

A PLACE IN NATURE, A PLACE IN TIME

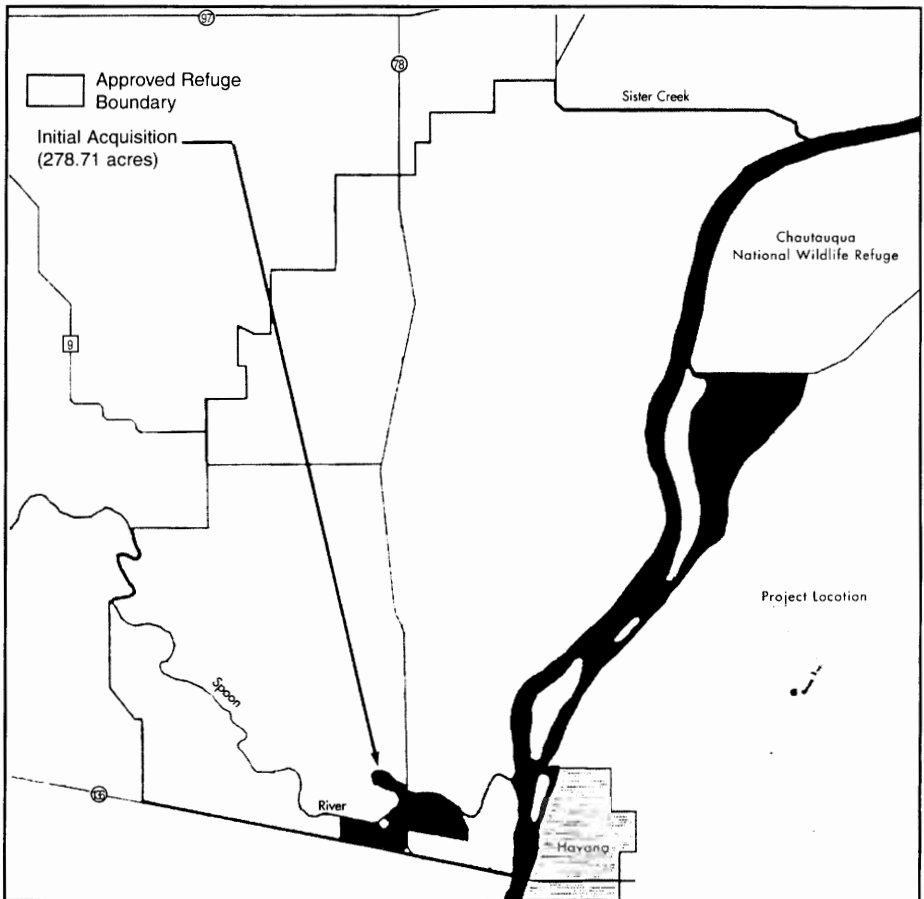
Emiquon



The Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge

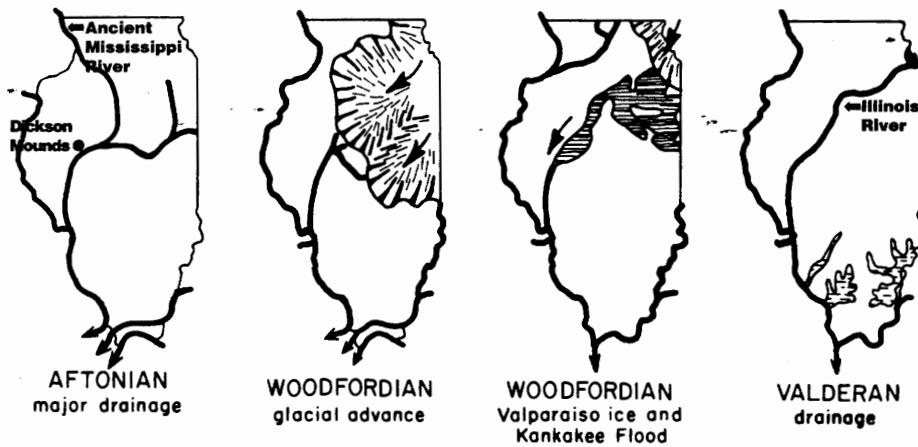
During the last five years, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has conducted environmental and economic assessments, held public hearings, coordinated federal and state involvement, and begun acquiring land for an ambitious new wildlife refuge at the confluence of the Spoon and Illinois Rivers in Fulton County, Illinois. When carried to fruition, the Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge will encompass about 11,000 acres of land from the mouth of Sister Creeks to just below Spoon River (six miles) and from the shore of the Illinois River to the bluffs three miles west.

