



Boone County Once Home Of The Indians

By Ralph W. Stark

Part I

In the years of exploring the history of our area, this writer has been sorely disappointed to find that historians have paid scant attention to the time when it was the home and hunting grounds of the Indians, the prehistoric and the historic people who lived here prior to the coming of the white men and the early settlers.

To satisfy his insatiable curiosity, he has dug deeply into old records, crumbling documents, and musty books to the extent that he has collected a considerable amount of information concerning the Indian occupancy of our area and of Boone County in particular. He is incorporating in this article some of the things he has learned about our early Red Men in the belief that it will be as interesting to the reader as it is to him.

Historians have separated the annals of the red-skinned aborigines who lived west of the Alleghenies into two categories, the prehistoric and the historic Indians, the former covering the countless centuries, perhaps five to ten thousand years, prior to the arrival of the first white explorers, and the latter taking in the period of which we have more or less definite knowledge.

Prehistoric Indians in what is now our state of Indiana included the Shell People in the southwest around 400 to 500 A.D.; the Hopewell People, who, around 600 A.D., lived principally in the southwest and along some of the bigger streams in other areas; the Adenas, who existed around 700 to 800 A.D., from Anderson to the east; and the Middle Mississippi People, who dwelled in the southwest some seven hundred years ago. The last three named were the mound builders.

In so far as we know, none of these aborigines inhabited our particular area. Our nearest vestige left by the prehistoric Indians is the Strawtown Works, as Eli Lilly called it in his book, **Prehistoric Antiquities of Indiana**, published in 1937. This mound is about one-half mile west of the village of Strawtown, in Hamilton County. It is believed that an extensive village once occupied most of the high ground on which the Strawtown Works is located. This village may have been a settlement of the Adena Indians and they may have been the builders of the mound.

As to the very early historic Indians, apparently they were not too numerous in the Indiana area, and the same was evidently true of the great expanse of wilderness that was to become the state of Kentucky. It has been recorded that the latter was known as the "dark and bloody ground," and was more or less set aside by the Indians as a hunting preserve. The red men knew that intensive settlement of the area would rapidly exhaust the wild game supply, a resource that furnished most of their food, clothing, and other wants.

Throughout most of the seventeen hundreds, the Ohio area hosted a big Indian population made up of Wyandots, Delawares, Shawnees, Ottawas, Chipewas, Potawatomes, Eel Rivers, Weas, Kickapoos, Piankeshaws, and Kaskaskias. These tribesmen, under the leadership of Little Turtle, the greatest of Miami chieftains, for a time successfully defended their homelands against white encroachment. They wiped out Le Baume's forces in 1789; whipped Josiah Harmar's troops at Fort Wayne in 1790; and annihilated Arthur St. Clair's Army at Fort Recovery in 1791, when a thousand Indians routed two thousand white soldiers, the latter suffering heavy losses.

Gen. Anthony Wayne's Army roundly defeated the Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, on August 20, 1794. A year later, in a treaty made at Fort Greenville, on August 3, 1795, the Indians ceded to the United States three-fourths of the present state of Ohio, and a small portion of eastern Indiana. The Indians then began moving westward to settle in newly established villages in the Indiana area.

A party of Delawares under Chief Straw settled on White River, seven miles north of Noblesville, in 1787, so the marker erected to the memory of Chief Straw reads, to establish the Indian village of Strawtown. The date may be in error. More likely, it was in 1795, immediately after the treaty at Fort Greenville had been concluded.

In a treaty made with the Miamis at St. Mary's, Ohio, on October 6, 1818, the United States acquired the middle third of the newly created State of Indiana, the acquisition being historically known as The New Purchase. One big reservation and several

smaller ones including the Thorntown Reserve, "of ten miles square at the village on Sugar Tree Creek," as the treaty document stated, were set aside as permanent homes for the Indians. The Thorntown Reserve was dedicated to the Eel River Tribe of the Miamis. The Eel Rivers, in the Miami tongue, were called the Kena-poco-moco or "Snake Fish" People.

Soon after acquiring the New Purchase, the government began sending in surveyors to map and chart the 900 miles of virgin wilderness into the 36-square miles congressional townships preparatory to offering the land for sale to the pioneer settlers. The area taking in the Thorntown Reserve was surveyed in 1822 by Thomas Brown, of Noble County and resurveyed for some now unknown reason in 1829 by John Hendricks, of Shelby County.

The Thorntown Reserve of 100 square miles or 64,000 acres, took in almost the entire northwest quadrant of present-day Boone County. Eighty-five square miles were in Boone, and 15 square miles were in Clinton County. The Reserve lacked an eighth-of-a-mile of reaching the west line of Congressional Townships 19 and 20 North, both designated as Two West. This particular congressional township line now divides Boone and Montgomery counties.

