

As She Knew Them



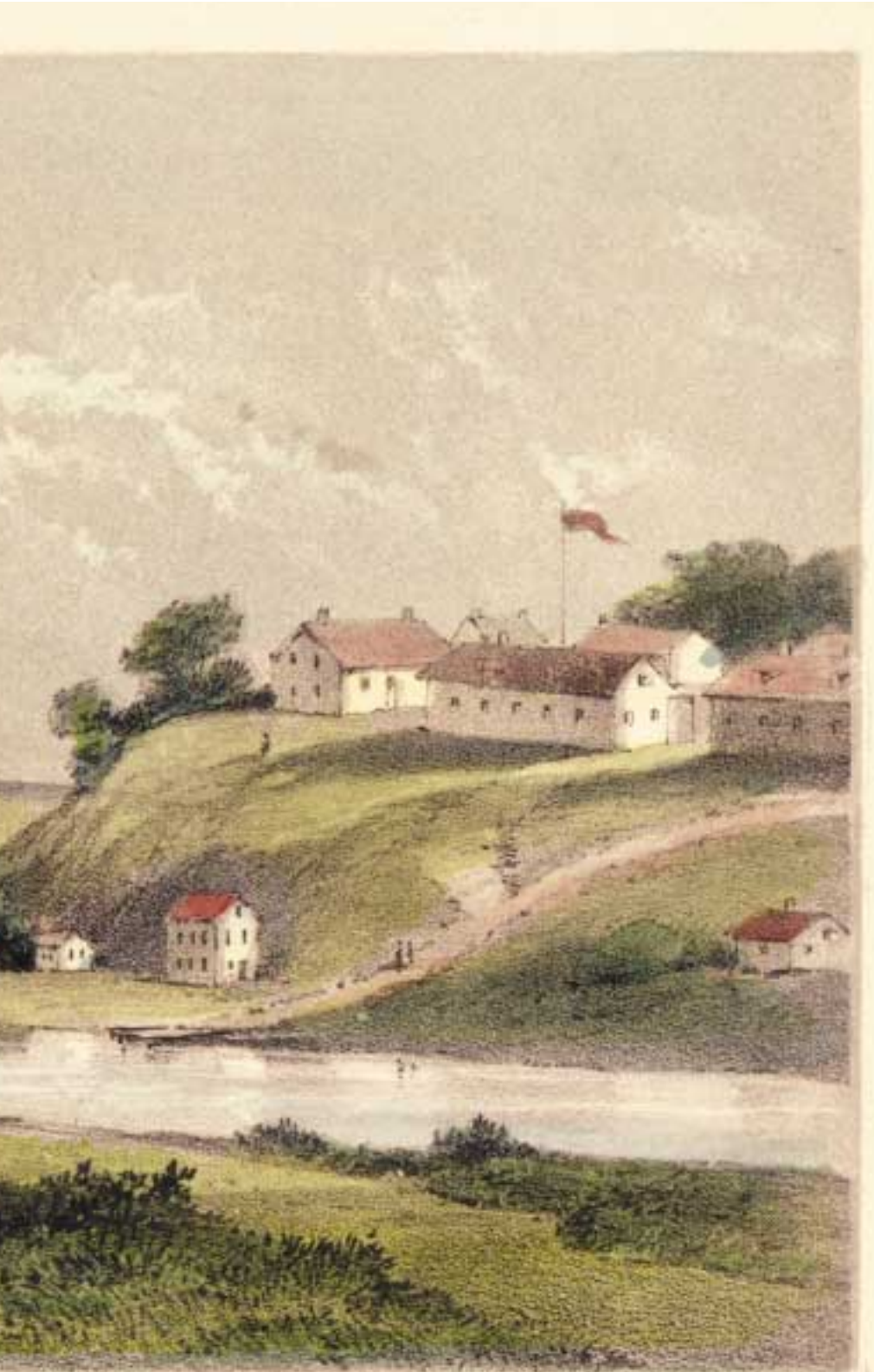
Juliette Kinzie and the Ho-Chunk, 1830-1833