Today, use of the refuge location is entirely agricultural. For the last seventy-five years the Illinois River has been walled off from these bottomlands, their rich agricultural potential put to use growing crops and raising livestock. In important ways, this land use has protected the bottoms. The proposed refuge includes two drained backwater-lake beds, Flagg and Thompson Lakes, the latter of which was one of the largest backwaters along the Illinois River.

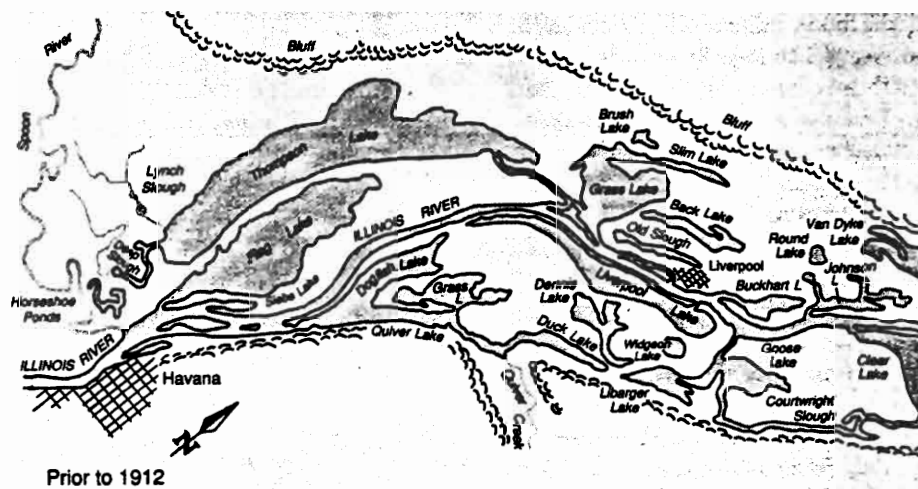


Above: A view of the proposed refuge site from the observation deck of the Dickson Mounds Museum. Photo by Gary Andrashko.

The Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge is planned to encompass about 11,000 acres of the Illinois River bottom land near Havana, Illinois. (Map courtesy of Outdoor Illinois and Illinois Department of Natural Resources)



Prior to the glacial advances of the Pleistocene era, the Mississippi River flowed through the present Illinois River valley. About 22,000 years ago, the Woodfordian advance of the Wisconsin glaciation cut off the Mississippi River. Melt water at the end of this latest glacial epoch helped form the new Illinois River. (Maps from Pleistocene Stratigraphy of Illinois, courtesy Illinois State Geological Survey)



The Emiquon Refuge locale as it appeared a century ago. The low gradient and broad flood plain of the Illinois River combined to create an incredibly rich environment of rivers, lakes, and sloughs. (Map courtesy the Illinois Natural History Survey)

Shielded behind flood control levees since 1923, these bottomlands have been spared the effects of massive siltation that has choked the life out of many of the Illinois River's once productive wetlands. The lake basins within the refuge have immense potential for restoration concealed below their present veneer of corn and soybeans. Free of the tremendous load of mud that plagues the entire Illinois River system, Thompson and Flagg Lakes are prime candidates for management within a controlled regime that mimics the natural mechanics of the Illinois River backwater system. Here it is possible to re-create the conditions that for

thousands of years made the Emiquon region an environmental jewel of the Midwest.

Looking out over the levee districts and fields, much of the impressive history and interpretive potential of the location is not immediately obvious. The Dickson Mounds Museum and its grounds are contiguous to the proposed refuge's boundaries, and the Museum's impressive overview of the refuge will provide a fortuitous vantage point for understanding the history of continuity and change for the environment of Illinois over the last several hundred thousand years.

Emiquon: A Place in Nature

One quarter of a million years ago, the blufftops where the Dickson Mounds Museum stands overlooked the confluence of two of the mightiest rivers on the continent. The Ancient Mississippi River, flowing out of the north to roughly today's Quad Cities region, had carved its channel through to the Princeton/Hennepin area and flowed in a deeper valley down the present course of the Illinois River valley. Near what is now Havana, the Ancient Mississippi met with a predecessor of the Ohio River, the Teays/Mahomet, which flowed west from the Appalachians through West Virginia, Ohio, and central Indiana. At their juncture, these giant rivers formed the Havana lowlands, today filled with terraces of glacial gravels and sands and hiding a vast underground store of water.

The Illinoian glaciation cut off the Teays/Mahomet River and created the modern Ohio River in its place, laying down the flat, fertile till plains of Ohio, Indiana, and south-central Illinois. Much later, at the end of the Wisconsin glaciation (a little over 20,000 years ago), the Ancient Mississippi River was also cut off, and its present channel south from the Quad Cities was formed. The Illinois River valley was partly filled with glacial sands and gravels and was remodeled by the melt water from the Lake Michigan lobe of the Wisconsin glacier.

