

# The Story of Twin Oaks—in the words of the Potawatomi of the Year 1834

## Prequel (from prehistory to the arrival of Thomas Durham)

by Dr. James Paul

During the 100 circles of seasons (1734-1834) before our Potawatomi people met outsider Thomas Durham, our people lived in Ti-yar-ac-ke, or Thea-ti-ki, “wonderful land” with its river full of fish. We have many villages in Ti-yar-ac-ke, but those of us who first saw Thomas live in the village of Chief Me-she-ke-ten-o. When we saw Thomas at Twin Oaks where two oaks grow side by side, we traded a pony for his tired horse. We later saw Thomas, his squaw Margaret, and their children and built a wigwam of tree branches for them to use until their log cabin was built. We told Thomas and Margaret the story of Ti-yar-ac-ke and the land of Twin Oaks, a story that has been told to us by our ancestors.

Ti-yar-ac-ke was once covered by warm and shallow water with hard ridges breaking the surface (coral reefs). There were many fish and other water creatures. Rocks (fossils) of these creatures can be found in the creek (Bourbonnais Creek) banks and within 100 paces from the caves at the creek’s mouth (Indian Caves). Underground rock is not far below Twin Oaks. A few openings to (sink) holes exist. They lead to openings made by running water.

An ocean of ice (glacier) once covered and flattened much of Ti-yar-ac-ke. One end of the ice ocean broke causing waters (Kankakee Torrent) to make the river and creeks of Ti-yar-ac-ke. These waters also made a large openness (prairie) on the sun rise side of the trail now called Bourbonnais Trace (Kennedy Dr.), wet lands (prairie or marsh) on the sun set side of Bourbonnais Trace and open land (prairie) with some trees and then a line of trees next to the river.

Large creatures (mastodons) lived here during the ocean of ice time (ice ages). Our ancestors came to Ti-yar-ac-ke while hunting these large animals. As the ice ocean slowly melted, the air became warmer and dryer. Large openness spread across the land. The big animals hunted by our ancestors were no more, the American mastodon became extinct about 10,000 years ago. Our ancestors hunted, but they also fished, and picked fruits, nuts, berries and seeds of wild grasses. They stayed for short times on high land, and then followed herds of bison, caribou and deer (these people were Paleolithic or Paleo-Indians).

The warming air and the spread of openness brought a new people. They were hunters who trailed herds of animals on their seasonal wanderings (these people were known as Archaic and lived 8000-1000 BCE). They built lodging for hot times on wooded areas and spent cold times in rock shelters or large caves like those at the mouth of the Twin Oaks creek, Bourbonnais Creek. These people hunted and gathered

food, yet found time to make many different types of weapons, tools and trinkets. Later, another people, Woodland, came and built villages, made clay pottery, buried their dead in mounds and made trinkets and tools. Two thousand circles of seasons ago, another group of ancestors, Mississippians, arrived and built huge spirit mounds and large villages along the river valleys on the sun set side of Ti-yar-ac-ke.

Every one of these ancestors (Paleo, Archaic, Woodland and Mississippian) had bands that lived in Ti-yar-ac-ke and on the land of Twin Oaks.

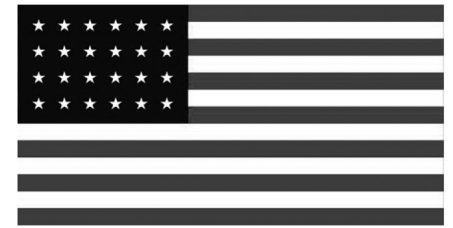
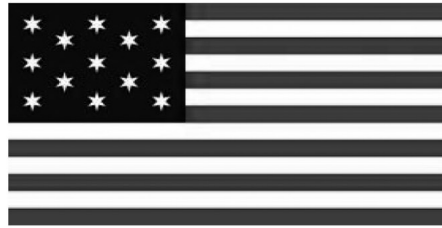
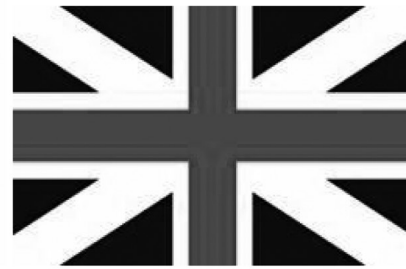
Between 100 and 500 circles of seasons ago, the years 1300-1700, in North America are known as Proto-History, the historic or written history period began when Rene Robert Cavalier de LaSalle and his company canoed down the Ti-yar-ac-ke River in 1679, our ancestors began to form tribes and occupied agreed upon land.

