

METAMORA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

NEWSLETTER

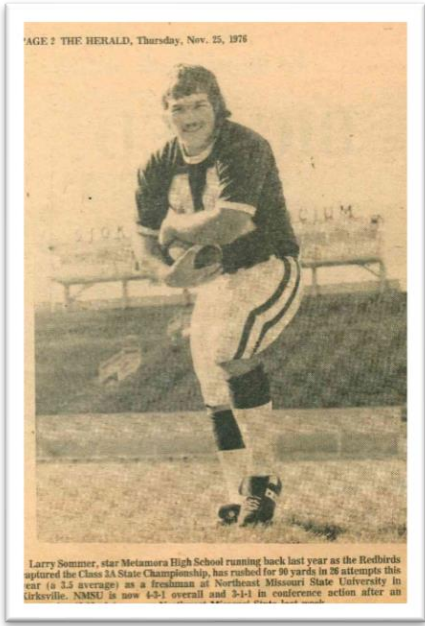
October 2018



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From the Files... Fall means wiener roasts, hayrack ricks, and, around Metamora, FOOTBALL!!! Remember these...?

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ETAMORA QUARTERBACK Scott mora rolled past the Lions 29-0 to advance to the quarterfinals Saturday at Malone Field against Taylorville. — Staff Photo
 rtel races through the Lisle defense Wednesday during a Class 3-A state football playoff game at Metamora. Metamora rolled past the Lions 29-0 to advance to the quarterfinals Saturday at Malone Field against Taylorville. — Staff Photo by Larry Brooks



The Metamora varsity cheerleaders attended a cheerleading camp at Western Illinois University at Macomb, June 21-24 and came away with several top awards. The Redbird cheerleaders received fourth place of the 31 squads at the camp and were invited to attend the National Cheerleading Camp Aug. 19 and 20 at Michigan State University in Lansing, Mich. Sandi Ahrens

was selected as one of the top ten individuals in the camp and teammate Sharon Worner was presented the third place individual award among those attending the Camp. The Redbird varsity cheerleaders include (L-R), Deb Swartz, Elisa Smith, Dawn Guerrero, Becky Sloan, Sharon Worner, Sue Schilling and Sandi Ahrens. Missing from photo is Cheryl Fandel.

Cool!!!



Are some of your ancestors in this photo? Maybe so. This photo, taken by G.W. Freese, a Farmers View Artist from Washington, IL, shows members of the Metamora "Graded" School. It carries a date of January 5, 1894. The two-level brick structure was built in 1850, burned in 1874, and rebuilt at that time. It housed a grade school and two-year high school until 1915 when Metamora

Township High School built a four-year school [on the High School's present location]. This grade school was one of the first in the Metamora area and served the community from 1850-1952 when the present grade school was built. The photo was purchased by James T. and Anthony C. Shuda at an area antique show and has been donated to Metamora Grade School.

Seems like a lot of local spots have “Partridge” in their name. But was he a real person – or just a local legend? And what did he do to be honored in so many ways? Here’s a brief history of his glorious story...

His Indian name was Muck-et-ep-o-kee...

Chief Black Partridge

2 — Black Partridge Cemeteries	Partridge Point
2 — Black Partridge Monuments .	Partridge Point Farns
Black Partridge Post Office	Partridge Point Orchard
Black Partridge Evangelical Church (1861—1925)	Partridge Township
The Black Partridge Society of the Evangelical Association of North America .	Partridge Street
St. Raphael's of Black Partridge (1939—1855) (Partridge Catholic Church)	Partridge Creek
Mennonite Partridge Church (Partridge Amish—Mennonite Church)	Partridge School
Black Partridge Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution	Black Partridge Road
Black Partridge Conservancy	Black Partridge Woods
	Back Partridge Park

It has come to my knowledge through recent, humble observations that we as a community have made our homes upon the land once trod by one of the least known, yet most heroic individuals of this land. This man, himself an emigrant leaving his homeland behind, was here before the first of our settlers. The bow of his canoe split the rippling waters of Peoria Lake before white men settled its eastern shores. His waterskin dipped into the clear springs that feed Partridge Creek before our sawmills utilized its power. His campfires burned brightly in the night long before lantern light shone through the first windows. Even his mournful death and stately burial among the forked branches of an ash tree took place before the timbers were hewn for the first houses of the white settlers in this area. In the time intervening between now and then, this man has been all but forgotten by those who now reside on land his people once claimed as their own, I now bring that man back to remembrance. He is Muck—et—ep—o—kee, Black Partridge, last chief of the Woodford County band of the Prairie Pottawatomie.

