

***Conference version***

***The Illinois Indians before 1673***

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**Introduction**

\*\*\*In treating the subject of the Illinois Indians before their historic encounter with the French explorers in the summer of 1673, we acknowledge we are drawing an arbitrary line in order to frame our exploration for a somewhat less arbitrary point of reference. By the time Marquette and Jolliet \*\*\* visited the Illinois in 1673, the tribe's response to the drastically changing conditions of economy, individual and community health, and social interaction that characterize the Historic Contact period in North America was well underway. \*\*\* So, what do we know about the Illinois in the period before history assumes its narrative?

**Pre-1673 references to the Illinois Indians**

- 1) \*\*\* 1634 listed as neighbors
- 2) 1640 war with Winnebago in which there were many Winnebago captives
- 3) 1655 fighting Iroquois in Illinois and definitely already on Miss. River.

Starting in 1665-1667, groups of Illinois came to trade at both Green Bay and Chequamegon. The wonderfully accurate 1669 Jesuit \*\*\* map of Lake Superior and the Green Bay region, which has been re-attributed by Campeau to the hands of Allouez and Marquette, shows a \*\*\*

“road to the Illinois” running straight south from Chequamegon. In 1670 Marquette described the Illinois as warriors who “*take a great many Slaves, whom they trade with the Outaouaks for Muskets, Powder, Kettles, Hatchets and Knives.*” At the same time Dablon said the Illinois came to Chequamegon “*as Merchants, to carry away hatchets and kettles, guns, and other articles that they need.*”

\*\*\* It was here at Chequamegon that Father Louis Nicolas joined Father Allouez and spent the winter of 1667/1668 (Thwaites 1896-1901:48:fn 14, 297). Father Nicolas, now known to be the author of the sketchbook \*\*\* known to us as *Codex Canadensis*, sketched portraits of five of the 13 western tribes that Allouez lists as frequenting this place. Nicolas illustrated an Ottawa, Sioux, Ojibway, \*\*\* Illinois, and Mascouten. The replacement for Father Nicolas, whose “temperament did not suit” Allouez’ flocks, was \*\*\* Father Jacques Marquette, who arrived in September 1669.

\*\*\* Thus we can place the Illinois in the Illinois Country by the 1630s, prior to the great dispersions to the east during the 1640s and 1650s which sent Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Mascouten, Potawatomi, Ottawa, Huron, and Petun refugees flooding into northern Illinois and Wisconsin. Yet, archaeology tells us that the Illinois had not been in this region long before this. No earlier assemblage in Illinois bears a resemblance to the Danner assemblage which we now recognize as the Illinois Indians. All know Danner assemblages are accompanied by trade goods.

### **pre-1673 trade activity**

\*\*\* In the five decades since the ethnohistorical and cartographical research that led to the first excavations at the Zimmerman Site (Grand Village of the Kaskaskia) and \*\*\* Starved Rock (Le Rocher), the implication that down-the-line trade reached the Illinois well in advance

of historically documented contacts has been slow to exert itself. \*\*\* Plentiful trade goods among the Illinois were assumed to date only to the period after the French entered Illinois. Theoretically, any pre-1673 Illinois Indian occupation would thus be self-evident by having negligible amounts of trade goods. Yet, we must acknowledge that if significant amounts of goods were flowing to the Illinois before the Chequamegon post was established, then this set of assumptions would lead us to misidentify pre-1665 contexts. So, with a nod to the presence of various pre-1600 trade goods in the Midwest, as illustrated by Drooker (1996), I want to take a moment to lay a foundation illustrating the approximate schedule of trade goods flowing into the western Great Lakes.

\*\*\* In the earliest decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the middle men of the relatively small amounts of French trade moving west were initially the Algonquin tribe of the St. Lawrence. The French and the Huron established direct contact as soon as the French trade volume in the St. Lawrence was appreciable. Once in charge of the French trade, the Hurons effectively guarded it from the 1610s and 1620s until the destruction of Huronia.

Sagard \*\*\* provides us with a valuable description of the nature of this 1620s trade. (see text on slide)

The expanding Huron trade in French goods of the 1620s stumbled, but did not entirely cease between 1629 and 1633, when Quebec transitioned from French into English hands and back again. And the volume of the trade moving west expanded greatly when Champlain \*\*\* returned in 1633. That same year, the number of Huron traders coming down to Quebec expanded from about 60 canoes with two hundred traders to 150 canoes with 500 traders.