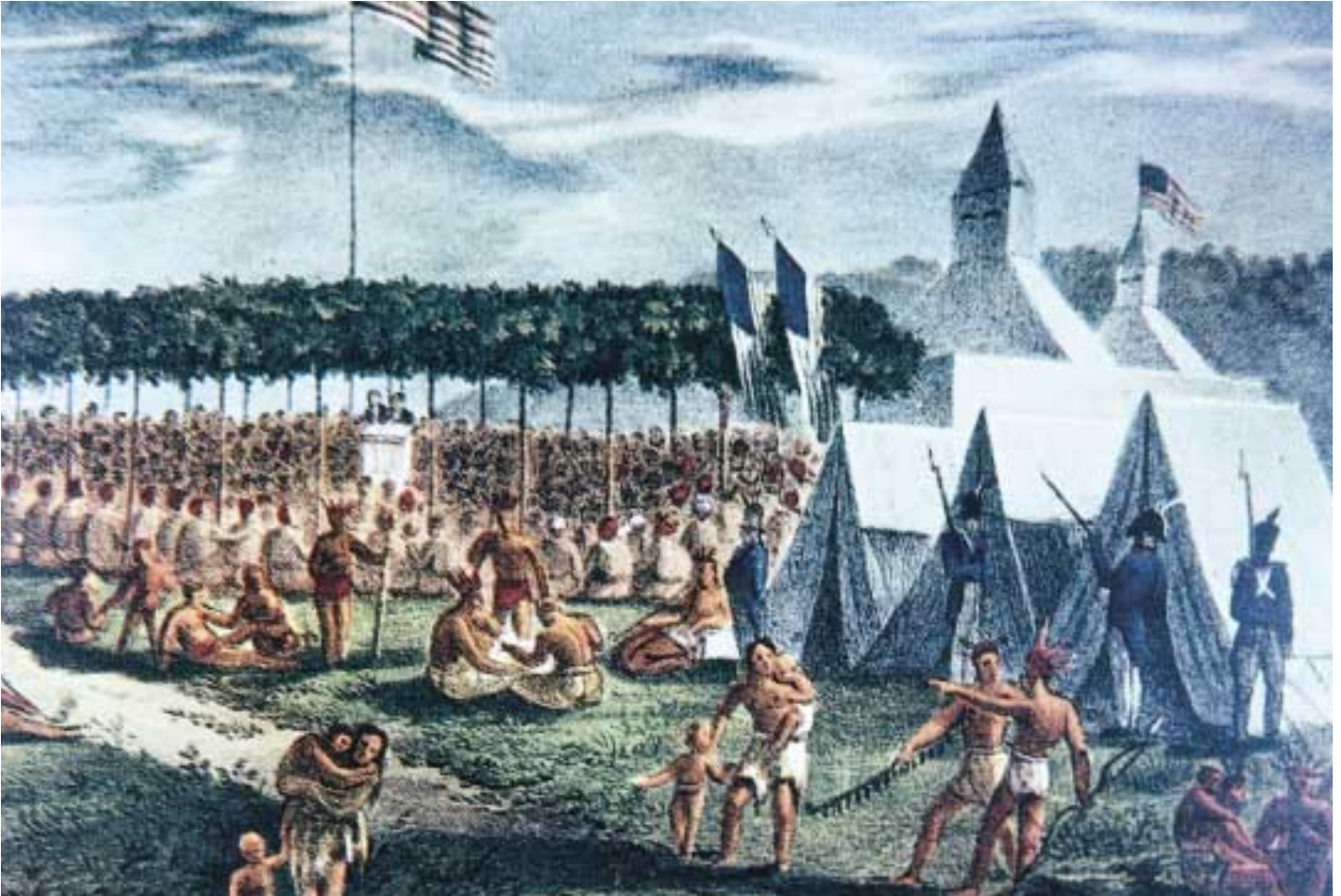
By Margaret Beattie Bogue

IN the published history of Wisconsin, we have in the literature of the Black Hawk War of 1832 much about military action, the pursuit of Black Hawk, the bungling and conflict between army regulars and militia, the brutality of Indian and white alike, and the terrible slaughter at the Battle of Bad Axe on the first two days of August of that year. We do not have nearly enough published about those indirectly involved and about the immediate consequences of the conflict for the people who called this area of Wisconsin home, principally the Ho-Chunk.

Juliette Kinzie witnessed with compassion and clarity the treatment of the Ho-Chunk people (then called Winnebago) in the advent and aftermath of the Black Hawk War. Her sketch of Fort Winnebago in 1831, one of the many images in her memoir Wau-Bun, demonstrates her skills of observation as well as artistic expression.

WHS Archives, 3-3153





Lithograph from *The Aboriginal Portfolio* . . . by J. O. Lewis;
WHS Archives, WHi(D485)10190

This lithograph of the “Great Treaty at Prairie du Chien, 1825” emphasizes the significant number of Indian people who gathered for the negotiations and suggests how leadership and decision-making were far more communal than the federal government’s single-headed military hierarchies.

So it is that readers of Wisconsin history will ever be indebted to Juliette M. Kinzie for her autobiographical memoir, *Wau-Bun, the “Early Day” in the North-west*, for the insights it gives about life in frontier Wisconsin from 1830–1833, the years of Black Hawk’s last resistance to white settlement. Published for the first time in 1855, today *Wau-Bun* remains in print and in steady demand.

Why has the memoir continued to attract readers over fourteen decades? The author’s spirited attitude toward the challenges of life, her sprightly depiction of Wisconsin frontier living during a critical three-year period, her powers of observation, and her sense of humor are part of the answer. Her ability to tell a good story is the larger part. With skillful writing, she developed the main narrative using dozens of small stories and vignettes along the way, each of which added diversity and vitality to her account. Her interest and her observa-

tions focus on the Ho-Chunk people, but the voice is always her own; the perspective reflects her identity and experience, as they were affected by the world around her. Considered as a whole, *Wau-Bun* is a story, with a well-defined beginning and end, minor climactic events along the way, and a major climax. The central narrative recounts the tragic experiences of the Ho-Chunk (then called the Winnebago) Indians associated with the coming of the Black Hawk War, the conflict itself, and its aftermath as perceived by Juliette and John Kinzie, from the fall of 1830 through June 1833. It was during those years they lived at Fort Winnebago, located near the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, where he served as the newly appointed United States Indian Sub-Agent for more than four thousand Indians.

Wau-Bun is especially valuable because it offers perspectives on the meaning of the Black Hawk War for the Indian

people living in the area to the south and east of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers. The lives lost, the physical suffering, and the surrender of beloved tribal land combined to produce devastation for the Ho-Chunk. In *Wau-Bun*, we see these developments through the observations and thoughts of a well-educated, cultured, middle-class New England woman married to a seasoned fur trader and federal Indian agent. Both of the Kinzies had a deep affection for the Ho-Chunk, a clear understanding of their enormous problems in the face of white settlement, and a real interest in their well-being and their culture. During their thirty-three months at Fort Winnebago, Juliette and John Kinzie clearly had come to feel very critical of the way the United States government handled Indian affairs, and yet they agreed in general principal with the idea of land cessions and removal to minimize contact with white culture, which they perceived to be a degrading influence on the Ho-Chunk. The only problem with that position, given the rapid development of the continent, was that it turned out to be virtually impossible to keep the cultures from each other. But that could not be foreseen in the early 1830s.

The principal actors in the narrative are the Kinzies. Juliette Kinzie was born Juliette Magill in 1806 into a respected, middle-class Connecticut family. She attended an avant-garde women's school, Emma Willard's Troy (New York) Female Seminary, founded on the principle that women

deserved an educational experience equal to that available to men. Privately she studied music, natural history, and sketching. She was very impressed by what she learned about frontier life, and when she met handsome young John H. Kinzie—fresh from Michigan Territory—at her grandparents' home in Boston, she found him most attractive. They were married in August 1830.

John Kinzie, born at Sandwich, Upper Canada, in 1803 into a family of fur traders, had served the American Fur Company at its Mackinac (Michilimackinac) Island headquarters and then at Prairie du Chien, assisted Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan with Indian treaty negotiations in 1825, and thereafter served as his secretary. His understanding of Indian languages and culture made him a natural choice in 1829 for sub-agent to the Ho-Chunk.

The tribe's ancestors had interacted with the ever-growing numbers of Euro-Americans for almost two centuries. At first French explorers and fur traders came their way. After 1800 their British fur trading allies, successors to the French in 1763, declined in influence as Americans in search of lead and farmland came closer and closer to tribal territory and even into it, precipitating abrasive and violent episodes in the struggle over who would occupy and use the land. By the time the Kinzies arrived at Fort Winnebago the tragic drama was nearing its final act.