A glance at the above list will show that in both past and present we have been encompassed with numerous commemorations to the memory of Chief Black Partridge. A further look will reveal that many of those landmarks are fast disappearing. Only the most recent in history remain, along with those most permanent, such as roads and natural land features. Of worthy note is the number of churches which bore the name of this chief, and the testament they give to his character. The individual that those parishioners were familiar with was not a bloodthirsty savage, but a man who left a legacy of friendship, peace, and heroism, Chief Black Partridge's name appears at various times in the history of the Midwest. He fought at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 against General Anthony Wayne. The next year he was given a medal at the signing of the Treaty of Greenville, to commemorate his new loyalty to the Americans in their continuing struggle against the British. During the subsequent War of 1812, Chief Black Partridge remained faithful to his pledge of peace with the new colonists. However, the single event for which he is most well-known is his heroic efforts at the Massacre at Fort Dearborn (Chicago) on August 15, 1812.

Through the efforts of Chief Black Partridge many lives were saved from certain death. It was he who provided for the safety of John Kinzie, the local trader, and his whole family, during and after the massacre. Further action on his part made possible the escape of the commander of the fort, Captain Nathan Heald, and his wife. Just fifteen days later, Chief Black Partridge negotiated for the ransom of 2nd Lieutenant Linai Helm, second-in-command at Fort Dearborn. Tragically, despite his display of courage, a devastating blow would soon be dealt to this heroic chief. Just three months after the massacre, Chief Black Partridge had relocated his village from Chicago to an area on the east side of Peoria Lake on the Illinois River, known as the Big Spring. It was here that in late October of 1812 four hundred militiamen under the direction of the Governor of Illinois, Ninian Edwards, brutally massacred upwards of thirty or more of the occupants of the village: the elderly, the women, and the children. Food stores, weapons, utensils and shelters were destroyed while the survivors fled for their lives into the surrounding swamps. The chief and his warriors, who were not present during the destruction of the village, entered a period of understandable outrage. However, in the continuing years until his death in 1819 or 1820, Chief Black Partridge continued to sue for peace with the Americans.

As settlers moved into the Metamora area and realized the significance of Chief Black Partridge, they began to incorporate his name into their new town. It appears that after those initial memorials our knowledge of one of our most important local figures began to decline. In 1947, Professor C. Henry Smith, wrote in his book entitled *Metamora*, that Chief Black Partridge is, "better known in Chicago than among the present dwellers of his native Partridge hills." While I can only surmise the present knowledge of Chicagoans on this matter, the fact that our local park board has allowed the transformation of the figure of this great chief into the likeness of a bird which does not exist, does little to convince me that we have progressed any more favorably.





It is my feeling that one of the greatest reasons for the loss of these important remembrances of Chief Black Partridge is the lack of awareness we have for what he and his people meant to our earliest settlers. In this day, as we struggle to realize how much we need heroes, who exemplify virtuous living, to play leading roles in our lives, we cannot afford to forget a hero so close to home. We must halt the processes of forgetfulness by educating our youth about local history. We must continue further by strengthening the passing on of our history by oral tradition. Most importantly, we need to learn from our own past. For example, as we strive to halt ethnic cleansing outside our land, we must remember that in the completion of our manifest destiny to conquer this country we created our own scenes of horrific brutality. In a more recent and local comparison, as we clamor for the salvation of the rain forest from destruction by natives attempting to make a living, we must question the stewardship of our own precious timber and speak out as urgently for its deliverance from the impending whine of chainsaws and bulldozers. It is in response to these aforementioned needs that I resolve to continue to search out and report the history of Chief Black Partridge and his significance to Metamora and surrounding communities. In order to ensure that the example and legacy he left us will not die but continue to live.

Seth Brown
Historical Committee
Black Partridge Conservancy

The Indian Black Partridge

In the late 1700's the Potawatomi Indians had a number of villages along the Illinois River and its tributaries, north of Peoria and past the mouth of the Fox. One of these villages was that of the chief called Black Partridge and was located north of Spring Bay in western Woodford County. It had 30 to 40 wigwams between Richland and Partridge creeks. Black Partridge has his name on several treaties ceding land, travelled about by canoe and horse, and was on good terms with the Kinzie family at Ft. Dearborn where Chicago is today. John Kinzie established a trading post there and his step-daughter was the wife of a Lt. Helm, second in command at the fort.

In 1812, when some Indians were planning to attack Ft. Dearborn, Black Partridge went to warn the garrison. He, along with several other chiefs disapproved of the attack, but were outnumbered by warriors who believed the British would reward them. He warned them but many were massacred as they fled to safety, and Lt. Helms was captured and held for ransom.

Accounts vary, but according to a Woodford history, when Black Partridge returned to his village after securing the release of Lt. Helms, he found his village had been attacked.

Illinois militiamen killed old men, women and children; burned the village, including stores of food and fur; and took 80 horses.

