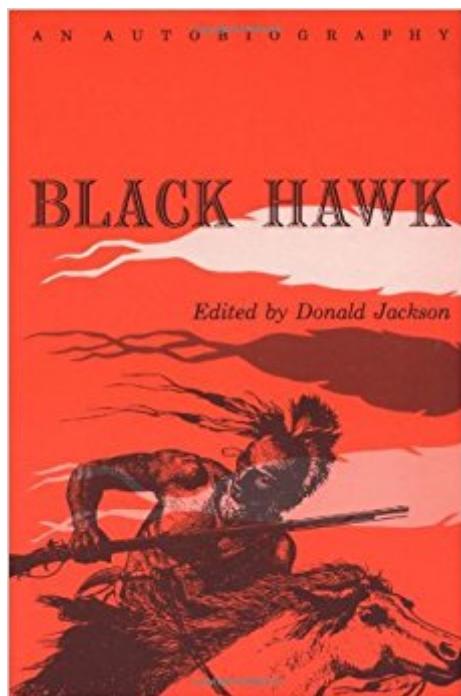


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# Black Hawk: An Autobiography (Prairie State Books)



## **Synopsis**

Ã  Â This story is told in the words of a tragic figure in American history - a hook-nosed, hollow-cheeked old Sauk warrior who lived under four flags while the Mississippi Valley was being wrested from his people. The author is Black Hawk himself - once pursued by an army whose members included Captain Abraham Lincoln and Lieutenant Jefferson Davis. Perhaps no Indian ever saw so much of American expansion or fought harder to prevent that expansion from driving his people to exile and death. He knew Zebulon Pike, William Clark, Henry Schoolcraft, George Catlin, Winfield Scott, and such figures in American government as President Andrew Jackson and Secretary of State Lewis Cass. He knew Chicago when it was a cluster of log houses around a fort, and he was in St. Louis the day the American flag went up and the French flag came down. He saw crowds gather to cheer him in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York - and to stone the driver of his carriage in Albany - during a fantastic tour sponsored by the government. And at last he dies in 1838, bitter in the knowledge that he had led men, women, and children of his tribe to slaughter on the banks of the Mississippi. After his capture at the end of the Black Hawk War, he was imprisoned for a time and then released to live in the territory that is now Iowa. He dictated his autobiography to a government interpreter, Antoine LeClaire, and the story was put into written form by J. B. Patterson, a young Illinois newspaperman. Since its first appearance in 1833, the autobiography has become known as an American classic.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: University of Illinois Press; Prairie state books ed edition (1990)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0252723252

ISBN-13: 978-0252723254

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #106,578 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 inÃ  Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Native American #2254 inÃ  Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical

## **Customer Reviews**

Ã  Â "This new edition of a stirring autobiography is not only an American classic but is one of the

relatively few accounts of American-Indian relations as they appeared to a leader of the Indians."--AmericanaÃ  "Black Hawk is the only important Indian author from Illinois. . . . His life story . . . is now a classic of midwestern literature, a remarkable self-portrait by a complex individual who identified closely with the heritage of his tribe. At a time when [Native Americans] were being removed by government policy, it made the Indian perspective a part of the national consciousness. . . . The best edition of the 1833 text is by Donald Jackson."--John E. Hallwas, in *Illinois Literature: The Nineteenth Century*

Ã  Black Hawk is one of the thirty-five Illinois authors honored by having his name cast in stone in the Illinois State Library Building, which opened in 1990. The late Donald Jackson, author and editor of several important books in Western American history, was the editor in chief at the University of Illinois Press when this edition was first published in 1955.

Initially I purchased this book as a required course reading, and we know how exciting those kinds of books can be :-), but after reading it I found it very interesting and informative. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in American History in relation to Native Americans

Really exciting and fascinating. Can't recommend it enough.

Great price for a book for a school book report.

Great book! I learned a lot and it was in great condition. An important part of Illinois and American history.

Good

The story is based in part as being close to where I live so it was of great interest to me.

The last "Indian War" in Illinois occurred in 1832 when a small band of Sauk refused under the leadership of the warrior Black Hawk to abandon their village (located under a subdivision of the present Rock Island, Illinois). They wandered up the Rock River, fighting contingents of regular army and state militia (a young Abraham Lincoln served several stints as a volunteer but saw no fighting; a young Jefferson Davis played a role in the last phases of the conflict), slipped into

Wisconsin, and were finally defeated in a brutal massacre of men, women, and children on the banks of the Mississippi. Black Hawk surrendered and was taken East to meet President Jackson. After a short term in confinement, he and his companions were taken on a tour of the East Coast, an effort by the United States government to impress him with the young nation's overwhelming superiority in numbers and technology. The plan worked, by Black Hawk's own testimony, and when he returned to the Midwest he lived out the rest of his life in obscurity in a village in Iowa. He never saw his home again. The origins of the autobiography published under Black Hawk's name has generated controversy. It was dictated to a half Native American interpreter, Antoine Le Claire, who rendered it into English, then edited by an Illinois newspaperman named John B. Patterson, who put it into publishable form. Both men swore that the result was faithful to Black Hawk's words, but the skeptical reader may be permitted some doubt; the language is clearly that of the period (surely Patterson's work), and Black Hawk himself complains on at least one occasion that his interpreter's grasp of the Sauk language did not suffice to translate a flowery speech. So what we have here, while no doubt in general faithful to Black Hawk's intentions and life story, cannot be his ipsissima verba. (It is a pity, given these doubts, that the editor of the volume, who has otherwise done an admirable job of annotation and commentary, did not compare the language of the preface, which records Black Hawk's own Sauk, with that of the text as a whole.) Despite these doubts, there can be no question that the Autobiography affords us an extraordinary opportunity to see the impact of midwestern expansion on the native population from their own point of view, and to obtain direct access -- even if it has been mediated somewhat for non-native consumption -- into the social world of a people soon to vanish. The war itself is somewhat of an anti-climax, and deeply sad, doomed as resistance clearly was from the beginning. It is rather the self-presentation of a proud, successful Sauk warrior, endowed with considerable facilities of self-reflection and honesty, that make this book a treasure that every American should read.

As a college student from the blackhawk area, I found this book captivating. Really written for any age or education level, I think anyone and everyone should read it. A heroic story of a real man, the book is a beautiful journey through history. The story some details of Black Hawk's life before the war and describes the events behind the wars and his interpretation of them well. I would recomend this to anyone from junior high up and definatly anyone from Rock Island or the surrounding areas.

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