

# GEORGE ROGERS CLARK

AND THE  
WINNING OF THE OLD NORTHWEST



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December 31, 1967

# George Rogers Clark

## VINCENNES SITES STUDY AND EVALUATION

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park  
Vincennes, Indiana

by  
Edwin C. Bearss



DIVISION OF HISTORY  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

December 31, 1967

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FOREWORD

*With Best Wishes  
to my friend  
Frank Sarles, whose  
eagle eyes have opened me  
my embarrassments  
Elna Benson*

This report has been prepared to satisfy the research needs as enumerated in Historical Research Study Proposal, GRCL-H-1, Site Study and Evaluation, George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. Besides evaluating the sites associated with George Rogers Clark's 1779 Campaign and those associated with the history of Vincennes during the period 1732-1816, the report is designed to provide a General Background Study to assist the Service in understanding the area's resources and interpreting the Park to the public.

A number of people and institutions have assisted with the preparation of this report. Thanks are due Superintendent Albert Banton and Management Assistant Robert Lagemann for securing photographs, information, and contacting local people interested in the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. Four persons interested in the history of Vincennes were especially helpful. They were: Judge Curtis Shake, a nationally known member of the bar; Tom Emison, a local attorney and President of the Indiana Historical Society; Larry H. Staines, Curator of the Historical Library at Vincennes University; and Miss Maxine Batman, the Librarian at the Vincennes City Library. At Indianapolis, the staffs of the Indiana State Library and the William Henry Smith Memorial Library, especially Mrs. Frances B. Macdonald and Miss Caroline Dunn, were helpful. In Madison, Wisconsin, the staff of the Wisconsin Historical Society was most considerate in permitting me to see the Draper Collection, while in Michigan, the staffs of the William L. Clements Library and the Detroit Public Library vied with one another in the hospitality extended. My thanks to Harry Scott for taking my rough drafts of the maps and making them works of art, and to Frank Sarles for proof-reading the final draft before it was sent out for reproduction.

Above all others I wish to especially express my appreciation to two individuals for their assistance: Roy E. Appleman, Chief of the Branch of Park History Studies for reading the manuscript and his editorial suggestions which strengthened the final report, and to Mrs. Lucy Wheeler--the ideal typist--who immersed herself in the subject and made many valuable suggestions.

ECB

NOTES:

1. Because of the large number of words misspelled in many of the quotations cited, the use of [sic], except in a few cases, has been dispensed with.
2. The use of "Bosseron" and "Busseron": Capt. Francis Bosseron spelled his name "Bosseron," while the street in Vincennes named for the Captain is spelled "Busseron."
3. Abbreviations:

*CIHS = Collections of the Illinois Historical Society.*

*IHSP = Indiana Historical Society Publications.*

*IMI = Indiana Magazine of History.*

NAC = National Archives, Colonial

WJCL = William L. Clements Library.

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## CHAPTER I

### "Sieur de Vincennes" Establishes a Post on the "Ouabache"

The establishment of the Post of Vincennes on the river "Ouabache," or Wabash, grew out of the long struggle between France and Great Britain for control of the vast heartland of North America, beginning with the War of the Palatinate in 1689.<sup>1</sup> During the 17th century the French had explored and occupied the valley of the St. Lawrence, and Acadia. "New France" encompassed much of what is now eastern Canada. The British had taken possession of and settled the Atlantic seaboard from the St. Croix River to the Savannah. To the south of the Carolina colonies the Spanish held Florida with posts at St. Augustine and Pensacola, and far to the southwest the borders of "New Spain" reached well north of the Rio Grande.

As the 17th century drew to a close it was plain that the European powers, especially the English and French, had begun to think seriously about occupying the Mississippi valley. Already English traders, coming inland from Charleston, had entered the southern Appalachians and had established themselves among the Cherokees. To the north, the governor of New France, Louis de Buade, Count Frontenac, in 1673 had sent Father Marquette (a Jesuit priest) westward with Louis Jolliet to explore the Mississippi. These brave men descended the Mississippi to the mouth of the Arkansas, but they feared to proceed any farther lest they fall into the hands of the Spaniards. Nine years later, in 1682, Robert, Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, descended the Mississippi to its mouth. In 1687 he was assassinated by several of his men as he was endeavoring to establish a French colony on the Gulf coast. Meanwhile, one of La Salle's followers, Henri de Tonti, had built a post on the Arkansas near its confluence with the Mississippi. French traders were also active in the Illinois country.

King Louis XIV, heavily involved with the War of the Palatinate, was unable to give adequate attention to La Salle's attempt to plant a colony near the mouth of the Mississippi until after the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, which marked the end of the war. By that time, rumors had reached France that the English were planning

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1. In North America, the War of the Palatinate was known as "King William's War."

to take possession of the mouth of the Mississippi. The French government began to take preventive measures.

To forestall the English an expedition was fitted out in Brittany, at Brest, under the command of Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur D'Iberville.<sup>2</sup> Leaving Brest in the fall of 1698, D'Iberville's fleet gained the Florida coast by January 1699 and arriving off Pensacola harbor, requested admission. The harbor had been recently fortified by the Spanish, who refused the request. D'Iberville's expedition continued westward along the Gulf Coast. At the mouth of the Mississippi landing parties were put ashore to reconnoiter the area. On going ashore, the scouts had found an area that was most uninviting and afforded no satisfactory location for a post. D'Iberville then turned back from the long-sought mouth of the great river to establish a settlement at Biloxi. This marked the beginning of "La Louisiana."