The change in course of the Ancient Mississippi provided the Illinois Valley with a very special legacy. Through the last 12,000 years as it settled into its present course, the new Illinois River left across its valley floor previous-channel scars, which became shallow backwater lakes. As it rejoined its old course near St. Louis, the new Mississippi River sometimes dammed and slowed the current of the Illinois River and caused its valley floor to grade upwards. The Illinois River became one of the slowest and flattest of large rivers in North America. The silt that was dropped by the tributary streams when they reached the flat Illinois River bottom accentuated the backwater networks by building low dams across the valley, forcing the Illinois River this way and that, and inhibiting drainage of the backwaters. Channel scars and low areas of the Illinois River bottom became vast backwater lakes, seasonally filling,

draining, growing huge stands of wet soil plants, and reflooding. Thompson and Flagg Lakes were thus formed, perhaps 5,000 to 7,000 years ago. For at least the last 3,000 years, the Illinois River has remained in its present-day channel.

Early Descriptions of Emiquon

Throughout this last 12,000 years, people have also been a part of the story of the Illinois River valley. Native inhabitants were sustained for hundreds of generations by the Illinois River bottom resources, but left no written descriptions of the Emiquon locality. Despite use of the river as a major highway for French explorers and fur traders for nearly 150 years, there are only a few descriptions of the area before its circa 1820s settlement by Euro-Americans. Several fascinating glimpses of the Emiquon environment can be gained from journals of explorers along the Illinois River. In the accounts that follow, brackets [-] indicate interjections to clarify locations and names.

The 1687 Journal of Henri Joutel

In the early 1680s, Robert Cavalier, Sieur de LaSalle, explored the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers and established a fur-trading empire with its center on the Illinois River at Starved Rock. After returning to France for a period, he once again set off for North America, where he led an attempt to colonize the mouth of the Mississippi River. The ill-fated venture ended with his ships wrecked and the colony stranded on the Texas coast. Attempting to reach Illinois, LaSalle led a small party on foot in search of relief for the colony. LaSalle was killed by some of his men during the trip, and by the late summer of 1687, all that was left of LaSalle's expedition was making its way up the Mississippi River, led by Henri Joutel and LaSalle's brother. In an account dropped from the published English translations of his journal, Joutel describes the Spoon River region. On the second of September the group entered the Illinois River, passing through "very pleasant country." From time to time they passed prairies "half a league" (over a mile) broad, and in one of these they killed a bison for much needed food. They described forests of walnuts, plum trees, pawpaws, oaks, maples, elms, cedars, firs, and other trees that they did

not recognize. They had been warned by Frenchmen in Arkansas that they would come to a lake where it was hard to discover the way, which they did on September 9:

We came to a lake about a half a league broad [the juncture of Spoon River, Thompson and Flagg Lakes, the Illinois River, and Quiver Lake], where Couture had told us, when we were with the Arkanses, that we must go to the left, which we did but not quite properly, for we entered a river which came from the left [Spoon River] and went up it. When, however, we had gone but a short way up, I saw that we were not following the course we had to keep. I told Monsieur Cavalier [LaSalle's brother, who was a priest] several times that this river could not be the one we had to go by; but we went on nonetheless... We therefore went up the stream about a league and a half, until... we were obliged to go back to the lake. One of our Indians then took his bow and arrow and went off along the lake, to see if he could not see the way out and the course of the river; and on his return, he told us that we must follow the lake.

Next day, the 10th of September, we started, taking the other [east] side of the lake, where we went wrong again; for after going on for some distance, we were unable to get to the river on account of the shallow and small islands enclosing the entrance to it [they had gone up Quiver Lake, which in low water is cut off from the Illinois River]. We were obliged therefore to go back and look again for the channel leading to the river, which we found on the left. This lake bears the name of Deux Mammelles [two breasts]... as there are two small mountains, round and separate from one another, which has lead to travelers and people of the country giving them that name. [Deux Mammelles are today known as the Twin Mounds, two large 2,000-year-old Middle Woodland Period tombs on the bank of Quiver Lake.] We came within sight of several camps round this lake, where the Indians had encamped; and I afterwards learned that they come here to fish at certain parts of the year; and that it is not a good place for hunting animals. They smoke fish, to take back to their villages; for these tribes

have fixed times for each kind of hunting and fishing. We continued our journey, when we had found the channel into our river, which we found to be of its usual width, with quantities of game almost everywhere of various sorts, such as swans, bustards, thrushes, geese, teals, and other kinds as well as fish in plenty.

