

CHAPTER 04

THE STAGE IS SET FOR A CLASH BETWEEN RACES

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(Transcribed by Dorothy Harlan)

The First Native Americans, Living a "No Work, No Weeds" Philosophy, and Leaving Virginal Forests Inviolated, Are Disturbed When Increasing Numbers of White Neighbors Fell and Plow, Plant and Reap, Driving Game Away--The Indian, However, Is Unorganized and Susceptible to Bribes, Gifts and "Gratifications" and Wise Policies of General William Clark and the Spanish and French Governors Before Him Pave the Way for Comparatively Peaceful Conquest of the Boon's Lick Country--This Despite a Heritage of Hate and Strife Incident to the Earlier Settlement of the Western Reserve--Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction in the Adventures of the Paternal Great-Great Grandfathers of Mrs. T. C. Beckett of Boonville, Youths Captured by Indians in Kentucky During the American Revolution.

THERE were no weeds in the Garden of Eden.

Professor Oliver Duggins of Northwestern University declares:

"Weeds are found only where man has disturbed the soil and set the stage for their growth. They never are found in woods, bogs or other undisturbed places."

The Indian's Eden was a hunter paradise--"no work, no weeds." Or practically none. Squaws did cultivate the weed, *tobacco*, that braves might smoke the peace pipe, and there were small patches of maize and vegetables.

But very little soil was disturbed by planting. For centuries the Indian left the land as he found it. The coming of the white man changed all that.

WHEN the two Cole families settled at the site of Boonville and just east of it, they were the only white persons west of the Osage river living south of the Missouri. They,

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their possessions and customs interested the children of the forest. The Indians were friendly. New neighbors with marvels of civilization broke the monotony of life in the tepee villages.

There was an abundance of game and fish and they shared their hunting grounds. But when additional white families came, to clear and crop and crowd, the old story of the frontier was to be repeated.

However, the Boon's Lick country had fewer Indian troubles than most frontiers.

White men took advantage of the Indian's primitive civilization. Disorganized, in small tribes, often wandering to new hunting grounds, the Indian was easily influenced by small gifts to abandon to the whites large areas and to move to new lands.

THE comparatively *peaceful occupation of Missouri was due to conciliatory treatment of Indians* in this section from earliest times.

From 1673, when Father Marquette and Joliet explored the Mississippi for France, Indian experiences with white men generally were pleasant.

Exceptions usually involved Spaniards. In 1719 a company of dons from Mexico by way of Santa Fe entered Missouri intent on inciting the Osages against the Missouris, living near the mouth of the Missouri river.

THIS CARAVAN of armed men, families, horses, mules, cattle and swine, ready to establish a colony, lost its bearings and mistook the Missouris for Osages, as both tribes spoke the same language.

The Spanish captain explained they wished to destroy the Missouris for their allegiance to the French, encroaching on Spanish territory. He supplied them with arms and ammunition.

The chief perceived and encouraged their error. He showed them every attention until he could assemble his warriors. The Indians then ambushed their enemies, sparing only a priest who later escaped.

WHEN LACLEDE founded St. Louis the Missouris were so friendly that they announced they would move their village alongside their white neighbors. As Auguste Chouteau and *"The First Thirty"* assembled rock and timbers for Laclede's house, headquarters for the fur company, 125 warriors with their squaws and papooses, begged food and helped themselves to tools.

Chouteau sent an alarm to Laclede who came immediately from Fort Chartres. He found the squaws digging the cellar and carrying away dirt for paint and beads. He conferred with the braves, telling them he would be unable to protect them from their ancient enemies, the Illinois, across the river. Eloquently Laclede pictured a terrible fate if they persisted in their new location and persuaded the Missouris to return to their original home.

Early Spanish explorers perpetrated many atrocities. But the Spanish governors in Upper Louisiana pursued a tactful course for more than 60 years. During Spanish rule at St. Louis there were times of financial stringency. Salaries were reduced and soldiers went unpaid for months. But the annual "gratifications" to the Indian nations were continued. They reached \$12,000 a year. An official gunsmith, paid \$140 a year by the Spanish government, was retained to repair Indians' guns.

AFTER American occupation relations were disturbed mainly by the War of 1812, but the wise policies of General William Clark,

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then Governor of the territory, kept most of the Indians on the path of peace. He was both feared and beloved by them. He protected them from impositions of white men, understood their character and could foresee their plans almost by intuition. They called him "Redhead."

When rivers ran clear of ice canoes from a hundred tribes each spring converged on St. Louis. Camp sites were chosen on the river front. Delegations then notified General Clark where the camp was located. That meant rations.

Next day the committees conferred with Governor Clark who also was Indian agent. They gathered in an impressive council chamber with Indian curios covering its walls. He met their aboriginal dignity with the suave courtesy of the Virginian. He was patient and kind.

