

THE STORY OF THE FAMILIES

By Joseph Vernelle Phillips

PART 1: THE AMERICANS

Chapter 1: The Wyandotte (Huron) Indians

Our first ancestors in America were most probably the Wyandotte (Huron) Indians of Canada, Michigan, and Ohio around Lake Huron and later in central and southern Ohio, although in earlier history they ranged from north of Toronto to Georgian Bay and along the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. They were of Iroquois stock and lived in wooden longhouses in villages and log forts along the lakes and rivers, built 40-foot birch-bark canoes, farmed tobacco and corn, beans and squash, picked wild berries, and, most importantly, trapped animals for fur, mostly beavers.

Their giant canoes could be seen everywhere stacked high with beaver pelts, paddling toward French trading depots in Montreal and Quebec. They traded the furs mostly for kettles and hatchets. They hunted with bows and arrows and in the winter traveled on snowshoes. For sport, they loved to play la crosse. Warriors also loved racing, running, leaping and tomahawk-throwing contests.



Indians Hunting in Winter



An Iroquois Longhouse in Winter



Hurons Making
Snowshoes



Louis Le Gros
Huron Family, Canada



Mother Solomon
Last Resident, 1887
Upper Sandusky, Ohio



Huron Village by Waterfall
1820, Canada

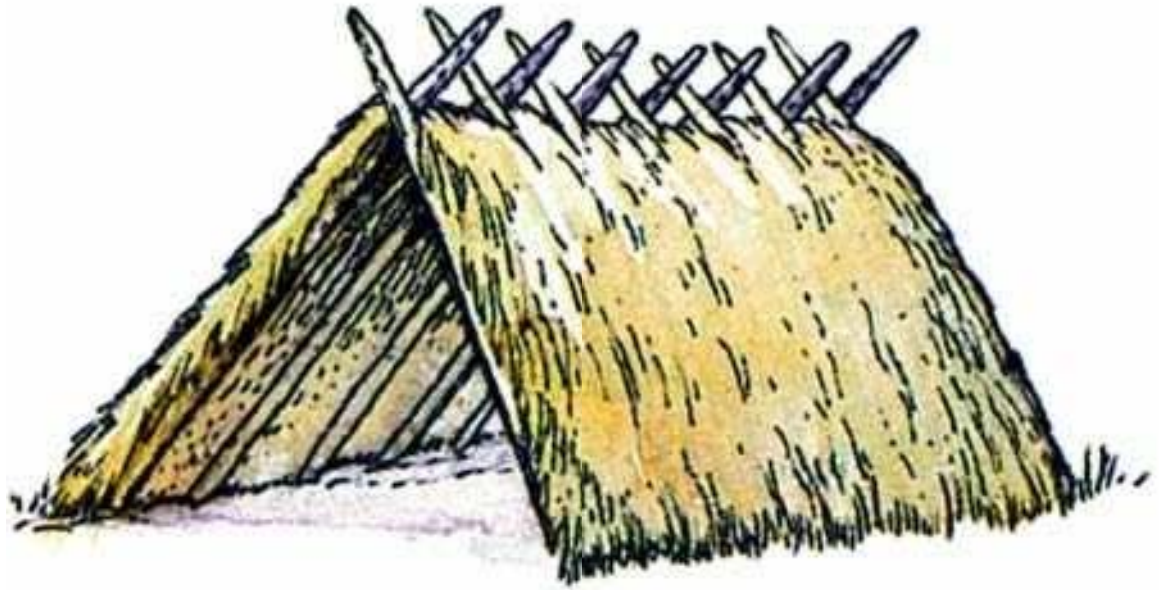


Iroquois Longhouse
Reconstruction

(Photographs Courtesy of the Ossossone Web Site, Some from Canadian National Archives)



Indians Making a Canoe



An Indian Lean-To



Indian Medicinemen in Wigwam

They were also fierce and deadly warriors—their hair was mostly cropped and roached—who not only killed but also loved to torture their captives and their enemies. The eyewitness accounts given by early missionaries like the Jesuits make your blood curdle. Father Paul Le Jeune wrote in the 1637 “Jesuit

Relations” the following (shortened) account of one captive’s torture that he personally witnessed:

“One must be there to see a living picture of Hell. The whole cabin appeared as if on fire...these barbarians—crowding one upon the other, howling at the top of their voices with firebrands in their hands, their eyes flashing with rage and fury—seemed like so many demons who would give no respite to this poor wretch...taking his hands and breaking the bones...pierced his ears with sticks which they left in them...bound his wrists with cords which they tied roughly, pulling at each end of the cord with all their might...he was made to repose upon hot ashes and burning coals...and one of those butchers having applied a brand to his loins, he was seized with a fainting fit...

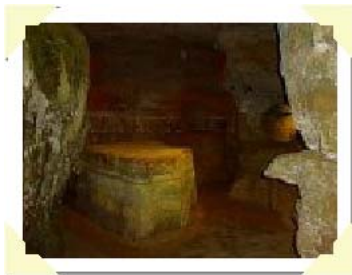
“As soon as the day began to dawn, they lighted fires outside the village, to display there the excess of their cruelty, to the sight of the Sun...made him mount a scaffold...tied him to a tree...There they began to burn him more cruelly than ever, leaving no part of his body to which fire was not applied at intervals. When one of these butchers began to burn him and to crowd him too closely, he fell into the hands of another, who gave him no better reception. From time to time they were supplied with new brands, which they thrust, all aflame, down his throat, even forcing them into his fundament. They burned his eyes, they applied red hot hatchets to his shoulders; they hung some around his neck...upon his back...upon his breast...If he attempted to sit or crouch down, someone thrust a brand from under the scaffolding which soon caused him to arise...water into his mouth...remained...almost motionless. Therefore, fearing that he would die...than by the knife, one cut off a foot, another a hand, and almost at the same time a third severed the head from the shoulders, throwing it into the crowd...carry it to the Captain Ondessone...to make a feast...as for the trunk...a feast was made of it the same day...”*

*This abridged copy taken from American Indian Almanac by John Upton Terrell, copyrighted by him in 1971, and published by Barnes & Noble Books, 1998.

