

## A Special Place to Camp

Who lived on the land where our schools and farms are today before we were born and before the first European settlers came here?

An Indian axe and a grinding stone were plowed up while Walter Kuse was clearing the property. Archeologists at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point suggested that early tribes from the Woodland Era used them as long ago as 500 B.C. to 1000 A.D. After the first white settlers came, the North American Indians still used the land.



**Native American Ax and Grinding Stone Found on Kuse Property**

Great-grandmother Hannah Marie Kuse, who lived in a cabin where Medford High School now stands, heard sounds of an Indian Pow-wow in the neighboring woods after she and her family moved to the Kuse farm in 1883. She was afraid. Her husband J. Peter tried to reassure her by telling her that the sounds were voices of loggers coming down the river on a logging drive.

Both Indians and pioneers located their camps or settlements near sources of water. Before there were dug wells, people obtained fresh water from springs. Two such springs were located in or near Medford. One was Brown's spring, located south of the Perkins Street Bridge and the other was Billings' spring. Billings' spring was at the bottom of the hill on the Kuse property near the present Billings Avenue. Possibly North American Indians knew of this spring and came near there to camp.

The Star News on March 2, 1878 described the experiences of a group of Medford people who visited an Indian encampment in the forest northwest of

town. Could that have been near the spring? Part of the editor's description follows:

Rays of the moon shone down between the great pine tops. A solitary man paced back and forth before the tents that had been set up. A great religious dance was about to take place. A large space had been set aside by means of blankets attached to poles. People sat down upon "the mother earth". Figures danced around a fire that burned brightly in the center of the enclosure. The dancers wore gorgeous costumes, "resplendent with flashing jewelry and costly furs; their noble brows covered with turbans, from which hung feathers of the rarest kind; and their shapely limbs encased in garments made from the soft skin of the fawn embroidered by the skilled hands of the dusky maidens of each chieftains wigwam."

Then "music arose with its voluptuous swell, the kettle drum beat." A person "joined his voice to the melodious sound of the minstrel drummer, and the melody was beyond our power of description." The dancers circled around the camp fire. They clapped their hands, sang and chanted. A chief stood up and "addressed the tribe in the Chippewa language, calling upon the great Manitou to send them plenty of game, and fish."