FOLLOWING the conference, the delegation inspected the museum of displays, pointing proudly to handicraft from their own tribes. Then they enjoyed the freedom of the city. In paint, feathers and robes, the visitors went from house to house beating drums, chanting and doing dances. Indian etiquette dictated that the visitor lift the latch and walk in unannounced. Standing within a home, the Indian would look about and finally utter "How!"

After a handshake with each person present, a small gift was expected. As the involuntary host's interest waned the Indian took the hint and proceeded up the street. Occasionally he found the house of a trader known in the wilderness. There a heartier welcome was accorded. Slices of fried bacon were handed around and *"Indian coffee,"* a pale, weak imitation, was served. Sometimes it was followed by "firewater."

After perhaps a week of the city the canoes were pushed into the river at daybreak and the chiefs would not be seen for another year.

All spring Governor Clark received daily the tribesmen. St. Louis tolerated their proud beggary. Westward up the Missouri and over the prairies pioneers pushed the frontier. Seldom was a war whoop heard. *Redhead's Indian policy was better than an army.*

Due to these influences, the Coles found peace in the solitude during their first two years. They were treated as neighbors. They, too, knew by intuition the intentions of the wily savages.

MOST TRIBES west of the Mississippi lived primitively. The Cherokees, lately removed from Tennessee, and the Osages were partly civilized nations. All lacked coordination between tribes. They warred on one another, being driven to union only by the common menace, white men.

Indian outbreaks often were averted by the superior diplomacy of the whites. Chiefs and leading braves were bribed with small gifts. They signed treaties to move to other hunting grounds. It often was distasteful to the tribes but their pagan creed maintained the sanctity of contracts.

During wars between French and British, later between the colonists and the motherland and again in the War of 1812, the enemy found it easy to incite the Indians. Yet, with irritants removed they were easily mollified or subjugated. They could not cope with the organized society ever pressing from the East.

For further Indian background let us turn to frontier Kentucky and to the dramatic experiences of Richard Rue and George Holman, paternal great-great-grandfathers of Mrs. T. C. Beckett, of Boonville.

We condense the narrative from chapter 19 of *"Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley,"* written by Sanford G. Cox and published in 1860 by the Indiana Courier steam book and job printing house. The volume is in the reference collection of the Indianapolis Public Library.

IRVIN HINTON, a red-headed wagoneer, drove a four-horse team February 11, 1781--during the Revolution--from a blockhouse at the village of Louisville to the fort at Harrodsburg, Kentucky, for provisions.

Richard Rue, 19, and George Holman, 16, accompanied him as guards against savages who might lurk in canebrakes and ravines. A snow storm developed and they fired their muskets to forestall the hazard of damp powder.

Before they reloaded they were captured by Simon Girty, a white renegade, and 13 Delaware and Shawnee chiefs and braves. The party then made for the Ohio river, crossing in three large bark canoes and swimming the horses unhooked from the wagon left in the road at scene of the capture.

After forced marches and without campfires, the party pushed far into the wilderness of Northwestern Territory. Weakened by many days of hardship on scant rations, the prisoners were taken numb and weary into the Shawnee village of *Wa-puc-ca-nat-ta* to run the gauntlet.

Hinton, pursued by a brave with raised tomahawk, was started between two rows of

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warriors, wielding tomahawks, knives and clubs. If knocked down a prisoner was not attacked until he could continue the chase. Hinton was badly battered before he gained sanctuary, the councilhouse at the far end of the lines.

Rue then outran his pursuer and dodged most blows enroute.

Holman, a stripling wasted by famine and hardship, protested the ordeal. So a farce was arranged. He ran a gauntlet of squaws and boys with switches.

THIS "reception" was followed by a feast and then trial of the prisoners for their lives. The Sanhedrin disagreed and judgment was deferred until other tribes could attend.

In the meantime Hinton, a family man, escaped with provisions and a gun and munitions. He was captured and burned to the stake. His scalp was returned to the village and exhibited significantly.

A deputation from Detroit announced a general rendezvous there. So the assembled tribes headed that way with their prisoners. Near the present site of Toledo, Rue and Holman again were made to run the gauntlet and were brought to trial.

They were sentenced to death, stripped of all clothing and their faces and hands blackened preparatory for the pyre.

Then a noble Mingo mourning a dead son adopted Holman.

After Rue was tied and brush and faggots ignited, a tall young Shawnee sprang forward, chopping the thongs with his tomahawk. He announced he was adopting Rue to take the place of a departed brother.

DISSENSION arose but the powerful Shawnee and his friends prevailed. Later, however, the dissenters forced the issue of another trial and Rue was saved by one vote.

Adopted into different tribes, Rue and Holman were separated. After three and one-half years, Rue and two other whites escaped. In full Indian regalia they made forced marches at night. After 12 days of hardship and hunger, traveling from near Detroit, they reached the Ohio river and safety.