Both images, WHS Archives, Name File

Juliette Magill Kinzie and John Kinzie came to Fort Winnebago in 1830 as newlyweds, and John's service as the sub-agent to the Ho-Chunk involved them both immediately in the lives of the people living in the area.

Specifically what had brought John and Juliette Kinzie to Fort Winnebago was the Treaty of 1829 between the United States and the Ho-Chunk, a settlement following the Red Bird Uprising of 1827. This uprising occurred as the direct result of incidents between settlers—especially lead miners who came into unceded Indian territory including that of the Ho-Chunk—and the Indians who resented such intrusions. The truth about which side in the confrontations committed the most severe murderous acts will never be known. Several such retaliatory incidents led by the Ho-Chunk chief Red Bird in 1826 and 1827 led to a coordinated push by federal troops and militia from Fort Snelling in present-day Minnesota, Green Bay, and Prairie du Chien. In early September 1827 they overtook Red Bird at the Fox-Wisconsin portage, where he surrendered.

The United States built Fort Winnebago at Red Bird's surrender site to further protect the strategic, well-used Fox-Wisconsin water route between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. Red Bird died in prison, and the American government negotiated a series of land cession treaties with Wisconsin Indian groups in 1829, which cleared the lead fields of all Indian claims. This treaty included the Ho-Chunk, who on August 1, 1829, relinquished an enormous tract: 1.76 million acres located in present-day southern Wisconsin and additional land in northern Illinois. Part of the settlement was payment of a little over half a million dollars in thirty-year annuities. John Kinzie carried the first installment of that money to Fort Winnebago in the fall of 1830.

JULIETTE Kinzie opened her narrative on a dark and rainy evening in Detroit when the newlyweds boarded the steamer *Henry Clay* bound for Green Bay. They carried with them the annuity payments for the Ho-Chunk and their household possessions, among them her piano! Juliette loved music and decided the piano was a must in the home.

The first stop beyond Detroit would be Mackinac Island, near the juncture of Lakes Huron and Michigan. After a



Margaret Beattie Bogue

Red Bird, the Ho-Chunk chief who in 1827 retaliated directly against Euro-American settlers, was a forerunner to the Sauk leader Black Hawk. Unlike Black Hawk, Red Bird did not survive imprisonment. He is commemorated in bronze at High Cliff State Park, Calumet County.

beautiful twenty-four hour passage northward on Lake Huron, the *Henry Clay* encountered terrible rainstorms in Thunder Bay that soaked the cabins and created utter misery for all aboard. As the boat incessantly pitched and rolled, the seasick passengers endured until the lights of Mackinac Island appeared in the dark night sky. Robert and Elizabeth Stuart, long associated with the American Fur Company and friends by virtue of John Kinzie's work for the firm, greeted and welcomed their guests to warm, dry quarters. The next morning Mackinac Island inspired Juliette Kinzie to use her fine powers of description:

MICHILIMACKINAC! that gem of the Lakes! How bright and beautiful it looked as we walked abroad on the following morning! The rain had passed away, but had left all things glittering in the light of the sun as it rose up over the waters of Lake Huron, far away to the east. Before us was the lovely bay, scarcely yet tranquil after the storm, but dotted with canoes and the boats of the fisher-

men already getting out their nets for the trout and whitefish, those treasures of the deep. Along the beach were scattered the wigwams or lodges of the Ottawas who had come to the island to trade.

From Mackinac Island the *Henry Clay* moved west and southwest through Lake Michigan and into more rough, rainy fall weather before arriving at Green Bay. The little steamboat grounded "fast and hard" on the flats about three miles below the settlement.

After a short time in Green Bay in the company of the Grignon and Baird families, with Judge James Duane Doty as their host, the Kinzies set off up the lower Fox River to make the well-known hard passage to Lake Winnebago, notorious for its many rapids. The Fox is a northeastward-flowing river whose headwaters reach as far south as Portage. It empties into Lake Winnebago and descends into Green Bay. The Jesuit explorer Jacques Marquette had described the difficulties of ascending the lower Fox in 1673, "on account of both the currents and the sharp rocks, which cut the canoes and

the feet of those who are obliged to drag them, especially when the waters are low.” The Kinzie party boarded a thirty-foot mackinaw boat manned by soldiers and three Canadian voyageurs to carry the passengers, Juliette’s piano, and the silver coin for treaty payments. The furniture and housekeeping articles would follow later. In the early pages of *Wau-Bun*, Juliette Kinzie recounted their adventures of passing around the rapids of the lower Fox and making their way through the Upper Fox River swamps filled with wild rice and water birds.

Along the way Kinzie revealed herself as a keen observer of plants, animals, and natural waters. Near the entrance to Lake Winnebago she wrote, “The woods were brilliant with wild flowers, although it was so late in the season the glory of the summer was well-nigh past. But the lupin, the moss-pink, and the yellow wallflower, with all the varieties of the helianthus [sunflowers], the aster, and the solidago [goldenrod] spread their gay charms around.”

And on this leg of the journey she took out her sketchpad to create views of “The Grand Chute, Fox River,” the site of present-day Appleton, and “Four Legs Village, Entrance to Winnebago Lake,” the first two of four Wisconsin landscape scenes she included in *Wau-Bun*. As she viewed the landscape, she also revealed her deep interest in the people she saw and the activities she witnessed. In *Wau-Bun* we find her lively impression of the voyageurs and the posturing of Judge John Law at a campsite, where he complained about a speck on his plate. His attendant cheerfully removed it with an all-purpose “black silk barcelona handkerchief,” pulled from his bosom.

During this part of the trip Kinzie also noted carefully how the Ho-Chunk women gathered wild rice around the shores of Lake Butte des Morts:

The water along its shores was green with the fields of wild rice, the gathering of which, just at this season, is an important occupation of the Indian



WHS Archives, WHi(W6)13605

Henry Schoolcraft's peaceful depiction of Michilimackinac Island, situated between Lakes Huron and Michigan, leaves no question as to why Juliette Kinzie delighted in it.

women. They push their canoes into the thick masses of the rice, bend it forward over the side with their paddles, and then beat the ripe husks of the stalks into a cloth spread in the canoe. After this, it is rubbed to separate the grain from the husk and fanned in the open air. It is then put in their cordage bags and packed away for winter use.

On the second day of their journey beyond Lake Butte des Morts, Kinzie depicted the abundance of rushes along the shores of Lake Puckaway and described in great detail how Indian women used these to make rush matting to cover their wigwams.