By 1639-1640, the Illinois were named as among the Huron's clients. At that time the western tribes had probably been receiving increasing amounts of trade goods for two decades. With the \*\*\* destruction of Huronia in 1649, a period of serious interruption to the western trade ensued. Assemblies of refugee traders in the west \*\*\* had intermittent successful voyages during this decade, but dependable trade resumed only in the early 1660s. It is very much worthy of note that the observations of the early Frenchmen (Perrot, Radisson, etc.) among the western tribes took place during these straited times of the 1650s. The resulting accounts should not be assumed a dependable baseline for evaluating the penetration of trade goods in the *preceding* decades. More likely the 1650s may present a markedly "flat" or even declining archaeological signature of trade good frequencies.

In 1664/1665, virtually as soon as the connections to the west were at all stable, Father Lalemant dispatched Allouez to begin the Ottawa mission. Allouez circumnavigated Lake Superior, visited Lake Nipigon, and established the \*\*\* mission of St. Esprit at Chequamegon, which had become the center of the western trade, as well as the point from which our incipient documentation and exploration of the Illinois Country originated.

It is important to keep in mind that the first "coureurs de bois" are limited to the period after 1654 and only in the middle 1660s did these traders, began to carry goods directly to the remote tribes. \*\*\* More importantly, the glut of both licensed and illegal traders pertains only to 1668 and after.

### **Distribution of known historic Illinois ceramic series and linked types**

\*\*\* Many Great Lakes area aboriginal groups stopped making ceramics in the Middle Historic Period and, of course, many of the Illinois Indian sites date to a period after cessation of

ceramics. Walthall (1992) has argued that 1720 is an approximate cut off date for the cessation of ceramic manufacture among the Illinois. I would argue for a slightly earlier date than that. Except for a single find spot, the distribution of sites at which ceramics assignable to the Illinois Indians (i.e., Danner Cordmarked, Danner Grooved Paddle, LaSalle Filleted, and Keating Cordmarked, plus the newly defined Haas Cordmarked and Hagerman Cordmarked) have been found is entirely restricted to historically documented Illinois Indian sites. One cluster of sites is in the immediate Starved Rock area (\*\*\*3 excav.\*\*\* @ Zimmerman\*\*\*, Starved Rock\*\*\*, Hotel Plaza\*\*\*, Simonson, and Utica Pond – a nearby find site). Many of the documented Illinois Tribe occupations in this region have not been located.

The only other sizable collection of \*\*\* Historic Illinois Indian ceramics is from Ilinwek Village. Minor occupations may be reflected by a few sherds across the Mississippi River and downstream from Iiniwek Villageis \*\*\* and a few LaSalle sherds at Tabbycat site on the lower Illinois Rive have been argued to represent a winter village. Finally, there is a reported find in the American Bottom near \*\*\* Cahokia (Jim Morton, personal communication), that may represent the substantial Cahokia and Tamaroa occupations that began there at least by 1700.

\*\*\*We can make several observations on these materials.

1. This sample size is relatively small.
2. The distribution thus far is strikingly restricted to historically documented occupation areas.
3. The ceramics identified as historic Illinois Indian are *ALWAYS* associated with historic trade materials.
4. There are usually a small admixture of historic Oneota ceramics directly associated with assemblages dominated by Danner Wares. In the Starved Rock region these are Huber,

in the Ilinwek Village deposits, they are Alamakee Trailed and a few Huber-like. The obverse of this is the Danner related ceramics that show up as minority wares in the two latest Huber sites (Oak Forest and New Lenox) and at Bell Site. \*\*\*

**Instructive finds of Danner like ceramics within contemporaneous assemblages**

These Huber associations (1600 to 1640) are very instructive. These are probably Illinois among the Huber phase people, but they are also the earliest verified dates we have for Danner/LaSalle. The Bell site Danner/LaSalle is probably an admixture of Illinois into the Mesquakie, during the Fox War and indicate the presence of captive Illinois that the Mesquakie held at this time.

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Rock Island (1551-1553) (more LaSalle –like)

Gros Cap Cemetery

Madeline Island (pers. observation of sherds on display)

As first noted by Mason, the presence of these Danner/LaSalle like ceramics among Huron/Petun/Ottawa associations such as are seen at Gros Cap and Rock Island (and Madeline Is.) may speak more to the question of ethnic amalgamations among the post-1649 refugees out of Ontario, Michican, and Northwest Ohio, than simply being Illinois Indians taking trips and breaking pots.

Of course, it is no great stretch to suggest that the Illinois, or their Miami cousins, could easily account for the Danner/LaSalle like sherds at Moccasin Bluff. \*\*\* But again as noted by Mason, the broader associations of neck decorations associated with the Moccasin Bluff notched fillet ceramics may find a better parallel in Ohio..

