

# Delaware Indians early residents of Monroe County

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ex-officio superintendent of Indian affairs for the area. His interest in the Indians prompted the War Department to undertake a study, which was reprinted in part by the Indiana Historical Society in 1946.

**TWO OF MONROE** County's earliest settlers could have contributed much to the informal study of the Delawares. John Ketcham and James Bigger were both officers in the companies of mounted rangers recruited by the federal government to keep peace on the Indiana frontier. According to an account written by Ketcham, Bigger was a captain, who commanded a group of rangers from Clark County.

The acquaintance between Ketcham and Bigger in the rangers led to the settlement of the latter's family in Monroe County. William Bigger's name can be found among the earliest land buyers in the county, along with several of his relatives. William bought his land in Clear Creek and Indian Creek townships. Hence his name appears on an old Indiana map in the form of a trail and a trading post.

Ketcham wrote that after the battle of Tippecanoe, the Delawares were very hostile. Some, but not all, moved farther west. It is one of those regrettable omissions of historical chance that the Biggers did not record any of their experiences with the Delawares that lived in Monroe County. The Historical Society study reported that the Delawares migrated west from the area of Philadelphia when the Iroquois told them to move on. As early as 1820, a 284-page grammar book of the Delaware language had been compiled.

**OTHER INFORMATION** gleaned from Delawares indicated that they believed in a supreme being, who ruled over some lesser good and evil spirits. Delawares were, for the most part, monogamous, except for wealthy ones and chiefs, who had several wives.

Despite the misconceptions repeated in Hollywood movies, the Delawares did not raise their hand in greeting and say, "How." They shook left-handed in greeting, because that was the hand closest to their hearts.

Children were trained not by corporal punishment, but by example and repeated instruction. Wives were bartered for and treated with consideration by the males, except in rare instances. Divorce was permissible, but uncommon.