Their mode of fabricating this is very primitive and simple. Seated on the ground, with the rushes laid side by side, and fastened at each extremity, they pass their shuttle, a long flat needle made of bone, to which is attached a piece of cordage formed of the bark of a tree, through each rush, thus confining it very closely, and making a fine substantial mat. These mats are seldom more than five or six feet in length, as a greater size would be inconvenient in adjusting and preparing the lodges.

Although she could not have known so early in her journey, she did learn about the customs associated with this work

and later described them in the pages of *Wau-Bun*:

It is a species of labor usually assigned to the elder women of the family. When they become broken down and worn out with exposure and hardship, so that they cannot cut down trees, hoe corn, or carry heavy burdens, they are set to weaving mats, taking care of the children, and disciplining the dogs, with which every Indian lodge abounds.

Kinzie thus began her tale with a focus on and interest in the work of women, especially Ho-Chunk women, awarding it by her attention and description a value that is evident to readers today. This interest did not change when, on this same leg of the journey, she met her first Ho-Chunk person and heard Indian people address John as “father” and her as “mother” as a matter of courtesy. In the pages of *Wau-Bun* she offered readers her initial response to this new title:

I was obliged, for my part, to confess that, being almost entirely a stranger to the Indian character and habits, I was going among them with no settled plans of any kind—general good-will, and a hope of making them my friends, being the only principles I could lay claim to at present. I must leave it for time and a better acquaintance to show me in what way the principle could be carried out for their greatest good.

With the passage up the Lower Fox and through Lakes Winnebago and Butte des Morts behind them, the party proceeded through the Upper Fox, twisting and turning, the passage tedious and difficult except for the occasional lakes, Puckaway and Buffalo. The final seventy miles, “through a country perfectly monotonous and uninteresting,” challenged the oarsmen to negotiate the narrow channels here and to force the boat through stretches nearly blocked by wild rice. At last they had arrived at Fort Winnebago where they temporarily settled in an apartment

in the fort, awaiting the arrival of furniture and household goods for the as-yet-to-be-built agency house.

Many of the players in the drama that unfolded over the next eighteen months were highly visible on the day of the Kinzies’ arrival in October 1830. As she looked over the landscape below the fort, Juliette Kinzie saw the soldiers at the garrison, many Ho-Chunk people, and the Indian traders. She described the scene:

The woods were now brilliant with the many tints of autumn, and the scene around was further enlivened by groups of Indians, in all directions, and their lodges, which were scattered here and there, in the vicinity of the Agency buildings. On the low grounds might be seen the white tents of the traders, already prepared to furnish winter supplies to the Indians, in exchange for the annuity money they were about to receive.

Encapsulated in the sights and sounds of one day, the results of the pressure of white settlement and United States Indian policy came dramatically to Juliette Kinzie’s attention. These included the legacy of subduing the Indians by force and the treaty system of acquiring title to their lands. Apparent also were the influence of the traders, whose presence at annuity payment time was tolerated by federal authorities, and the debasing, ineffectively regulated sale of alcohol to the Indians.

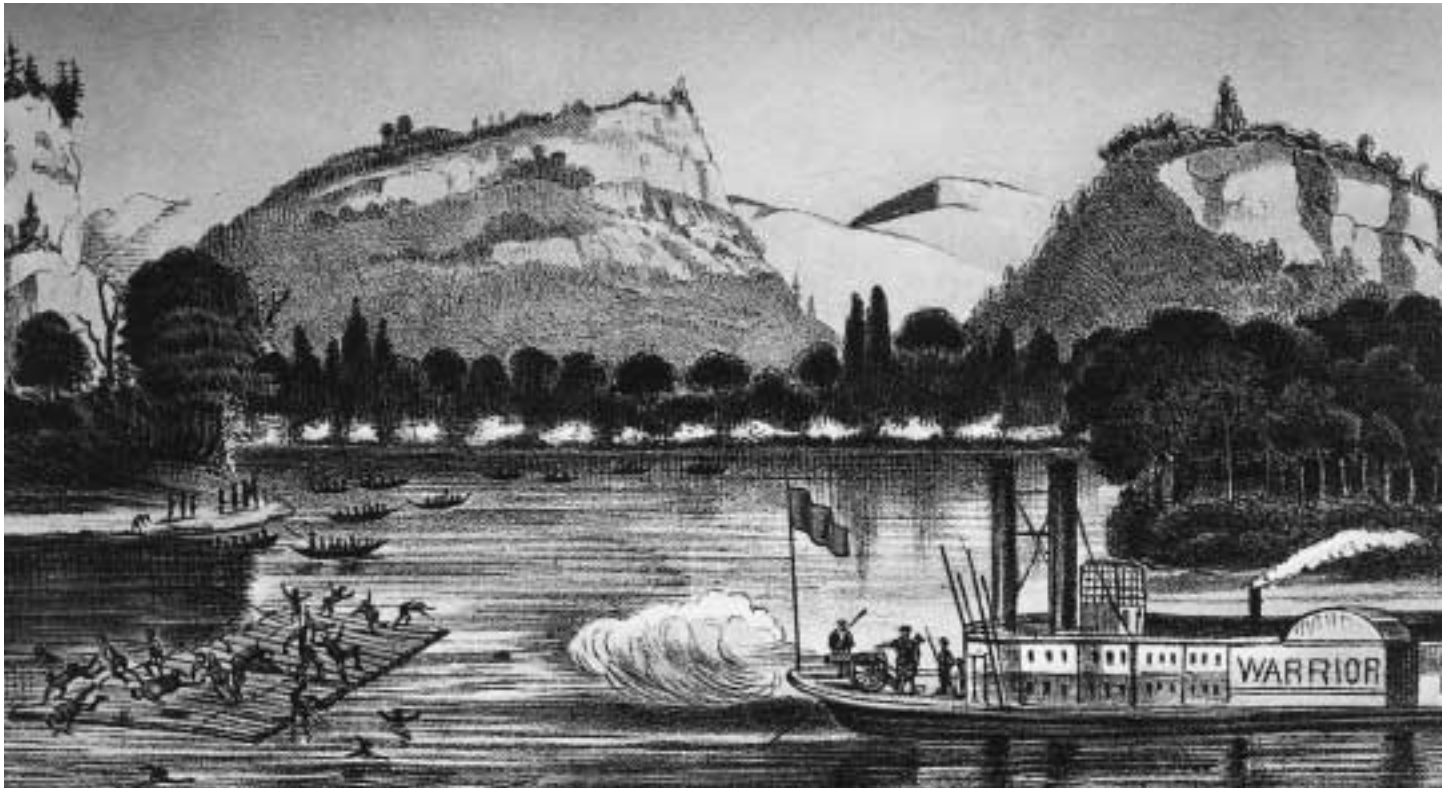
The Ho-Chunk and the traders had assembled over many days, awaiting the arrival of John Kinzie and the annuity silver. Contrary to federal law prohibiting the sale of liquor to Indians, some of the traders had supplied them with alcohol, and Chief Four Legs, whose village at the head of Lake Winnebago the author had recently sketched, had overindulged and died.

