

The Kickapoo Treaty –



On July 30, 1819, at Fort Russell, just north of Edwardsville, the treaty was made between the Kickapoo Indians and the U. S. Government, by which the Indians ceded forever their right to all lands east of the Mississippi, more than 10 million acres. In addition to \$ 3,000 worth of merchandise, the Government agreed to pay the Indians \$2,000 in silver annually for 15 years plus land in the Osage country in the territory of Missouri. This mural, originally commissioned by the Edwardsville National Bank and now in the Madison County Courthouse, shows Macine, Chief of the Kickapoos, with a band of his Chieftains at the crest of the hill of the old Fort Russell. Before him are assembled Ninian Edwards, territorial Governor and Superintendent of the Illinois Indians; Auguste Chouteau and Benjamin Stephenson, Indian Commissioners, and Jacques Matte, explorer and interpreter. Macine, at the signing of the treaty revealed his devotion to the land which he so reluctantly surrendered. The lands relinquished by the Kickapoo extended north to the Kankakee River and included the great Corn Belt of Illinois. The price was about 1/3 of a cent per acre. It was reported that during several weeks of July the Indian camp on the banks of the Cahokia Creek was big entertainment for the new City of Edwardsville with just 200 residents. Immediately after, boats waiting at the river transported the entire

tribe and all their belongings to the west bank of the river. For 15 years, a large tribal group came to Edwardsville annually to collect their payments.

There were other major gatherings of Native Americans in SW Illinois in the late 1700s and early 1800s, some resulting in short “treaties” and others actually ceding land to the USA. George Rogers Clark, called “Big Knife,” convened a gathering of representatives from ten tribes in the days after he conquered Kaskaskia and Cahokia, winning most of them to “neutrality”, (as opposed to helping the British.) Ninian Edwards held a major meeting at Cahokia, along with Governor William Clark of Missouri, in mid 1815, where a peace treaty was signed. In August of 1816, discouraged Potawatomi, Ottawa and Chippewa signed away land in an open ceremony at the northern tip of Chouteau Island. These tribes also visited Edwardsville annually for payments. Eyewitnesses tell of dozens of canoes in the pool above the Chain of Rocks, with hundreds of Native Americans marching single file to Edwardsville’s land office, the only “Federal” facility other than Fort Russell, (which location is now unknown.)

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