The 1722 Journal of Legardeur Delisle

Extracts from a 1722 journal of Sublieutenant Legardeur Delisle, who was stationed at Fort des Chartres in present-day Randolph County, Illinois, provide another description of the Emiquon locale. We pick up the account on June 6 as the expedition leaves its overnight camp near present-day Beardstown:

Next morning, Saturday, the sixth, I caused departure before daybreak in order to have time to cover some distance before the great heat. We traveled until ten o'clock in the morning, when we found a river at the right going up that is called the Sagimont [at this time the Sangamon entered the Illinois River above Browning at the foot of Elm Island. It was later canalized to join the Illinois River nine miles downstream at Beardstown]. After the great heat had passed we left. We went to spend the night at an island that is named Grand Island, which is two and a half leagues long [this is still called Grand Island, at present-day Bath]. We made during the day eight leagues.

The next day, Sunday the seventh, we left at broad daylight in order to avoid the heat... Toward five hours past noon we passed a sort of little lake where up about a quarter league, on the right going up, we found a fine meadow, very high, on which there are two little buttes that are called the Mammelles [the Twin Mounds at Quiver Beach]. We camped one league above and made seven leagues for the day.

The 1773 Journal of Patrick Kennedy

In 1773, Patrick Kennedy, an Englishman from Kaskaskia who later aided George Rogers Clark in his conquest of the Illinois Country, was searching for copper mines on an expedition on the Illinois River. Kennedy gives a graphic description

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of the Emiquon area. We join his journal on August 4, just downstream of modern Beardstown:

August 4, 1773: Here the land on both sides of the Illinois River is low, but rises gradually. The prairie, or meadow ground on the eastern side, is at least twenty miles wide [the Beardstown terrace]. It is fine land for tillage, or for grazing cattle, and is well-watered with a number of springs. About 12 o'clock we passed the River Sangamond [just above Browning], and about sunset we passed the River Demi-Quian [River de Emicouen, or Spoon River]. It comes in on the western side of the Illinois River.

We encamped on the southeastern side of the Illinois River, opposite a very large savannah, belonging to and called, the Demi-Quian Swamp [the bottomlands between Thompson Lake and Spoon River]. The lands on the southeastern side [Havana] are high and thinly timbered; but at the place of our encampment are fine meadows, extending farther than the eye can reach, and affording a delightful

prospect [this would have to be the Quiver Beach/Twin Mounds area, which is across the river from Thompson and Flagg Lakes and is the only location where the eastern prairies came up to the edge of the river]. The low lands on the western side of the Illinois River extend so far back that no high ground can be seen. Here is plenty of Buffaloe, Deer, Elk, Turkeys, etc.

August 5, 1773: It rained all day, which detained us till the evening, when we embarked and rowed till dark. In our way we passed Lake Demi-Quian [Thompson and Flagg Lakes], 200 yards west [north] from the river of that name. It is of circular figure, six miles across [actually, the combined lakes were about one and a half miles across and four and one half miles long, covering about 2,800 acres], and discharges itself by a small passage four feet deep into the Illinois River.

August 6, 1773: Set out early, and at 11 o'clock we passed the Seseme-Quian River [Copperas Creek, also known as River Sheshequon]. It is on the western side of the river. The land bordering on this river is very good...



The 2,000-year-old Twin Mounds facing Quiver Lake and the Illinois River. French explorers in 1687 and 1722 referred to the landmark as "Deux Mammelles." Photograph by Duane Esarey, April 1994.

Emiquon in the future

Eventually, Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge may again look something like it did when Patrick Kennedy described it over 200 years ago. There cannot yet be a firm timetable for restoring Emiquon, as there is no schedule for acquiring the land. In keeping with its over-fifty-year-old policy, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is purchasing land only from willing sellers. Importantly, two of the twenty-one owners of the land account for 87 percent of the planned refuge. Acquisition of these two properties will be key to the full development of the refuge. However, with the purchase of 1,115 acres of land near the confluence of the Spoon and Illinois Rivers, the restoration of Emiquon has officially begun. 🍷

Additional Reading

United States Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1993 "Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge: Final Environmental Assessment."

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Bellrose, Frank, et al. "The Fate of the Lakes in the Illinois River Valley." *Illinois Natural History Survey Biological Notes* No. 119.

Schneider, Daniel. "Enclosing the Floodplain: Resource Conflict on the Illinois River, 1880-1920." *Environmental History* 1(2):70-96.