Former Boone County historians indulged in some fanciful statements regarding the antiquity of the "village on Sugar Tree Creek," admitting, however, that they were based on legend. My research indicates that Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi, "Thorntree Place," translated by the whites into Thorntown, came into being in or around 1795, when the Eel Rivers came from the Ohio area into what was to become the Hoosier state.

One old writer said the village dated back to 1720; that some 400 Indians lived there; and that it housed 36 French trading posts. A village that old and with such a large population would most certainly have merited some mention in early records. As to having 36 trading posts, there were not that many in all the country west of the Alleghenies. A French immigrant did, indeed, operate a trading post in the village from sometime in the early eighteen hundreds until 1828. This may have given rise to the French trading post tradition.

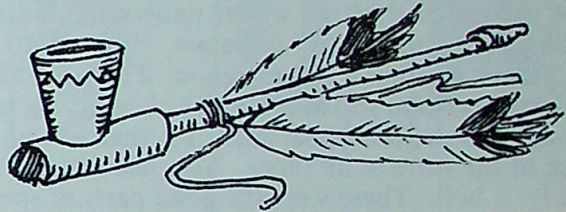
Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi was located in the very center of the Thorntown Reserve. It may have been that the boundary lines of the Reserve were determined by simply going five miles from the village in each cardinal direction to form the ten-mile square as stipulated in the St. Mary's treaty.

Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi very definitely was located on the high ground to the southwest and above the junction of Prairie Creek with Sugar Creek for at least some years and perhaps for all of the time of its existence. One writer, however, once wrote that just prior to the founding of present-day Thorntown by Cornelius Westfall and its settlement by white peo-

ple, that the Indian village was on the east bank of Prairie Creek and south of Sugar Creek.

It is quite likely that the village occupied various spots in the vicinity. It is reasonable to assume that after a few years, the village site could get pretty dirty and filthy, and as a matter of cleanliness and sanitation, the Indians would simply move their pole and bark wigwams to a brand new and unspoiled location.

In addition to Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi, there was another Indian village in the Thorntown Reserve, a smaller grouping of Eel Rivers in what the white people called Upper Thorntown. This cluster of wigwams was in what is now Washington Township, about three miles northeast of Thorntown, on the north bank of Sugar Creek and on the farm owned for many years by the late Lloyd Bennington.



(To Be Continued)

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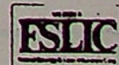
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Boone County Once Home Of The Indians

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Part II

Ka-wi-ki-un-gi also boasted of having a "suburb," consisting of a half-dozen or so Indian huts or wigwams at what the early whites called Clayroot Spring, which has been located as being just outside the northeast corner of the lawn of the Keith Craig home, about a mile northeast of Thorntown on the Thorntown-Frankfort Road, and on what was then the Strawtown Trail. The spring at this spot was a favorite watering place of the Indians and yet today bubbles forth from the ground much as it did a century and a half ago. The story is told that an early settler, George Harness, housed his family of wife and twelve children in two abandoned Indian huts at Clayroot Spring, or The Big Spring as some called it, when he came to the area in 1828 to clear his land and build a more comfortable log cabin.

The Thorntown Reserve existed a mere ten years. In 1828, the government, in response to the arguments of white settlers just beyond the Reserve, that 64,000 acres of rich, fertile land were too good to be wasted on Indians, forced the Eel Rivers to give up their Reserve at a treaty made at the Wyandot Village near the Wabash in Tippecanoe County.

The agreement, made on February 11, 1828, stipulated that the Indians were to be gone by the following October 15th. They were given a much smaller reservation near Logansport and paid \$10,000 for their one hundred square miles. In addition, they were given some other fringe benefits, but, on the whole, the United States government got the best of the Indians in the big real estate deal. The Reserve land was opened to purchase by settlers at the Federal Land Office in Crawfordsville on November 10, 1829, and within a few short years, the entire 64,000 acres had new owners.

Seventeen Eel River Indians signed the 1828 treaty document by their marks, the first to sign being their head man, Chief Ne-go-ta-kaup-wa. From this treaty we get seventeen authentic names of Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi villagers, plus several more from other sources including the legendary. The latter include Ne-con-zah, whom the whites called "the Squirrel;" Chap-a-do-sia; Dixon, whose Indian name was Me-ta-sin-

ta, and his squaw, Cha-ka-pe-am; Wah-neh-te-mah-nah; To-na-wah; Ma-cul-ta-ci-ka-na; Gen-og-wei-awed; and To-pe-naw-koung.