It was in the wake of Four-Legs’s death that Kinzie discovered the status of Ho-Chunk women in their communities, one of honor and respect that is



Courtesy of Smithsonian American Art Museum, gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.

Juliette Kinzie included an appendix in Wau-Bun in an effort to “do justice” to Black Hawk, the Sauk warrior who refused to be moved.



Lithograph from an engraving by Henry Lewis, published in *Das Illustrirte*; WHS Archives, Name File, WHI(X3)182222

The Battle of Bad Axe.

not always apparent from the contemporary descriptions of village life. Kinzie wrote of Madame Four-Legs, a member of the Fox tribe and the wife of the Ho-Chunk chief Four-Legs. She spoke the court language among all the tribes, Ojibwe. Kinzie noted, “She was often called upon to act as interpreter, and had, in fact, been in the habit of accompanying her husband, and assisting him by her counsels upon all occasions. She was a person of great shrewdness and judgment, and, as I afterwards experienced, of strong and tenacious affections.”

DURING the eighteen months between the Kinzies’ arrival at Fort Winnebago in the fall of 1830 and the beginning of the Black Hawk War in April 1832, Juliette Kinzie became acquainted with the Ho-Chunk and went on several journeys as far north as Green Bay, southwest into the lead fields, and southeast to Chicago. Her vivid descriptions of each of these trips introduced readers to the natural beauty of the landscape and the stark realities of travel in a very lightly populated region. She described dramatically the challenge of high, almost unfordable streams, the morass of swamps, getting lost in a spring snowstorm, riding against strong winds, and the challenges of travel in extremes of heat, burning sun, and intense cold. She vividly portrayed hunger and hospitality along the way.

During the first week in March 1831, the Kinzies journeyed to Chicago for a family visit with John Kinzie’s mother, two sisters, and brother. During the visit Juliette Kinzie related the early history of a frontier Chicago and created a word portrait and sketches of what the village and Fort Dearborn were like in 1831. She included an account of the massacre at Fort Dearborn in April 1812 as told to her by family members. The story was “in the main historically true,” according to noted Wisconsin historian Louise Phelps Kellogg, but probably dramatized and likely “biased by family traditions.” After two months in Chicago, the Kinzie party—including John Kinzie’s mother, sister, her four-year-old son, and two small unrelated children—made the return journey to Fort Winnebago in mid-spring.

As the Kinzies traveled north, the tensions between white miners and farmers and the Sauk and Fox Indians in the Rock River area of northern Illinois escalated. In addition to the Red Bird uprising, a result of white intrusion on unceded land, white settlement on ceded lands was also a source of trouble. The Sauk and Fox in the area had previously signed a treaty relinquishing their lands east of the Mississippi, agreeing to vacate them when settlers arrived, but they had found it very hard to leave their homes, cornfields, and burial grounds at Saukenuk, the village located near the mouth of



Map by Joel Heiman

Juliette Kinzie's initial journey to Wisconsin introduced her to the Fox River, one of the few in the United States that flows northward. Thus she found herself going both south and upriver at the same time and struggling as the trip became more arduous the closer she got to her new home, Fort Winnebago.

the Rock River. While one principal leader, Keokuk, a Fox tribal chieftain, consented to the move and led all who would follow him west of the Mississippi in 1829, Black Hawk, a prominent Sauk warrior, resisted. In 1830 and again in 1831 following the winter hunt, he and his followers had returned to Saukenuk. He tried to find outside help for his people, looking to Canada for British assistance. He sought allies far and wide among Indian tribes fed up with white pressure. In his quest he relied heavily on the advice of a Ho-Chunk prophet who lived in a village on the Rock River.

Black Hawk returned in the spring of 1831 with the announced determination to oust settlers and reclaim tribal lands. In response, Ho-Chunk leadership visited Fort Winnebago during the early summer. While John Kinzie was away, White Crow, Little Priest, and several other chiefs of the Rock River bands came to the fort. They told Juliette Kinzie that Black Hawk was moving east across the Mississippi River to his people's former Rock River village area and hunting grounds, and that he had announced his plan to drive

out white settlers there and remain. The Ho-Chunk chiefs also advised her that Illinois was calling out the militia to force Black Hawk and his followers back across the Mississippi. The Ho-Chunk delegation wanted to consult John Kinzie and to tell him they were doing their best to keep their young warriors out of the disturbance. They also came requesting that John Kinzie use his influence with the military to leave them alone just as long as they remained peaceful and "behaved in a friendly manner." White Crow assured Juliette Kinzie that should trouble erupt he would come with his people to protect her and her family.

Trouble did not follow immediately. In the face of an overwhelming force of federal troops and an undisciplined Illinois militia, Black Hawk and his followers quietly retreated west of the Mississippi under cover of darkness. The military showdown was postponed until the spring and summer of 1832.

When Juliette Kinzie's brother, Arthur Magill, arrived from Kentucky in late April 1832 by way of the Mississippi, he brought the news that Black Hawk and his followers had



WHS Archives, Place File

A view of Fort Dearborn, the new home of Juliette and John Kinzie after they departed from Fort Winnebago in 1833.

recrossed the Mississippi River to take possession of their old homes and cornfields. Soon, Juliette wrote, “our own Indians came flocking in, to confirm the tidings, and to assure us of their intention to remain faithful friends to the Americans.” The Kinzies learned bit by bit about the Illinois Rangers’ and the U.S. Army’s pursuit of Black Hawk and his followers as they retreated up the Rock River, scattering throughout the countryside, eluding their enemies, their presence—or even rumor of it—causing terror. John Kinzie decided to confer with all Ho-Chunk chiefs available because he knew the Sauk would try hard to have the Ho-Chunk join them. He knew that many young warriors wanted to distinguish themselves by “taking some white scalps.” Juliette Kinzie did not blame them. She explained:

They did not love the Americans—why should they? By them they had been gradually dispossessed of the broad and beautiful domains of their forefathers, and hunted from place to place, and the only equivalent they had received in exchange had been a few thousands annually in silver and presents, together with the pernicious example, the debasing influence, and the positive ill treatment of too many of the new settlers upon their lands.