### **Danner origins and affiliations: the eastern possibilities**

Although it has taken many decades to verify the connection between the Danner ceramic complex and the historic Illinois Indians, there has been no time when the more easterly affiliations of the assemblage, particularly to certain Fort Ancient ceramics at Madisonville, \*\*\* were not recognized. However, a closer look at Madisonville ceramics makes it clear that sherds similar to Danner and LaSalle must be chosen from among much much broader assemblages. In Ohio \*\*\* we can identify ceramics with broad similarities to Danner in a broad arc across the northern and eastern parts of the state.

Late and especially Early Wellsburg \*\*\*

Whittlesey \*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\* \*\*\*

Ft. Meigs Phase \*\*\*, and with some continuities\*\*\* into the ensuing Indian Hills phase.

But the problem in Fort Meigs/Indian Hills phases, as well as Whittlesey and Wellsburg, is that there are numerous other ceramic traits and types that do not match Danner and LaSalle.

### **Considerations on connecting Illinois Indian archaeology to prehistory**

Retreating back to the Danner realm for a moment: What exactly can we say is *known*?

1. We now “know” the Peoria subset of Illinois Indian ethnicity is represented by the Danner, Haas, Hagarman CM series \*\*\*. Of Course those types may be greater than or equal to this restricted ethnicity. These types in turn seem to correspond to a specific subset of the variation within Fort Meigs and South Park/Reeve notched fillet ceramics in northern Ohio, rather than all of the notched fillet, teated lug, rim strip-decorated, grooved paddle treated ceramics in Ohio.
2. Likewise, we can assume Kaskaskia is some part of the Danner CM, Danner Grooved Paddle, LaSalle Filleted and Keating CM mix seen at Zimmerman. \*\*\* Does this

mean the broader range of ethnicities known to have frequented Zimmerman area are also reflected? Probably yes. Importantly, we can observe that, among this broader series in the Starved Rock region are\*\*\* more examples of teated, pinched, grooved paddle, decorated shoulder, funnel handled etc. ceramics. These show a better correlation to some the other variation in the Fort Meigs/Whittlesey/ Wellsburg “arc” across northern and eastern Ohio.

\*\*\* And it is still unknown to what degree other closely related Algon. groups can share these ceramic traits. Can Danner be Illinois and also Fort Meigs Notched Applique still be Mascouten? This seems unlikely to me, but we simply don’t know. Miami/Illinois should hang together. Sauk/Fox/Mascouten/Kickapoo should. There are too many unknowns. We can take some guidance from Bell Type 1 and Bell Type 2. In a world where central tendencies of ceramic assemblage might approximate central tendencies of ethnicity within the population, the Sauk/Kickapoo/Mascouten ceramics will look more like the Bell series, not to mention each other.. How will we find out? In Wisconsin the post-diaspora Mascouten settlements were multi-ethnic villages. Perhaps if the exclusive Mascouten settlements from ca. 1700 at the mouth of the Ohio are located the answers will appear more clear.

\*\*\* What does it mean that we recognize a Danner phase connection to only a subset of these Ohio phases? In searching for Danner antecedents, we repeatedly find ourselves referring not to the absolute latest ceramics in these Ohio series, but to a specific subset of traits on what has been assigned as the circa 1550 –1600 time horizon. These limiting factors are frustrating, but they also mean something. The Illinois/Miami ethnicity at first historic notice was constituted by quite a lot of people – perhaps 8 to 10 thousand. We seem to be talking about a major and rapid migration here. And I do not wish to overstate the similarities of the Ohio



assemblages to the Danner phase. It may well be that we have not yet seen certain aspects of the variation that the Illinois sub-tribes may encompass. We can identify a span of time, space, and cultural attributes that we best recognize as probably containing Danner origins, but we cannot yet explain how these can be extracted from what seem to be integrated parent assemblages in Ohio. The associated traits and types and temporal expression that we do not recognize as Danner related are certainly the key to the social mechanisms explaining the historical process we wish to identify. Redmond and Ruhl have recently laid a useful foundation for examining this process.

At this point we should begin to question the nature of the Fort Meigs to Indian Hills succession of trait distributions in the Sandusky Tradition. Is this perhaps not an amalgamation, or possibly an overlapping transgressive sequence, of various Central Algonqian groups rather than a strictly developmental sequence within a single ethnic group? In fact, this would be largely in line with other evidence for late Prehistoric amalgamations \*\*\* of the midcontinent where both closely related and markedly dissimilar populations in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (for example, for Caborn Welborn.) \*\*\* In such a case, incomplete ethnic amalgamation would provide pre-existing lines of fissioning that left coherent but differentially mixed subsets of material culture as the departure of the Illinois groups progressed. \*\*\* In this manner we might have a case where Indian Hills, late Whittlesey, and late Wellsburg were not isomorphic with Illinois/Miami ethnicity, even though subsets of their apparent predecessors assemblages, at least in part, were.

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