One can imagine his feeling upon his return to this scene. He tried to prevent the building of Ft. Clark in Peoria but sued for peace in 1813 and remained true to the treaty. After the massacre at his village, the Indians remained in the hills. When white settlers arrived in 1819 and 1820, they found the natives friendly, and it was about this time that Black Partridge died. His name, however, survived upon the land.

—John Riedell



The above points are from a farm located within about a mile of the Lourdes church. It is possible some of them were used in hunting by Black Partridge's people. Note the variety of shapes. The persons who lived on the farm, Otto, Lucille and Celia Kerker are now deceased, so it cannot now be verified if all of these artifacts were found on their land, but they may have been.

Great Leader: Black Partridge of the Potawatomi, c 1744- c 1816

The almost constant warfare on the frontier makes it seem as though friendships and fellow feeling between Natives and Settlers was impossible. In fact, mutual friendship and respect were possible, though wider tensions strained these qualities to the breaking point. The story of Black Partridge, c 1744 - c 1816, and Mrs. Margaret Helm at the Battle of Fort Dearborn on August 15, 1812, illustrates that point.



Black Partridge and his brother Waubonsie were first recorded as leaders of the Potawatomi during the Northwest Indian War, 1785-1795, participating in the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. As signatories of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, both received medals bearing the likeness of George Washington. After the treaty, Black Partridge worked with his brother and other Native leaders to co-exist with Settlers in and around what is now Chicago. He later affirmed his peaceful stance by signing the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809, possibly receiving another medal from William Henry Harrison with James Madison's likeness. With the windup to Tecumseh's Revolt in 1810, Native leaders had to decide where their people's best interests lay. Black Partridge made his mind up and told Tecumseh, "I cannot join you. This token (the Washington medal) was given to me at Greenville by the Great Chief (Wayne). On it you see the face of our father at Washington. As long as this hangs on my neck, I can never raise my tomahawk against the Whites." Black Partridge's own feelings did not deter many young warriors who wished to join Tecumseh and take on the Settlers coming into their territory.

Black Partridge was a frequent visitor to Fort Dearborn and knew the family of trader John Kinzie quite well. Kinzie's daughter, Margaret, married Lt. Lenai Helm. He also developed a personal friendship with the commander of the fort, Captain Nathan Heald. As Tecumseh's War blended into the War of 1812, Black Partridge felt that he could no longer deny his young warriors their right to fight the Whites. As an attack on

Dearborn loomed, he sought a meeting with Captain Heald and urged him in the strongest terms to leave Dearborn, letting him known plainly that his warriors had no choice but to attack the fort. When Heald refused to leave, Black Partridge pulled the medal off his neck and handed it over, telling Heald, "Father, I came to deliver up to you the medal I wear. It was given to me by the Americans, and I have long worn it in token of our mutual friendship. Our young men are resolved to imbue their hands in the blood of the Whites. I cannot restrain them, and I will not wear a token of peace while I am compelled to act as an enemy." Heald finally received orders to evacuate the fort. On August 15, 1812, as the garrison, militia and noncombatants marched out of Dearborn, the Potawatomi war party attacked.

Black Partridge saw a warrior about to tomahawk a pregnant woman struggling to carry a young toddler in her arms. He waded into the confusion and jerked the woman away, acting as though he bore a personal grudge and intended to kill her himself. It was Margaret Helm and her young daughter. He led her to edge of Lake Michigan and made her get into the water and stay as low to the water line as possible. Later that night, he found her and conducted her to his village so she and the child could eat and have their wounds treated. However, though he had taken her, he didn't have the authority to release her. He carried the ransom money given him from Kinzie by the Indian Agent, and when that didn't prove enough, threw in his own horse, rifle, a gold ring, and a note for \$100 signed by George Rogers Clark. Having settled Margaret Helm's ransom, he returned to his own village, only to find that it had been burned by Illinois Rangers under the command of Ninian Edwards. Black Partridge's daughter and young grandchild, no older than Margaret Helm and her daughter, had been killed.

This slaughter made up Black Partridge's mind to go to war. He led his people throughout the War of 1812. Eventually, he and his men surrendered, and he signed a treaty with Zachary Taylor in St. Louis. He left the historical record more than twenty years after he'd first entered it, a warrior who tried to honor his word to both his people, and to Settlers with whom he'd had no personal quarrel. The attack on Fort Dearborn has been novelized several times, with allegations that Black Partridge mercy killed other settlers whom he could not rescue. History doesn't record these claims. A statue of Black Partridge was erected in Chicago in 1893, showing the climactic moment when Black Partridge pulled Margaret Helm and her child from danger. The statue has since been removed, and is in city storage.

Contact Us

Questions, ideas - Love to hear from you

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