Sparks, Richard. "Need for Ecosystem Management of Large Rivers and their Floodplains." *Bioscience* 45(3): 168-182.

In Our Next Issue

What does the word *emiquon* mean? Part two of *Emiquon: A Place in Nature, A Place in Time*.

Emiquon

Duane Esarey, Dickson Mounds Museum

Emiquon: A Place in Time

Part One of this essay reviewed the environmental history of the area encompassed by the proposed Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge in Fulton County, Illinois, showing how a 200,000-year sequence of glacial and post-glacial drainage patterns resulted in the formation of an especially rich floodplain and backwater lake regime for the Illinois River valley. This legacy, combined with the history of drainage and degradation of the Illinois River and its floodplain during the last 100 years, has made the Emiquon area a prime candidate for environmental restoration. Passages from journals written as early as 310 years ago describe this location as a myriad of lakes, rivers, and swamps where there were abundant fish, waterfowl, and large game animals. One of these accounts indicates that the location was used for seasonal Illinois Indian occupations, and another notes that the French were the first to record a variation of the place name *Emiquon* for Spoon River and the lakes and swamps around it.

It is gratifying that with the establishment of the Emiquon Refuge the ancient place name for this location is in use again. There are numerous spellings of this place name and some geographical confusion exists over its use, but historical continuity makes it clear that all previous usages derived from the same source. What does the place name *Emiquon* mean? In the past it had always been translated to mean "spoon." Part Two of this essay reviews the history of this place name, showing that such translations are not always what they seem.

What Does the Word Emiquon Mean?

There has been no time during the one hundred and seventy-five years since the EuroAmerican settling of western Illinois when it was not recognized that the name for the Spoon River was derived from a previous Indian place name. In fact, translations

were sometimes supplied by those making early maps and writing historic journals. For instance, John Melish's 1819 *Map of Illinois* labels the Spoon River as "*R. Micouenne or Spoon.*" Clearly, the current place name "spoon" implies continuity with the earliest known version of the place name, written as *Emicouen* on a 1684 map.

In spite of at least twelve variations in spelling (*Mequin, Mequen, Micouene, Amequon, Demiquian, Emicouen*, etc.), the English translation for all versions of this Indian place name as spoon has been universally accepted. However, the interpretation of *Emiquon* as a place name is not quite as simple as it would seem.

Certainly most of these cognate place names are variations of an Algonquian term for "spoon." As indicated, one of the early 1800s maps used both the previous place name and the English translation. Likewise, Henry Schoolcraft, who was quite familiar with Algonquian languages, referred to the river in 1820 as *Amequon*, and indicated that it meant "spoon." In 1826,

when Charles Bird King painted a copy of a portrait of a Winnebago man named *Amisquam*, he indicated the name signified "wooden ladle." More to the point, the word *emikwan* translates exactly as spoon in Reverend Maurice Gailland's 1761 English-Potawatomi dictionary, and it was the Potawatomi who lived in the Spoon River area from at least the 1790s through the early 1830s.

Of some interest is the question whether the word translated into English in the early 1800s was French or Indian. *Micoine*, a borrowed word from the Algonquian languages, is French Canadian for "wooden spoon." Pierre Charles Deliette, a French administrator in Illinois 300 years ago, used this word, indicating that its adoption into French Canadian took place by the 1680s. Because the terms *River DemiQuian*, *DemiQuian Lake*, and *DemiQuian Swamp*, as documented in the 1773 journal of Patrick Kennedy, are clumsily anglicized

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Placement and names of Illinois River tributaries varied considerably during the French period. Some French maps of the Illinois Country, such as this 1732 map by d'Anville, show "Emicouen" as an eastern tributary to the Illinois River. "Macopin" often appears as either an eastern or western tributary of the Illinois River. ("Carte de la Louisiane par le Sieur D'Anville." Courtesy of the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.)

versions of the place name as it was expressed in French (that is, *Riviere de Emicouen*), it is quite possible that the names most commonly used in subsequent decades could easily have derived from French Canadian as opposed to strictly aboriginal terminology. Nonetheless, whether the term is a Potawatomi or French Canadian term, could there be any doubt that the translations of all of the previous names for the river signify "spoon"?

The local historian Albert Perry went one step further in his 1912 *History of Knox County*, creating an enduring popular interpretation of the meaning of Spoon River that continues to be cited to the present day. Perry asserted that *amaquon* is the Potawatomi word for mussel shell, which the Indians frequently used as spoons. Thus, the name Spoon River came to be linked to mussel shells, in spite of numerous references to *emikwan* and *micoine* as specifying a wooden spoon.