Three and a half years after Holman was taken prisoner there followed a year's truce between the colonies and the Indians. As his tribes needed supplies, he induced the Indians to let him go to civilization for them, promising to obtain the necessities.

Accompanied by another prisoner and a young warrior, they went to Louisville where General Clark and his troops obtained the ransom of the two white for a small quantity of powder, lead, salt and handkerchiefs.

HOLMAN arrived back in Harrodsburg just three days after Rue. They eventually settled on the same section of land in Wayne County, Indiana Territory, in 1805, about two miles south of the site of Richmond. They became prominent wealthy and influential. They helped to organize a Baptist church in their community. Numerous of their descendants received important political recognitions.

For many years after peace was made, their Indian "relatives" paid them annual visits, staying from one to two weeks, visiting a while with one of their white brethren and then with the other. Rue and Holman always welcomed them with genuine affection and enthusiasm and made much ado over them. They slaughtered beeves and sheep and spread gala feasts.

Shy children of the hosts lighted the wrinkled 'warriors' pipes and reported the condition of their ponies, and then looked on the pow-wows with mingled awe and suppressed glee.

AT LENGTH ponies were loaded with tobacco, flour, salt and knickknacks as an inducement for the swarthy children of the forest to leave.

After elaborate gesticulations and thanks and best wishes none the less sincere for their broken English, the weird cavalcade would wend its way between prosperous farms in the growing up Indiana Territory, an aging burlesque on the proud savagery of yore. Thrifty farmers shook their heads and smiled indulgently at the profligacy that Rue and Holman showered on the Indian "loafers."

But the white "relatives" who long ago had been in dire need of Indian favor and who later had shared hardships and danger, food and tepee, with the tribes, felt a kinship cemented in the white solitudes during the lean wilderness winters and through green and golden summers. With Longfellow they knew that "--in even savage bosoms there are longings, yearnings, strivings--that the feeble hands and helpless, groping blindly in the darkness, touch God's right hand in the darkness, and are lifted up and strengthened."

The Indians did the best they knew, which wasn't very good. They liked slow torture for their enemies.

DURING his captivity Holman saw the Indians burn Richard Hogeland, a Kentuckian taken at the defeat of Colonel Crawford *He was roasted 13 hours before he collapsed.* During

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his excruciating ordeal he begged to be killed with gun or tomahawk.

Finally his tormentors promised and proceeded to deeply gash his flesh. Then they shoveled hot ashes and embers into the gaping wounds.

After his death they scalped, mutilated and burned him, scattering his ashes over the village to dispel evil spirits.

Holman died May 24, 1859, aged 99 years, three months and 13 days. Rue was an invalid during his last 25 years, the hardships of captivity having undermined his health.

INDIAN TROUBLES were mostly during wars with England. The British incited the savages against settlers.

But the Indians never were over-friendly with the British. Pontiac, an early chief of three tribes, the Ottawas, Ojibways and Pottawattomies long before the Revolution led in a revolt against English authority east of the Mississippi after France had ceded her claims there to Britain.

Pontiac in an oration described the English as "*dogs dressed in red, come to rob you of hunting grounds and to drive away the game.*"

After Pontiac was forced to make a treaty in 1766 with England he sought congenial retreat in the French community of St. Louis. Still in his prime but depressed, he took to drink.

St. Ange de Bellerive, who governed the settlement, had known the chief in better days and treated him kindly. While intoxicated Pontiac was lured across the Mississippi and ambushed by a Kaskaskian Indian, said to have been bribed with a barrel of rum by an English trader to kill the chief.

St. Ange went after the body, had it dressed in the uniform of a French general, a gift from Montcalm, and after lying in state, guarded by French soldiers, the chief was given a military funeral.

This was typical of French treatment of the Indians. Many French traders married squaws. There were many half-breed trappers and traders along the Missouri in the earlier times.

THE FRENCH were more interested in trading than in clearing, planting and industrializing the vast domain that early was theirs. This tendency not to take the Indian hunting grounds and a democratic attitude toward the aborigines promoted friendship.

But most of the limited number of French settlers lost their racial identity. Very few English settlers married Indians. The English came in ever-increasing numbers and were more aggressive in felling the forest and over-running the prairies.

FIREWORKS ENDING IN A BLAZE OF GLORY

IN THE LONG AGO a Fourth of July picnic and barbecue in Boonville was to be climaxed with a widely advertised two-hour fireworks display from a barge anchored in the Missouri.

The riverfront was crowded. An expert pyrotechnician from St. Louis sent a skyrocket into the heavens. Then a blinding flash. The barge-load of combustibles was exploding.

Two minutes later, darkness, boos from the crowd and a dripping expert being fished from the river.

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