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History of Local Indigenous Tribes

The St. Louis region lies at the confluence of several large rivers including the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois, all of which played a significant role as migration routes into and out of the region. Eureka itself is located directly on the Meramec River, 15 miles south of the Missouri and 20 miles west of the Mississippi, and contains a rare exposure of Crescent Chert, once a valuable resource used for toolmaking (Fuller 2006; Leach 2017). The combination of these attributes made Eureka an appealing area for members of numerous Indigenous tribes to spend time exploring and living in the area.

Of the many people who have settled around Eureka, the Osage have the longest and most continuous ancestral history here. The Osage came to the Mississippi River Valley as part of the larger group of people, called the Dhegiha Sioux. This Siouan language subgroup originated in the Ohio River Valley and is the ancestral tribe of the Quapaw, Omaha, Ponca, Kaw, and Osage tribes (Osage Nation; Wiel & Hunter 2010). Through the combined work of tribal oral historians and ethnologists, the migrations and ancestral history of these closely related tribes of the Dhegiha Sioux have been constructed. This group reached Missouri by migrating west along the Ohio River until they reached the Mississippi. At the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers, the Dhegiha subsequently split into two groups – the Omaha, who traveled up the Mississippi (“those going against the wind or current”), and the Quapaw (“the downstream people”), who remained behind. The Omaha traveled until they reached the mouth of the Missouri River and settled near present-day St. Louis. From here, a group that would later become the Omaha and Ponca tribes split off and began migrating along the river drainages to the west and north, leaving behind the last remaining group of the Dhegiha. The Kaw and Osage were the last Dhegiha groups to separate, with the Kaw continuing their westward movement up the Missouri River (Hunter 2013; Osage Nation; Wiel & Hunter 2010).

The Osage, also named the Wahzhazhe, or Ni-U-Kon-Ska (“children of the middle waters”) maintained settlements along the Missouri River, but also moved southward and ventured out along the Osage River. Among the Dhegiha, the migration stories indicate that the Osage inhabited the St. Louis region for the longest period of time (Hunter, 2013). The Osage would eventually range throughout Missouri and Arkansas, and at the onset of the colonial contact period, large groups of the Osage were living in southwest and south-central Missouri along the Missouri and Osage Rivers. Though by the time European colonialist settlers arrived in eastern Missouri the Osage villages were on the Western fringe of the Ozarks on the Osage River, the tribe still made seasonal hunting trips along the Meramec River (Foster, 1983). When René-Robert Cavalier de La Salle came to the region in 1682, his party encountered established villages of Indigenous peoples, likely the Osage, at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri (Houck, 1908). The Osage retained control of the region until the pressures for land from European and American settlers forced them west into Kansas and then Oklahoma.

Though not a constant presence west of the Mississippi, the tribes of the Illinois Confederacy also utilized and lived on the land around Eureka. The Illinois Confederacy was composed of multiple tribes of the Algonquian language group including the Kaskaskia, Peoria, Cahokia, Tamaroa, Michigamea, and Moingwena. They lived throughout the Mississippi River Valley and had ancestral lands in portions of present-day Michigan,

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Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, and Missouri (May, n.d.). Colonial historical records of the 1600s show Tamaroa, Cahokia, and Kaskaskia villages in Missouri, and it is likely that their ancestors were living, hunting, and exploring throughout the western region of the Mississippi River Valley long before the colonial period (Foley, 1971; Reyling, 1963; Sturtevant, 1967).

Members of the Great Lakes Algonquian language tribes were some of the later Indigenous groups to arrive and live in this area. Increased aggression from both Iroquois expansion campaigns westward into the Great Lakes region and colonial settlers in the 1650s forced many Indigenous tribes of the northeast to migrate into the Midwestern United States. By the late 1600s, segments of many splintered Algonquin language tribes including the Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Shawnee, and Delaware, had arrived in Missouri. The Shawnee were driven from their ancestral homelands in Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky, and segmented into four groups. One of these groups left Ohio in 1773 and 1779 and took up refuge in Spanish Upper Louisiana, or what is now Missouri (Foley 1971; Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, 2015). Members of the Shawnee tribe frequently visited St. Louis and for a long time were major suppliers of game. A family living near the current Route 66 State Park in Eureka reported frequent visits from members of the Shawnee Tribe (Foster, 1983). Fear of retaliation from Americans after the Revolutionary War led to the scattering of members of the Delaware tribe. Their original homelands were in present-day Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and by the time of the American Revolution they were living along the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers. Different segments of the greater Delaware tribe were pro-British or pro-American, and at the end of the American Revolution those that had sided with the British moved in nearly all directions to avoid retaliation. One segment of the Delaware traveled all the way to the Spanish Upper Louisiana territory, what is present-day Missouri (Delaware Tribe of Indians, 2020).