She felt confident of the loyalty of the older members of the tribe encamped in fifty lodges around their dwelling. They had pledged to protect the family.

John Kinzie, feeling he should do everything possible to dissuade the younger Indians in his charge from joining Black Hawk, made arrangements to meet in council with the Ho-Chunk near Four Lakes, thirty-five miles to the south, the location of present-day Madison. Despite his family’s pleas, he rode forth. He returned the same day. Juliette Kinzie told of the family sitting at a late hour near an open window, listening, and “with what joy did we at length distinguish the tramp of horses!” He returned with leaders’ promises to try to preserve peace among the young warriors and with the knowledge that all the Rock River bands save one was determined to remain peaceful. These were said to be abandoning their villages and fields and moving north to keep out of trouble.

Rumor after rumor of “outrages” and “murders,” as Juliette Kinzie put it, and reports about Sauk plans to attack Fort Winnebago floated in, increasing tension and unease during spring and early summer. The fort stood open without palisades; it lacked artillery; nothing defended the barracks or officers’ quarters; and the commissary’s store was down the hill, well away from the other buildings. John Kinzie and family finally convinced the military to build a stockade. The family, housed as they were outside the palisade, developed a plan to use in case of attack, whereby Juliette and her sister-in-law, Margaret, and Margaret’s child should go to the upstairs. Juliette, having recently accidentally shot a “blackbird on the

wing,” kept her “little pistols” handy at night and admittedly was ready to shoot if necessary. She rested uneasily and felt renewed terror with the arrival of every Indian party carrying news of troop and possible Sauk movements. A detachment of troops from Fort Howard arrived at the newly stockaded fort in early summer, and John Kinzie and the military agreed that every night the Kinzies should sleep inside the fort.

One incident dramatically illustrates the genuine sense of terror the women in the family felt. A group of Ho-Chunk arrived one day at the Kinzie home and asked permission to dance for the family. The dance began in front of the house with Juliette and her sister-in-law watching from the open parlor windows. Margaret spotted one dancer whom she believed from paint and ornament to be a Sauk, and she shared this belief with Juliette.

Knowledge of the Ojibwe massacre of British troops in 1763 at Fort Michilimackinac came to Juliette Kinzie’s mind, and her imagination leapt to possible comparisons. In that famous incident, Ojibwe and Sauk Indians lulled the British troops into watching them play baggattaway (lacrosse) outside the stockade with the gates open. With a sudden rush the Indians entered the gates, attacked the soldiers, and captured the fort on June 2, 1763. White observers left grim accounts of the ensuing slaughter. Was this to be a slightly different version of the lacrosse ruse used there to get into the fort? While these thoughts were swim-

ming in Juliette’s mind, her sister-in-law had the events of the Fort Dearborn massacre fresh in mind from oft-repeated family memories. When the dancers decided to avoid raindrops and continue the dance inside the house, Juliette and Margaret fled to the upstairs room, thinking death was upon them. John Kinzie and the children refused to follow because they were having such a good time watching the dance. With the dance over, the Indians departed. As she later found out and noted, “the object of our suspicions” was “only some young Winnebago, who had, as is sometimes the custom, imitated them [the Sauk] in custom and appearance.” She thought in retrospect that he probably went back to his village and told a tale about scaring the “white squaws.”

Shortly thereafter, John Kinzie insisted that the family, all except himself, leave Fort Winnebago for the greater safety of Fort Howard at Green Bay, and so they went solemnly with a boatload of furs on July 4, 1832. They proceeded “always in profound silence, for a song or a loud laugh was now strictly prohibited,” until they were far from where Black Hawk’s band might conceivably be. They experienced nothing worse than a very heavy rainstorm with violent thunder and lightning and arrived at Green Bay to find people terrified that Black Hawk and his followers would come their way in search of British protection in Canada.

Juliette Kinzie vividly described the panic at Green Bay. “A portion of the citizens were nearly frightened to death, and were fully convinced that there was no safety for them but within the walls of the old dilapidated fort,” even though the troops had departed for Fort Winnebago long before then. Intense heat, mosquitoes, a plague of the Green Bay fly (a kind of dragonfly), and the news that cholera not only afflicted Detroit but that it had struck General Atkinson’s reinforcements in the war on Black Hawk enlivened the Kinzie party’s short stay at Green Bay. After news came of the Battle of Wisconsin Heights on July 21 and the Indians’ consequent retreat toward the Mississippi River, the Kinzie party returned to Fort Winnebago.

When army forces confronted Black Hawk’s fleeing followers near the mouth of the Bad Axe on the Mississippi River the first two days of August, the Sauk experienced a terrible slaughter by militia, army regulars, and the soldiers aboard the



“Medicine Dance of the Winnebagoes” by Seth Eastman from the *American Aboriginal Portfolio*, 1853; WHS Archives, WHi(X3)25006

Juliette Kinzie did believe her culture to be superior to that of the Ho-Chunk and other Indians, but she wanted to learn about other cultures, and she accepted and often supported many of their traditions and beliefs.

steamboat *Warrior*. With so many dead, the war was over. Black Hawk escaped northward to be captured later, imprisoned in St. Louis and then brought east where as prisoners he and his party were brought before President Andrew Jackson—former Indian fighter, now president and great white father to the Indians. President Jackson explained to the prisoners the kind of conduct the nation expected them to follow. Then Black Hawk and his party were temporarily imprisoned at Fortress Monroe. On recommendation of General Atkinson, leader of American troops in the Black Hawk War and William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, they were sent home to Chief Keokuk, by way of major eastern cities. This route was designed to show them the folly of making war on the United States, large and overpowering as it was. Indian rebellion and warfare in Illinois and what would become Wisconsin seemed to be a thing of the past.