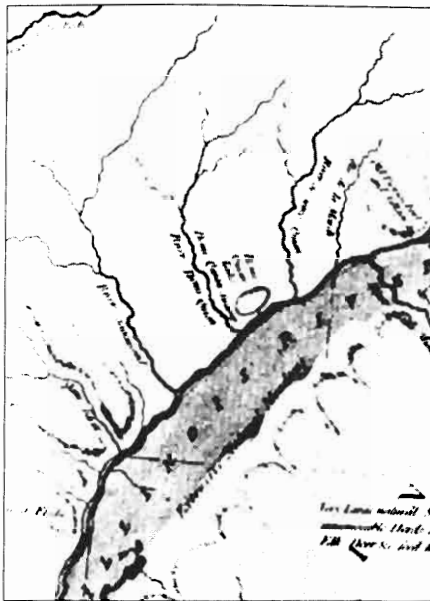
Mussel shells or not, given all of this evidence, can we confidently conclude that the original Indian place name refers to "spoon" in one sense or another? If so, only in a historically derived sense. Originally, *emicouen* had a meaning not reflected in any of the interpretations so far discussed.

When is a Spoon Not a Spoon?

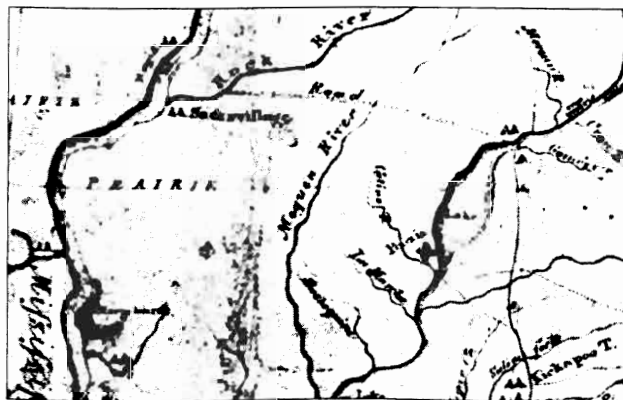
One important observation recommends caution in accepting the commonly forwarded interpretation of Spoon River's etymology. The earliest written use of the place name *Emicouen* dates to Jean-Baptiste Franquelin's 1684 map, made in Quebec. The information for this map came from LaSalle's expeditions to Illinois. As noted, the French Canadian term *micoine* was in use by this time. If the French had named the river themselves, or been told that the name of the river signified spoon, wouldn't the 1684 map have used something like that term? Why was the term *emicouen* used instead? The French map maker must have utilized the name given by the current inhabitants of that region—the Illinois tribes, known collectively as the Illinois or Illiniwek. The language spoken by the various Illiniwek (Kaskaskia, Peoria, Tamaroa, Cahokia, Michigamea, etc.) and Miami (Miami, Wea, Piankashaw) tribes is a branch of Central Algonquian known as Illinois/Miami. It is

related to Potawatomi and other Central Algonquian languages, but has significant differences.

As first observed by Virgil Vogel in his landmark study *Indian Place Names in Illinois*, there is a problem if we accept *emicouen* as an Illinois language word. Although Potawatomi and some other Algonquian terms for spoon are close to *emiquon*, *amequon*, *micoine*, etc., the Illinois and Miami words for spoon (*c8ocane* and *kukanî*), are not. (The symbol "8", originally used in transcriptions by French Jesuit scholars, can be translated to represent a sound closely ap-



Hutchins' 1778 map is the first in a series of EuroAmerican maps to show Spoon River as "River DemiQuian," a crude anglicization of "Riviere d'Emicouen." Although "emikwan" does mean spoon in the language of the Potawatomi, who lived in central Illinois during the late 1700s, it had another meaning to the previous inhabitants, the Illinois Indians.



Maps made late in Illinois' territorial period, such as this 1815 Rene Paul map, label Spoon River with a variety of spellings of the French Canadian word micoine, meaning wooden spoon. The shift to the English usage (spoon) took place circa 1820.

proximated by the letters "ou" in English.) If the word *emicouen* came from the Illinois language, it must have a different interpretation than spoon. One thing *emicouen* certainly does not refer to in the Illinois language is mussels, which, according to White and White's *Illiniwek Words and Phrases...*, would be *wapapisa*.

Significantly, several later maps that include the Spoon River region also give the Indian place name of the next major tributary above Spoon River (Copperas Creek) as variations of the word *Sheshequinn*. Written accounts refer to Copperas Creek as *Sheshequon* in 1813 and as *Sesemequian* in 1773. An 1812 map labels the minor tributary between Spoon River and Copperas Creek (Duck Creek) as *Little Sheshequinn*. The importance of these nearby placenames for helping to interpret the etymology of the name for Spoon River has been overlooked.