While dealing with increasing invasion of their lands by colonialists in the late 1700s, the Osage pushed back through continued depredations against the Spanish communities in eastern Missouri. Spanish settlers attempted to control and push back the Osage by first withholding trade. However, continued trade and assistance from the British in the area undermined this strategy, allowing the Osage to remain independent from the Spanish and fight back against their settlements. In 1788-89, the Spanish Governor of Upper Louisiana invited members of the Shawnee and Delaware tribes living in Ohio to what is now southeastern Missouri to act as a buffer between their settlements and the Osage (Foley 1971; Soodalter, 2018). The Spanish proceeded to instigate attacks between these and other neighboring nations, like the Sac and Fox, on the Osage, in the hopes of eradicating them. This instead led to the near extermination of the Missouri tribe, whose remaining members joined the Otoe. The Osage, however, remained defiant (Foley, 1971).

The land upon which Camp Wyman currently sits was eventually ceded by the Osage to the United States in 1808 under Cession 67 and the Treaty of Fort Clark in Sibley, MO. The Osage ceded to the United States all land east of a line due south from the fort (near what is now Kansas City), north of the Arkansas River, and south of the Missouri River (see map of [Cession 67](#), on [digitreaties.org](#)), or approximately the southern half of Missouri and the northern half of Arkansas. In return for this 52.5 million acre tract of land, the Osage were promised \$1,200 in cash (about \$24,800 today*) and \$1,500 in merchandise (about \$31,000 today*). This

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treaty was affirmed in 1815 in Treaties of Portage des Sioux, at which time the United States re-drew the lines and seized another 23 miles of land. Though the Osage gave up all claims to land in the central and eastern part of Missouri in the treaty of 1808, they continued to use much of the area described in the treaty until Missouri became a state in 1821 (The Indigenous Digital Archive, 2020; Leiker and Tovar, 2018).

Anger at the terms of this treaty would lead some members of the Osage to side with the British in the war of 1812. The British allied heavily with Indigenous Nations during this war against the United States, and when they finally lost, tried to guarantee that the Treaty of Ghent signed in 1814 assured them protections to land. The British initially proposed in Article IX that the Canadian Midwest Territory (land that is now Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, a large part of Indiana, and about one third of Ohio) be set apart for Native Nations as a buffer state (Dorn, 2020). The United States rejected this proposal outright and instead awarded Indigenous tribes the “possessions, rights and privileges which they may have enjoyed or been entitled to” in 1811. After the signing of this treaty with the British, the United States government swiftly began the negotiation of over 200 of Treaties and land cessions meant to disenfranchise Indigenous Nations, 99 of which involved the formation of reservations west of the Mississippi River.

With multiple rapid cessions of land pressed by the United States government, and subsequent further cessions of initial reservations, all the tribes that once called Missouri home have been removed. Not only were many of these nations forced to cede their lands to colonialist settlers, but many tribes were fully eradicated and forced to integrate into other shrinking tribes. Throughout the early formation of the United States, the various tribes of Missouri were lied to, bribed, persecuted, and ultimately forcibly uprooted and driven onto smaller tracts of land. Once there, they were preyed upon by dishonest agents and traders. Missionaries helped destroy their native cultures. Despite all of this, Indigenous people are still here, and their voices deserve to be elevated. They are living and thriving, and they are also still working against the consequences of colonialism, oppression, enslavement, deceit, and the effects the loss of sacred land has had on their cultures and heritage.

In 1818, the United States first surveyed the land that is now Eureka and split it into Township and Range blocks to be sold to new settlers in the Missouri territory, or given to soldiers who had fought in one of the United States’ recent wars. The Section where Wyman now sits was originally purchased in 1851 by Daniel Andrae (U.S. Bureau of Land Management). The next recorded owner of this land is George Forby, who then sold the property to Dr. L. E. Monroe. Dr. Monroe was the owner of the land when the Children’s Industrial Farm, now known as Camp Wyman, began renting the site for \$150 a year in 1900 (\$4,650 today*). In 1910 Peyton Carr, along with several other donors, purchased the land for \$3,500 (\$95,900 today*) and donated it to the Children’s Industrial Farm. The road into camp bears the name of one of these early owners, George Forby, and the camp itself now bears the name of one of its earliest advocates, Frank Wyman.

**Current dollar conversions were calculated in 2021.*

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