the land on which their major village stood and that they had signed several other treaties with the United States recognizing the validity of that cession. He lectured them about the expense of having to bring troops up the Mississippi River from Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, just to get them to do what they had already promised. Urging them to think of their own best interests by cooperating and keeping the peace, he encouraged the Indians to move west across the Mississippi immediately.

According to his own account, Black Hawk began speaking almost before the General could retake his seat. “We had never sold our

country,” he insisted. “We never received any annuities from our American father! And we are determined to hold onto our village.”

Bolting to his feet, the angry Gaines demanded, “Who is Black Hawk? Who is Black Hawk?”

After a moment’s hesitation, a flushed Black Hawk retorted, “I am a Sauk! My forefather was a SAUK! and all the Nations call me a SAUK!” With that exchange, the council lost even the façade of civility. Bluntly, General Gaines gave the Indians two days to move west across the Mississippi, threatening to use his troops against them if they refused. To this, the aging warrior responded that “I never could consent to leave my village,” and he remarked that he was determined not to leave it. With those words, the meeting ended as the angry participants separated. During the next year, 1832, American forces destroyed the British Band, and incarcerated Black Hawk and the other Indian leaders in chains at Jefferson Barracks.

Black Hawk’s shouted insistence on his identity as a Sauk provides a key to his years as a youth and young adult, as well as to his self-image and relationship to the Indian past. He grew to manhood at a time when traditional customs remained in place. These included everything from the naming ceremony for a baby to the burial rites and mourning practices for the dead. Although clearly affected by long-time white presence in eastern North America, the Sauks and their close neighbors the Mesquakies had maintained rich cultural traditions and strong tribal identities well into the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the decades after the American War of Independence, growing white influence and economic pressures began to buffet many native groups, and the tribes of the upper Mississippi Valley could no longer ignore the turbulence that swirled around them.

These pressures came at the time young Black Hawk was growing to manhood, and they clearly upset him. Whether or not consciously aware that the changes resulted the actions of whites, the young Sauk came to see himself as a defender of his village and tribal traditions. When his father died, Black Hawk proudly announced that he “now fell heir to the great medicine bag of my forefathers, which had belonged to my father.” He stood, then, at a watershed

in history for the Sauk and Mesquakie people. Fundamental changes in economics, diplomacy, and society swept across eastern North America as the British replaced the defeated French after 1763 and the British and Americans competed bitterly with each other after 1776. During those decades, Black Hawk saw few of the invading whites. While he may have heard about some of their actions, his world rarely went beyond family or village affairs. As a result, he had little experience to help him understand events that would soon destroy much of tribal life as he knew it. He tended to look backward, to favor long-established traditions and practices rather than to accommodate the present. He had learned the lessons of his forefathers well. Unfortunately, these lessons did not always fit the new situations he would face as a mature adult.

The almost willful self-destructiveness Black Hawk had displayed at the June 1831 meeting with General Gaines illustrated a long-demonstrated trait of the Sauk people. Since first encountering Europeans in the early seventeenth century, the actions taken by the Sauks and their allies the Mesquakies (or Foxes) appear to have been short-sighted, even ruinous. Nevertheless, their behavior resulted from well-thought-out motivations and clearly recognized principles of conduct. By the late eighteenth century, the whites considered the Sauks and Mesquakies a single tribe. That was incorrect. Although related by language and culture, and enjoying substantial cooperation and even intermarriage, the two peoples always remained separate entities in their own minds.

The Osakiwugi or Sauks called themselves the yellow-earth people, while their neighbors the Mesquakies were known as the red-earth people. Both tribes spoke closely related language variations of what ethnologists call the Central Algonquian group, and during the late prehistoric era they used the technology of many eastern woodland peoples. They hunted, fished, gathered, farmed, and mined for lead, as did some of their aboriginal neighbors. They erected permanent villages with multiple-family lodges built of poles, mats, and bark, living in them during the summer while their nearby crops matured. Their technology remained simple, based primarily on the use of wood, bone, and stone implements. Adept at weaving mats, they also