Emicouen: An Illinois Language Place Name

It is of considerable significance that the documented place name for this locality changes through time (see Table on page 14). The placement and nomenclature of Illinois River tributaries was inaccurate and highly variable until the 1770s. The place name *Emicouen* was intermittently used from the earliest map of this region (1684) until the 1760s, although most French maps during this interval showed no western tributaries to the Illinois River and did not use any version of the name *Emicouen*. As noted earlier, in 1773 the term *DemiQuian*, poorly translated from the French version of the river's name, was first documented. The term *Demiquian* was then copied extensively from Thomas Hutchins' landmark 1778 map, and its use continued until at least 1805. The various cognates of *micoine* came into use circa

1812, and the English name Spoon River came into standard use by 1820. However, the assumption that the original Illinois language place name *Emicouen* has the same meaning as the very similar place names documented for Spoon River in later times has created a problem.

The place name for nearby Copperas Creek was recorded as the cognates *Sheshequine*, *Sheshequinn*, *Sheshequon*, and *Sesemequian* between 1773 and 1815. The

common suffix of the words *sesemequian* and *emicouen* at first glance seems to imply that both refer to some kind of spoon (that is, does *mequian* = *micouen*?). However, the “m” sound is missing from three of the four renditions of this former place name.

Interestingly, *sheshequin* is the word many Algonquian speakers use for a gourd rattle, which was called a *chichic8ni* or *chichicoya* in the Illinois language. A further clue, from Carl Voegelin’s *Shawnee Stems* and Jacob Piatt Dunn’s *Miami Dictionary*, is that the Miami word *sisiikwa* means “a speckled gourd” and that the elaboration *sisiikwana* specifies a gourd rattle. This is important because bottle gourds not only were made into bottles and rattles by most native groups, but also served as dippers.

Prominent among the sources of information on the Illinois/Miami language is a French/Illinois language dictionary written by the Jesuit priest Jean LeBoullenger, who was stationed among the Illinois tribes from 1704 until his death in the early 1740s. LeBoullenger’s dictionary (which is at the John Carter Brown Library), is the most cited and authoritative source on the Illinois language due to its accessibility, relatively early date, and comprehensive nature. In modern French (according to Harrop’s French/English dictionary) the words for gourd are *courge* and *gourde*, neither of which are provided with entries in LeBoullenger’s dictionary, but the French word for bottle gourd is *calebasse*. LeBoullenger records the Illinois words for *calebasse* not only as *chichic8ni*, but also as *emic8cane*. Likewise, *emic8cane* is also the Illinois word for a gourd pitcher or jug. The Illinois word *chichic8ni* apparently refers to the rattle kind of bottle gourd since it is nearly identical to the Miami term

sisiikwana (clearly the same as *sheshequon* and *sheshequinn*). Because it is almost certain that the place name for Copperas Creek refers to a bottle gourd (and, more specifically, a bottle-gourd rattle), does the Illinois language name for Spoon River then refer to a bottle-gourd container? No, because the place name in 1684 was not *emic8cane*, but *emicouen* (which the Jesuits would have transcribed as *emic8en*). To what, then, does *emicouen* refer?

Squash River

If *emic8cane* means a bottle gourd with special reference to a container, then it is clear that the prefix “emi-” is the key to our search for the meaning of the word *emicouen*. What would the names of some other kinds of gourds be? In modern French, another name for pumpkin is *citrouille*. LeBoullenger’s translation of *citrouille* is *emic8ene*. Pumpkin, as we know it today, is one of a wide variety of New World edible squash-derivative plants. Further elaboration of the Illinois/Miami use of this term can be seen in the translation of the French word *colokinte*, a small, bitter, inedible gourd closely related to squash and pumpkins. LeBoullenger’s dictionary lists *colokinte* as *emic8ena*.

Although the names of the various New World gourds were inconsistently applied in the 18th century, we can be sure that the Illinois language term *emicouen* as used on the 1684 map, refers at least in the generic sense to squash/pumpkins. This would be in line with other Native American uses for the squash/pumpkin distinction. Melvin Gilmore, in his 1919 ethnobotany classic *Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region*, notes that the Omaha do not distinguish between pumpkin and squash, but call them both by the same name with descriptive modifiers attached. This is a

Early Map References to Emicouen, DemiQuian, Mequen, Spoon, etc.