THE Kinzies soon witnessed the tragic consequences of Black Hawk's struggle and its impact upon the Ho-Chunk. Summoned in late August 1832 to come to Fort Armstrong at Rock Island with as many chiefs as possible, John Kinzie called them together for the journey. The purpose of the gathering was to demand further tribal land cessions from the Sauk and Fox and to make a treaty with the Ho-Chunk whereby they would cede all of their land east and south of the Wisconsin River in exchange for land west of the Mississippi. The United States accused the Ho-Chunk of encouraging and assisting Black Hawk, and the U.S. government demanded the surrender of specified tribal members accused of murdering whites; these men would be tried and punished according to white law. The federal government and the tribal leaders concluded the treaty on September 15, 1832.

To John Kinzie fell the task of persuading the chiefs to collect and surrender those prisoners, which he succeeded in doing. With due ceremony the prisoners came in a "grand and solemn" procession, winding their way up the hill to the agency house on a bright autumn day. They surrendered at the front steps of the Kinzie residence in the presence of John Kinzie and General Henry Dodge, soon to become Governor of the Wisconsin Territory. Juliette Kinzie watched the ceremonies through the window; she reported her doubts about the guilt of two prisoners but wondered about the third. The accused were imprisoned at Fort Winnebago awaiting trial but tunneled their way out of the "black hole" in late autumn.

The Indians had remained near the fort following the prisoner surrender ceremonies because they expected their annuity payments to be made soon. Governor Porter of Michigan Territory chose to bring the silver instead of having John Kinzie

come to Detroit and transport it, but he delayed and delayed, finally arriving at Fort Winnebago in early November. The Indians were already painfully aware of the bleak winter before them. They had abandoned their gardens and hunting grounds in the summer and moved north to avoid being accused of helping Black Hawk. By November they were very short of food, and John Kinzie tried to bring two boatloads of corn from Green Bay to the fort. He planned to stockpile these against the very lean times certain to ensue, but he failed to receive them before the freeze prevented use of the waterway. The Indians used their late-arriving annuity payments to secure extra ammunition, hoping for a good late fall and winter hunt to sustain themselves, but the hunt was poor. The Indians came straggling in all winter long to Fort Winnebago, badly emaciated and in search of food from the commander of the garrison and from the Kinzies, both experiencing extremely short rations. The Kinzies heard reports of dying Indians stretched in the road to the portage. By spring the Ho-Chunk were trying to stay alive on roots and bark. Juliette Kinzie recounted how their terrible suffering reached a nadir before the boatloads of corn reached the fort:

We were soon obliged to keep both doors and windows fast, to shut out the sight of misery we could not relieve. If a door were opened for the admission of a member of the family, some wretched mother would rush in, grasp the hand of my infant [Wolcott], and, placing that of her famishing child within it, tell us, pleadingly, that he was imploring "his little brother" for food. The stoutest man could not have beheld with dry eyes the heart-rending spectacle which often presented itself. It was in vain that we screened the lower portion of our windows with curtains. They would climb up on the outside, and tier upon tier of gaunt, wretched faces would peer in above, to watch us, and see if indeed we were as ill provided as we represented ourselves.

Finally the boats came in sight, and with their landing and the opening of the barrels of corn, the starving time was over. The treaty-allotted time for the Indians to live near Fort Winnebago also was almost over. They had agreed to leave for their newly assigned lands west of the Mississippi by June 1, 1833, but many of them did not.

The closing pages of *Wau-Bun* leave the reader with two memorable vignettes: the appearance of one of the escaped prisoners on the Kinzies' doorstep in spring of 1833, and the departure of the couple on July 1. Juliette recognized the prisoner in company with others who had come to have the blacksmith repair their guns, traps, and tools. She told John Kinzie,

who made no effort to detain him. Clearly expressing his empathy with the Ho-Chunk, he replied, “You are right, but it is no affair of ours. We are none of us to look so as to give him notice that we suspect anything. They are undoubtedly innocent, and have suffered enough already.”

On July 1, amid the tears and lamentations of the Indians, the Kinzies departed for Detroit and a new life in Chicago. In 1832 the family had entered a fractional quarter-section of federal land, 102 acres now lying in the vicinity of Navy Pier. It became Kinzie’s Addition, bounded by Kinzie Street, North State, Chicago Avenue, and the lake. As for the Ho-Chunk, their prospective new home was far different. They had been assigned new land west of the Mississippi in present-day Iowa, the “neutral territory” between the Sioux and the Sauk and Fox. By 1837 the Ho-Chunk would lose all their Wisconsin tribal lands by treaties with the federal government, seven and one-half million acres, roughly 20 percent of present-day Wisconsin.

WAU-BUN, or “The Early Day,” is an intriguing title for Juliette Kinzie’s book. Louise Phelps Kellogg suggests on the title page of her edited edition that in the Ojibwe language it means the dawn, or the break of day. Perhaps Kinzie named it for that wonderful morning, “bright and beautiful,” at Michilimackinac following their arrival on a very stormy night aboard the steamship *Henry Clay* in September 1830.

Whatever she had in mind, that day was the dawn of a completely new experience in her life, thirty-three months among the Ho-Chunk in frontier Wisconsin. Given her intellectual curiosity, her creativity, and her love of people, she proposed to learn about and to understand Indian people and the lush natural world around her. She used her genteel, well-educated upbringing as an asset rather than a deficit in learning about a rough frontier setting and opened her mind to comprehend a culture completely new to her. This is not to say that she had an unlimited acceptance of all things. She clearly depicted experiences and events when fear and intense dislike for Indian ways dominated her reactions, the same kinds of responses common among incoming Euro-American settlers. For example, she vividly described how the scalp dance revolted her. Yet she tried very hard to achieve a measure of fairness and objectivity in her writing, a goal that led her to include an appendix to *Wau-Bun* designed to do “justice” to Black Hawk. These are the qualities found in Kinzie’s memoir that still attract readers in the twenty-first century.

Juliette Kinzie’s opinions as both sensitive observer of the Ho-Chunk and active participant in frontier life give historians a perspective to be treasured for its insights. It is interesting to touch

on just a few passages from *Wau-Bun* that reveal much about Ho-Chunk culture and Juliette Kinzie, the individual. While she felt her own culture superior to that of the Ho-Chunk and initially tried to promote knowledge of the English language and Christianity among the Indians, she found it important to understand why Indians preferred their ideas and ways of life. She noted:

As a general thing, they do not appear to perceive that there is anything to be gained by adopting the religion and the customs of the whites. “Look at them,” they say, “always toiling and striving—always wearing a brow of care—shut up in houses—afraid of the wind and the rain—suffering when they are deprived of the comforts of life! We, on the contrary, live a life of freedom and happiness. We hunt and fish, and pass our time pleasantly in the open woods and prairies. If we are hungry, we take some game; or, if we do not find that, we can go without. If our enemies trouble us, we can kill them, and there is no more said about it. What should we gain by changing ourselves into white men?”