The people in the river valleys toward the setting sun called themselves Inoca. The Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Peoria were also Inoca. We Potawatomi are not Inoca (the French explorers referred to the Inoca as the Illini or Illiniwek). One-hundred thirty circles of seasons ago, 1700, many of our Potawatomi ancestors lived on both sides of the great lake up-river from Ti-yar-ac-ke in Michigan and Wisconsin, but within 30 circles of seasons ago, 1730, one of our Potawatomi tribes found new hunting and planting grounds in Ti-yar-ac-ke. The Piankeshaws and the Miamis lived on the sun rise side of Ti-yar-ac-ke. Some Mohicans, Inoca, Chippewa, Ottawa and Miami lived in Ti-yar-ac-ke before us.

Two hundred circles of seasons ago, 1634, our Potawatomi people met outsiders called voyageurs (French travelers) including men in black clothing (Jesuit missionaries). We liked to trade with them. Over the course of 100 circles of seasons while living in Ti-yar-ac-ke, 1734-1834, we met outsiders who carried different cloths waving on poles, flags. They often carried these cloths into battle against each other and sometimes against us.

The men who wore black clothing tried to “baptise” us. Few of us were interested in this strange religion because it went against our culture and beliefs. Eleven circles of seasons ago, 1823, near the St. Joseph River on the sun rise side, a new group called “Baptists” came to teach our people reading, writing, farming and working inside the home. Some of these “Baptists” thought that we could be saved from the outsiders’ bad habits by moving us to the sun set side of the Mississippi River. They told this to their leaders, and those leaders agreed. The outsiders also wanted our land.

After the Black Hawk War ended, two circles of seasons



Flags that flew over Twin Oaks during Potawatomi tenure were (l. to r., top down) French Colony of New France (1543-1763); British Colony: Indian Reserve (1763-1778) and Province of Quebec (1774-78); Commonwealth of Virginia (1778-87); United States 13 stars (1787-95); and United States 24 stars (1822-36)—with four U.S. flags with 15, 20, 21 and 23 stars in between 1795-1822.

ago, 1832, the Treaty of Camp Tippecanoe, changed our lives. The treaty was between the outsiders and the chiefs and headmen of the “Potawatomi Tribe of Indians of the Prairie and Kankakee”. The treaty gave land to those with Potawatomi blood so they could sell it. Our land is now being sold to outsiders since we must move to the sun set side of the Mississippi River. Ti-yar-ac-ke is now open for outsiders. In return for this land, we are to be given new lands, money and supplies to help us build new homes. We worry that this money and supplies will be little, or late in arrival, and we will suffer after removal to the lands toward the setting sun. As our bands now begin to leave our homes and villages, our hearts are broken. Squaws cry. Braves and the old people

shed tears as they see for the last time their Ti-yar-ac-ke, its beauty, its trees along the river, its openness full of game, fur bearing animals, deer and its clear waters full of fish.

An outsider, Gurdon Hubbard, bought our Twin Oaks. Thomas Durham bought Twin Oaks from Hubbard. We can only hope that Thomas, Margaret, their children and their children’s children will continue our Potawatomi spirit of loving and caring for Twin Oaks, and tell its story.

For the full story of Twin Oaks, Perry Farm Park and Durham-Perry Farmstead, go to this link on the Bourbonnais Township Park District website [http://www.btpd.org/park\\_history\\_4\\_2934382977.pdf](http://www.btpd.org/park_history_4_2934382977.pdf).

Dr. Paul is a member of the Perry Farm living history advisory committee whose purpose

is to teach the community about the history of the Durham-Perry Farmstead. He has portrayed Thomas Durham in the Lifelong Learning courses at Kankakee Community College, at Durham-Perry Farmstead summer camps, and at community events. Dr. Paul is also president of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society.

The Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting local history. Monthly meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month March to December. Museum hours are 1 to 4 p.m. on the first and third Sundays of each month, March to December or by appointment.

Visit <http://bourbonnaishistory.org>, find them on Facebook at [facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory) or call 1-815-933-6452.

## Thee Olde Time Farm Show full of power



Herald photos by Mason Schweizer

The 41st annual Thee Olde Time Farm Show was held at the Bourbonnais Township Park District Perry Farm Park in Bourbonnais Friday to Sunday, June 30-July 2, 2017. There were flea markets, antique car and tractor shows, truck and tractor pulls, consignment auctions, bounce houses, corn shelling demonstrations and more. Wally Rush and Bob Lacy (top, l. to r.) show off their antique John Deere’s during Saturday’s Parade of Power tractor parade. Dozens of hot rods and antique rides were shown off Saturday afternoon during the Strictly Street Rod Club show.

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