Na-go-ta-kaup-wa was called Billy Flower, or Captain Flowers, by the whites. He and his band lived their last years in a village on the Wabash near Logansport, where the chief died and is buried. We can add the name of Ah-son-zong, which meant "Sunshine." The whites called him Chief Cornstalk. He was the leader of the several Indian families living at Cornstalk's Village, about two miles southwest of Ladoga, and often visited in Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi. To-pe-naw-koung was the Miami wife of Pierre Langlois, the Frenchman who ran a trading post in Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi for some two decades. Several of the Indians named are buried in the Indian Cemetery just east of Thorntown.

Sugar Creek, the Sugar Tree Creek named in the St. Mary's Treaty, was called the Sa-nah-min-dji Si-pi-wi by the Eel River Indians. Sa-nah-min-dji meant sugar maple tree in the Miami language, and Si-pi-wi was the word for stream or river. The early French translated the name into Riviere d'Erablieres, erable being the French word for maple. Later, the name was converted into English as Sugar Tree Creek, and ultimately, the tree was dropped from the name and it became Sugar Creek.

Wolf Creek was the Indians' Ma-ha-wa Si-pi-wi, Ma-ha-wa being the Miami word for the timber wolf. Again, this was a simple case of translation. Eagle Creek had the long-drawn out name of Law-schinge-pern-hannek Si-pi-wi, which meant "middle of the valley stream." White Lick Creek had three different but rather similar names, the easiest to pronounce to the trio being Wah-pe-ke-wah.

Big Raccoon Creek had two names, She-qui-ah and A-se-pa-na. Eel River was the Sho-a-mack, which meant "slippery fish." Reversing the process of translation and converting the English names into the Miami tongue, we have Te-king-come-e Si-pi-wi for Spring Creek, and Ma-ko-ta-yan-gi Si-pi-wi for

Prairie Creek. What the Indian name for Brown's Wonder might have been remains a mystery. The Big Spring at what the whites called Clayroot Spring might have been called the Ma-ca-ki Te-king-come-e.

Indian trails crossed the Boone County area in all directions. There was the Great Trail from Fort Greenville, in Ohio, to Fort Dearborn, at Chicago. It came through Strawtown in Hamilton County, past Sheridan and Elizaville, and on into Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi. From there it went on west and north to Fort Dearborn. The 34-mile section of the Great Trail between Strawtown and Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi was known as the Strawtown Trail and today the highway between Thorntown and Strawtown is known as the Strawtown Road.

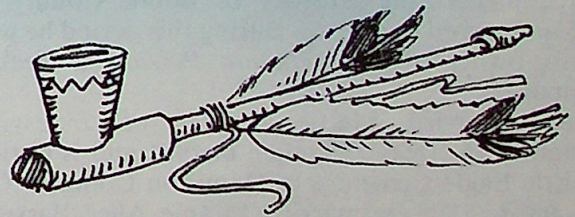
There was another Strawtown Trail which ran from Strawtown past Cicero and Boxley in Hamilton County, Kirclin and Jefferson in Clinton County, and on up to Ouitanon and Lafayette. It cut across the northeast corner of Boone County. A movement has been started by the Marion-Adams Historical and Genealogical Society to memorialize the Strawtown-Lafayette Trail with suitable markers. A similar project should be inaugurated for marking the Strawtown Trail between Strawtown and present-day Thorntown.

Another trail came up from the southwest, from Vincennes, through Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi, and on northeast to Fort Wayne and the Indian village of Kekionga. Thomas Brown, who surveyed the area in 1822, noted the trail on his survey map as the Fort Wayne Trace. Brown also indicated the trails from

Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi to Lafayette and Crawfordsville, mapping them as being to and from Thomastown. He did not show the Indian village on his chart, but did outline the perimeters of the Thorntown Reserve, and marked an area just east of Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi as the Thorntown Prairie.

A trail came from the south into Ka-wi-a-ki-un-gi from Cornstalk's Town. Another came down across the northeast corner of Boone County to go south and then turn east in the vicinity of the site of Hamilton to go on to Conner's Trading Post, which was on White River, a few miles south of Noblesville. Buzzard's Trail came up from the Lizton area into lower Boone County, and thence east to Conner's Trading Post.

Needless to say, the entire story, or as much as we now know about it, of the Indian occupancy of our area in the days of yore cannot be told in twenty-five or thirty minutes. To give it in more or less detail and include the several Indian legends, would take hours. However, the writer has tried to hit the high spots in the hope of encouraging Booneites to delve more deeply into our history before the coming of the white settlers that we may make the annals of our Indian heritage more complete. ☆



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