She brought the same studied approach to Ho-Chunk religion as well:

They have a strong appreciation of the great fundamental virtues of natural religion—the worship of the Great Spirit, brotherly love, parental affection, honesty, temperance and chastity. Any infringement of the laws of the Great Spirit, by a departure from these virtues, they believe will excite his anger and draw down punishment. These are their principles. That their practice evinces more and more a departure from them, under the debasing influences of a proximity to the whites, is a melancholy truth. . . .

In just those few sentences on culture and religion she indicated an awareness of her own time with the Ho-Chunk, a time of transition and change for a culture that she valued and for which she quietly grieved, in her knowledge that it was eroding as her own Yankee culture intruded.

Yet that grief did not keep her from capturing the daily experiences she witnessed, and through her writing she helped preserve the Ho-Chunk culture. The subject of women’s work remained a constant, and very conscious, theme. She recounted the scene before her when the Ho-Chunk arrived and departed at annuity payment times under the terms of the treaty of 1829:

When the Indians arrived and when they departed, my sense of “woman’s rights” was often greatly outraged. The master of the family, as a general thing, came leisurely bearing his gun and perhaps a lance in

his hand; the woman, with the mats and the poles of her lodge upon her shoulders, her papoose, if she had one, her kettles, sacks of corn, and wild rice, and, not unfrequently, the household dog perched on the top of all. If there is a horse or pony in the list of family possessions, the man rides, the squaw trudges after.

This unequal division of labor is the result of no want of kind, affectionate feeling on the part of the husband. It is rather the instinct of the sex to assert their superiority of position and importance, when a proper occasion offers. When out of the reach of observation, and in no danger of compromising his own dignity, the husband is willing enough to relieve his spouse from the burden that custom imposes on her, by sharing her labors and hardships.

And yet, despite the lack of power and control that Kinzie testifies to in the pages of her memoir, another example gives readers an insight into her thoughts on the resiliency and resourcefulness of Ho-Chunk women. She told with relish a tale about the mother of the elder Day-kau-ray, a very old Ho-Chunk. As Juliette described her:

No one could tell her age, but all agreed that she must have seen upwards of a hundred winters. Her eyes dimmed, and almost white with age—her face dark and withered, like a baked apple—her voice tremulous and feeble, except when raised in fury to reprove her graceless grandsons, who were fond of playing her all sorts of mischievous tricks, indicated the very great age she must have attained. She usually went on all fours, not having strength to hold herself erect. . . . She crept into the parlor one morning, then straightening herself up, and supporting herself by the frame of the door, she cried, in a most piteous tone,—“Shaw-nee-aw-kee! Wau-tshob-ee-rah Thsoonsh—koo-nee-noh!” (Silverman, I have no looking-glass.) My husband, smiling and taking up the same little tone, cried in return,—“Do you wish to look at yourself, mother?”

Juliette told her readers that the elderly woman found the idea very funny and laughed so hard she had to sit down. Then she told him it was for one of the boys. Once she received it, noted Juliette, “She found that she had ‘no comb,’ then that she had ‘no knife,’ then that she had ‘no calico shawl,’ until it ended, as it generally did, by Shaw-nee-aw-kee paying pretty dearly for his joke.” The old woman was indeed old, frail, and without much formal power. But, as Kinzie joyfully noted, the elderly woman had the powerful, young white man meeting all demands and enjoying himself as he did so. As a whole, Kinzie’s observa-

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Photo by Elle Bogue

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tions show her admiration for Ho-Chunk women whom she found excellent wives and mothers who bore far more than what she believed to be a fair share of work essential to tribal life, but who managed all the same.

These few examples do little more than sample the kinds of rich social history encapsulated in Juliette Kinzie’s experience living at Fort Winnebago during the years of the Black Hawk War. Readers of Wisconsin history are the richer for her efforts to portray the largest segment of Wisconsin’s frontier people, men and women, as she understood them and their way of life. ❧

Resources and Further Reading

The primary resource for this article, naturally, is the work of Juliette Kinzie herself, but readers should be aware that the many editions that have been published are not equal. Of the many editions of Juliette M. Kinzie’s *Wau-Bun, “The Early Day” in the North-west*, originally published in 1855, historians find the one introduced and annotated by Louise Phelps Kellogg, eminent Wisconsin historian, especially satisfying. Originally copyrighted in 1948 and published by the National Society of the Colonial Dames in Wisconsin, it has since been reprinted many times and sold to help maintain the historic Agency House at Portage. Also highly recommended is the edition published in 1992 by the University of Illinois Press, containing an excellent introduction by Nina Baym, University of Illinois professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences with expertise in nineteenth-century women’s fiction. The Kellogg edition stresses historical questions and the Baym edition literary expression and author orientation.

Several other works were critical in the writing of this article, for their data and interpretations on land cessions and tribal cultures. These are Charles C. Royce, *Indian Land Cessions in the United States, House Documents*; Charles J. Kappler, comp., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (2 vols., Washington, 1904 edition); and William T. Hagan, *The Sac and Fox Indians, The Civilization of the American Indian* series (Norman, Oklahoma, 1958). For more information on the fur trade, many resources are available, but *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, 1991*, Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, editors (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994) was especially helpful.

Readers will find an excellent survey of Wisconsin Indian history in Robert E. Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin, 1600–1960: A Study of Tradition and Change* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995). The most comprehensive study of the Ho-Chunk is Paul Radin’s *The Winnebago Tribe*, a study made early in the twentieth century for the U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology and reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press in 1970. Highly recommended for understanding the Black Hawk War is *Black Hawk, An Autobiography*, Roger L. Nichols, editor (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1999). The introduction is very insightful. Both Roger L. Nichols, “The Black Hawk War in Retrospect,” and Anthony F. C. Wallace, “Prelude to Disaster: The Crisis in Indian-White Relations Which Led to the Black Hawk War of 1832,” found in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 65 (Summer, 1982), pp. 239–288, are excellent for understanding the course of the war and the broad meaning of the war in American development.