

Sauk & Meskwaki (Fox)

For nearly a century, beginning about 1730, the **Sauk** and **Meskwaki (Fox)** Indians made their home in the area surrounding Black Hawk State Historic Site. Saukenuk, the capitol of the Sauk Nation and one of the largest Indian centers in North America, stood adjacent to the site. The Sauk and the Meskwaki farmed the land along the river and relied upon the fur trade for their livelihood. At the height of their power they controlled parts of Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri and most of Iowa.

The city of Saukenuk eventually became the site of the westernmost battle of the Revolutionary War. Americans destroyed the village in 1780 because some of the Sauk people had given military support to the British. In 1804, several chiefs ceded all 51 million acres of their tribal lands east of the Mississippi River (as well as land in present-day Missouri) to the United States government. Black Hawk, a Sauk warrior, led the pro-British faction that refused to recognize the cession as legal. During the War of 1812, the pro-British Indians remained at Saukenuk. They defeated the Americans in battles along the Mississippi River at Campbell's Island and Credit Island.

In the late 1820s, white settlers began to move into the area and, by 1831, the Sauk and Meskwaki had been forced across the Mississippi. In 1832, Black Hawk led 1,500 followers back into Illinois in an attempt to regain their cornfields. He and the men, women, and children that followed him were chased into the wilderness of southern Wisconsin through several sharp skirmishes. Black Hawk's band was defeated at the Battle of Bad Axe on August 2, 1832.