Historians think the word Wyandotte was a white corruption of the word Wendat from the Wendat Confederacy (which also included the Tobacco People and the Erie Indians) of which the Wyandottes were a member. Terrell said the word may mean “Islanders” or some suggest it means “Dwellers on a Peninsula.” He notes that the French called these people Hurons, “rough” or “unkempt lout and wretch.” Lake Huron in the Great Lakes was named after them.

Their major enemies were their fellow Iroquois tribes of the Five Nation Confederacy who tried desperately to wipe them from the face of the earth and they became refugees after 1659 when war was launched against them. Any tribe or village harboring them was also exterminated by the confederacy.

Earlier, many Hurons converted to Christianity—Roman Catholicism--and they were considered the “good Indians” by the French. About half of all Hurons were exterminated by epidemics of European diseases, including venereal diseases, and by alcoholism.



“Council Rock” in Olentangy Indian Caverns,
Delaware County, Ohio, where the Wyandottes
held many of their tribal ceremonies.

Many Wyandottes traveled to southern Ohio during their refugee migrations and their principal chief Tarhe or Crane established his capital at Lancaster, Fairfield County. It was then called Tarhe or Cranetown. A scattering of Shawnee braves also joined the Wyandottes here for their attacks. From here, the Wyandottes massacred settlers in Ohio and Kentucky and aboard flatboats sailing down the Ohio River, killing, scalping and capturing them.



À la suite d'une recherche en Angleterre, Roland Viau a trouvé ce scalp datant du 18^e siècle, l'un des rares à avoir été conservés.

During research in England, Roland Viau found this scalp, dating from the 18th Century one of the rare ones to have been saved.

In the Olentangy Indian Caverns in Delaware County, the Wyandottes often sought refuge from their enemies, the Delawares, and from cold weather. They also made arrows and other stone implements in the council room until as late as 1810. Various Wyandotte artifacts and crafts are on view in the museum there.



Chief Tarhe, the Grand Sachem



Chief Tarhe, the Grand Sachem



After the defeat of the great Indian coalition at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 by General (and later president, “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too”) William Henry Harrison and under terms of the Treaty of Fort Greenville in 1795, Chief Crane (Tarhe) of the Porcupine Clan and Grand Sachem of the Wyandottes, ceded most of his land to the American government and the tribe was removed to Upper Sandusky, Ohio, where many became Christians, mainly Methodist Episcopal. Chief Tarhe was born near Detroit, Mich., in 1742, and died in November, 1816, at Cranetown (a new Cranetown) near Upper Sandusky. He was 6 feet four inches tall, a giant among most Indians of the time. The name means “at the tree.” The French called him Le Chef Grue or Monsieur Grue, Chief Crane or Mister Crane. He married first the daughter of Chevalier Durante, a French Canadian, and they had a daughter Myerrah (or Myeerah) or White Crane.

He was elected Sastaretsi, the first of the Porcupine Clan to serve in that position as ruler of the entire Wyandotte nation, although he never assumed the title, calling himself Grand Sachem instead. At the time of the signing of the Treaty of Greenville, Chief Tarhe lived at Solomanstown in Logan County, Ohio, and then moved to the banks of the Hockhocking River where Lancaster, Ohio, is now located.



Indians Cooking Stew

Then, on July 11, 1843, they were removed to Kansas by foot, wagon train, and steamboat, some by horse, on a tearful exodus fraught with disease, crime, battling both black and white thieves, and drunken parties hatched by illegal liquor peddlers. And eventually many Wyandottes were also sent to reservations in Oklahoma.

The Wyandottes for years operated the only ferry service over the Missouri River between the two Kansas Cities, Missouri and Kansas. They also owned much land in downtown Kansas City, Kansas, including a rather large tract that is a historic cemetery site and a gambling casino today. Many became quite prominent businessmen, statesmen, educators and religious leaders. They founded the first schools and churches in Kansas/Nebraska and were instrumental in Kansas's entry into the Union, drafting the territory's first constitution. The Kansas Wyandottes became American citizens while the remnants of the tribe going to Oklahoma were recognized by the federal government as the Wyandotte Nation.

General George Sanderson in a lecture published in 1851 in Lancaster, Ohio, said many Wyandottes lingered behind in Fairfield, Hocking and Licking counties, and he noted that Tarhe had a second, white, red-haired wife, a former child captive. Her name was probably Sally Sharpe, who later married a man named Frost after the removal to Kansas. The general, who was in Lancaster in the early days of the 19th century, also noted that other whites and Wyandottes intermarried.

We must tell you also at this point that most of Hocking County and Licking County, both Slane family counties, were carved out of Fairfield County.

For relatives interested in the early Wyandottes in Fairfield County, Ohio—their way of life, massacres and other horrors, the intermarriages between Wyandottes and whites and their removal to Sandusky—we recommend reading “A Brief History of the Early Settlement of Fairfield County Being the Substance of a Lecture Delivered Before the Lancaster Literary Institute, with Additional Facts” by George Sanderson, Esq., published in Lancaster, 1851, by Thomas Wetzler, and reprinted by the Fairfield Heritage Association, Lancaster, Ohio, 1966. Sanderson was an eyewitness to early county history even before the county was created.

(I want to thank the University of Illinois Museum for the use of many pictures found in this chapter.)