Date	Attribution	River name
1684	Franquelin	Emicouen (east side)
1732	d’Anville	Emicouen (east side)
1755	Mitchell	Emicouen (east side)
1763	Bowen & Gibson	Emicouen (east side)
1778	Hutchins	DemiQuian
1785	Fitch	DemiQuian
1796	Bradley	DemiQuian
1803	King	DemiQuain (lake only)
1805	Clark	DemiQuian
1805	unattributed	Quian
1811 ?	unattributed	Mequen
1812	Forsyth	Miquoin
1812	Forsyth	Miquoine
1812	Edwards	Miquoin
1815	Paul	Mequen
1816	Paul	Micouene
1816	Long	Mequoin
1819	Melish	Micouenne or Spoon
1822	Yeager	Spoon
1827	Street	Spoon

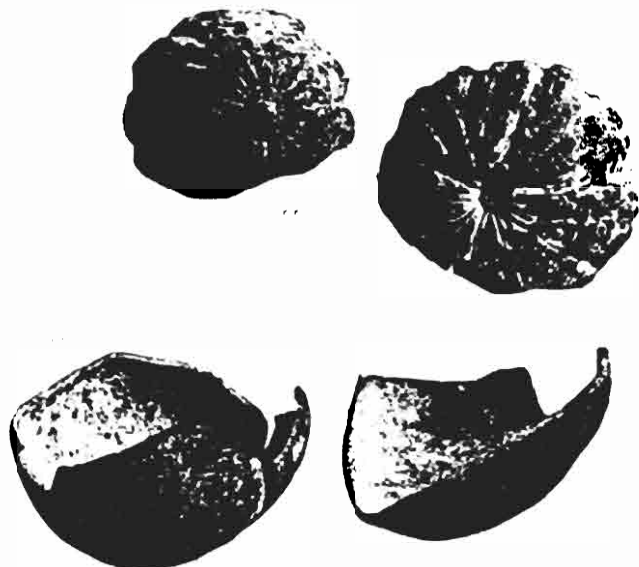
Sources: Temple and Tucker, ed. *Indian Villages in Illinois*, Part 1.; Giraud, Marcel, *A History of French Louisiana: Volume 5: The Company of the Indies, 1723-1731*; Wood, Raymond W., ed., *An Atlas of Early Maps of the Midwest*; Edstrom, James A., *Nathaniel Pope and the Admission Enabling Act of 1818*. (*Illinois Historical Journal* 88:4).

Citrouilles Emic8ene. xaximic8ena amikimic8ena (cit. courtes)
gixaximic8ena cit. ameres gixinissa petites cit. picategionfleur
nijy pichiyara elles nint ou delean
maveginikikira namahigabyam mechantes menghiaki, vieilles meures
mentic8emic8ena pepic8chikira (cit. creuses) ynsayemic8na jauras

Facsimile of LeBoullenger’s circa 1720 French/Illinois dictionary, showing various usages of the Illinois language noun “emic8ene (emicouene)” as a translation for “citrouilles,” which is French for pumpkin. (Copy of John Carter Brown Library original text courtesy of John Knoepfle.)

similar distinction to that seen in the Illinois use of *emic8ene* and *emic8ena*.

The original place name of the Spoon River/Thompson Lake region almost certainly meant pumpkin or another closely related variety of squash. Thus, Spoon River itself can be translated as "River of the Pumpkin," or more generically as "River of the Squash." This interpretation is strengthened when we observe that



Approximately 2500-year-old shells of domesticated edible squash (Curcubita pepo) and dipper/bowl fragments of bottle gourd (Langenaria siceraria) preserved in a Kentucky cave (photo, Illinois State Museum).

this name was used in tandem with "River of the Bottle Gourd" for Copperas Creek. In all probability, the transition to the place name's implied reference to "spoon" came about when the name in Illinois/Miami was adopted by the Potawatomi (to whom *emikwan* is spoon) and/or the French Canadians (who readily translated it as *micoine*, which is "wooden spoon").

As late as 1815 the name for Copperas Creek maintained its original reference to the bottle gourd (or gourd rattle), but the creek later received its EuroAmerican name during settlement of the Military Tract in the 1820s. Likewise, Lake *Mequoin*, near the mouth of the Spoon River, was renamed Thompson Lake. The town of Maquon, on the upper Spoon River, has retained the Indian place name used by the Potawatomi from their occupations in that area. Spoon River itself was able to survive yet another translation, its significance altered, but its history not quite lost, in its 300-year journey through four languages. ☞

Further Reading

Patrick J. Munson. 1973. "The Origins and Antiquity of Maize-Beans-Squash Agriculture in Eastern North America: Some Linguistic Implications." In *Variation in Anthropology*, edited by Donald W. Lathrup and Jody Douglas, pp. 107-135, Illinois Archaeological Survey, Urbana.

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