

Chief Thomas Herrick, who received the title of Sac and Fox chief in Kansas at the 1953 Kickapoo Indian pow wow. He served for many years on the Sac and Fox tribal council. He died in 1956 at the age of eighty. (Courtesy of H. E. Bruce)



Facts and Fiction

Sleepy Ones? Iowas? . . . Yep, that's what the linguistic experts say. Or maybe Iowa means *Drowsy One*, but the two meanings are pretty close. Anyway, it was a Dakota term applied to them; they called themselves *Pä-hutch-æ* (or sometimes it is spelled *Pahodja*).

Their own name for themselves meant *dusty noses*, or possibly something like *dusty heads*, or *gray* (from dust) *heads*. Of course the linguists have haggled for years over the precise meaning of *Pä-hutch-æ*. According to a story told by one old Indian, the Iowas had from a very early time lived on the Missouri River. They often bathed in its muddy yellowish waters; the coating of sediment left afterwards made their heads appear dusty or gray, hence their name for themselves — the *Dusty Heads*. (The story may or may not be true, but it is a pretty good story.)

The name for this Indian tribe has not always been spelled with four letters as it is now. It used to be spelled *Ioway*, and before that, the French gave it a French spelling, such as *Ayavois*, *Aiouez*, *Ajowee*, *Ayauway*. (The pronunciation for all these spellings was very similar to the present pronunciation of *Iowa*.)

The name of the second tribe of concern in this issue of *Heritage of Kansas* was not always spelled *Sac*, either. Previously, these people had been called *Sauks*, *Ousakis*, *O-Sau-Kees*, and *Za-ke*, among other pronunciations and spellings. Apparently, the name ultimately came from a word meaning "People of the Yellow Earth"—*Os-sa-wah* (yellow) plus *Ha-kee* (land or earth).

Similarly, the third tribe, the *Foxes*, were once known as the *Red Earth People*, the *Mosk-wah-ha-kee* (from *Mosk-wah*, meaning red, and *Ha-kee*, meaning land or earth). Another spelling of this name is *Mesquakie*, or sometimes *Meshkwa kihugi*. (The *Foxes* called themselves this because according to their creation myth, they were formed from red earth.) The *Wyandot* name for the *Fox* tribe was translated to mean *Fox People*, and the *Potawatomi* name, *Wakushég*, also meant *Foxes*.

These three tribes have left their mark on the daily American scene, even in this day of unconcern with Indians, in the age of space capsules and trips to the moon. There is the state of Iowa, to say nothing of two rivers and several small towns bearing the Iowa name. The Sac name is perpetuated in Sauk River, Minnesota; Sauk County, Wisconsin; and a number of other towns and villages. Fox River, Wisconsin, and some smaller places retain the name of the third tribe.

. . . So much for the names. Now, what about their backgrounds?



A typical bark house of the Sac and Fox Indians, found as early as 1805 by Lewis and Clark. This photo was taken in 1890. (Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society)