In the 12 years which followed, the French were to establish other settlements on the Gulf Coast and along the Mississippi River, but they failed to prosper. One reason for this lack of success was the outbreak, in 1702, of the War of Spanish Succession.<sup>3</sup> As had happened in the War of the Palatinate and was to continue during the next 113 years, France and Great Britain found themselves in opposition and conflict. With the French now in possession of Louisiana, they held a tenuous grip on the Mississippi from its source to its mouth. But the English threatened them broadside, by pushing toward the headwaters of the great rivers flowing

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2. Better known as D'Iberville, Pierre Le Moyne was born at Montreal, New France, on July 20, 1661. At the age of 25 he was chosen by Governor De Denonville to take 90 Canadians and drive the English from Hudson Bay and establish French dominion there. With two bark canoes and 11 men he boarded and captured an English vessel armed with 12 guns. In 1691 he went to France, where he was appointed to command a frigate. During his absence the English had recaptured the posts on Hudson Bay. D'Iberville was again sent against the English with two frigates and in 1694 he recovered Fort Bourbon on Hudson Bay. In 1696, after cruising along the coast of New England and bringing assistance to Acadia, he captured all the English settlements in New Foundland, in the dead of winter. He was then placed in charge of the Louisiana expedition and devoted the years 1698-1702 to three expeditions. He died from yellow fever at La Habana, July 9, 1706. *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1701-1729, French Dominion*, Collected, Edited and Translated by Dunbar Rowland, and Albert G. Sanders (3 vols., Jackson, 1929), Vol.2, 10.

3. In the British Colonies in America the War of Spanish Succession was known as "Queen Anne's War."

westward from the Appalachian front. The Carolinians, from their base at Charleston, had worked their way down the Tennessee through the land of the Cherokees as far as Mussel Shoals. Venturesome Scotch traders had crossed over from the watershed of the Tennessee to that of the Alabama and were trading with the Creeks. Contact had been established with the warlike Chickasaws, whose villages were located on the Pontotoc Ridge, in what is today northeast Mississippi. The English supplied the Chickasaws with arms and powder and thus won their friendship. Together the British and their savage allies enslaved other Indian tribes who were compelled to rely only on their native weapons. Further north the English were feeling their way toward the headwaters of the Ohio.

D'Iberville was convinced that these people were not just adventurers but were actually operating under orders from the English governors, and he feared that their coming was the forerunner of larger movements by the English across the mountain barrier and down into the Mississippi valley. In the English colonies, he argued, population was already so dense that it must find an outlet to the west. These emigrants could settle along the Ohio and then ally themselves with the Indians whose country they were invading. Once this had occurred, the British would be in position to sever communications between Louisiana and New France and threaten the integrity of the French colonial empire.

D'Iberville complained that the *coureurs du bois*, who had come down from Canada to the Illinois country and the Ohio to trade, were selling their furs to the English, whose posts were only 300 or 400 leagues to the east, and could be reached without a portage. To smash this trade, the combative D'Iberville advocated drastic steps. On one occasion he proposed closing all the routes leading from the Illinois and Ohio country to the English posts. At another time he suggested the dispatch of an expedition with the mission of destroying the encroaching English posts. Were this accomplished, he then proposed to establish a French post on the "Ouabache" and compel the Indians to trade there or face the long month's journey on to Detroit.

D'Iberville envisioned a two-fold mission for the proposed fort on the Wabash. Not only would it block the English in their move toward the Mississippi, but it would also check the advance of New France, whose merchant princes, ignorant of D'Iberville's conviction that the Wabash country was a part of "La Louisiana," were already laying claims to that area's trade. The governor of New France, Vaudreuil, vigorously supported their efforts.

The French government, hard-pressed as it was by global commitments, was unable to give any consideration to D'Iberville's mid-continent projects. For nearly a quarter of a century, the French of Louisiana drafted memorials regarding the coveted Wabash country, while Canadian and English traders struggled for its possession. D'Iberville never ceased to recall

that the region was rich in furs, and he thought that tanneries would prove profitable. In addition, he believed that there were lead mines in that area which could be worked with advantage.<sup>4</sup>

François de Mandeville, who had spent a number of months at the post established by Sieur de Jucherau in 1702 at the mouth of the Ohio, was likewise impressed with the resources of the Wabash country. While there he had discovered some copper. Of more far-reaching importance was his report that "skins of buffaloes, cows, stags, does, bears, roebucks, panthers, and other sorts of small pelts . . . are very abundant." These peltries had been shipped down the Mississippi in great numbers, but, he complained, in 1709 "for want of ships in two years' time the moths got into them, the waters rose, and for lack of people to guard them the Indians took them and the whole lot was lost." Of special interest to the French of Louisiana was the story Mandeville had picked up of a silver mine on the upper Wabash.<sup>5</sup>

Up to the middle of the 18th century, the Wabash was regarded by the French of Louisiana, as the main stream and the Ohio as a tributary. Therefore, the word "Ouabache" signified not only the river Wabash as we know it, but also the Ohio River from the mouth of the Wabash to the Mississippi. It was the ambiguity of this word that led Judge John Law to confuse Post Vincennes with the post established by Sieur de Jucherau at the mouth of the Ohio. This error was followed by others, some in ignorance and some with deliberate intent to fabricate history. The location of Jucherau's post is unquestionable. Its history is preserved in contemporary official documents. It was abandoned in 1705, three years after its establishment.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after his brother's death in 1706, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, had been named governor of Louisiana. Others beside Mandeville had arrived at the French fort on Dauphine Island with

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4. J. G. R. Phillips, "Vincennes In Its Relation to French Colonial Policy," *American Register of History*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 313.

5. Report of Louisiana by Mandeville, April 29, 1709, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 2, 51-52. Mandeville was a native of Bayeux in Normandy. At this time he was an ensign in De Vaulezard's company. The secondary sources consulted fail to give a name to the post established by Jucherau.

6. Jacob G. Linn, "Mission to the Ouabache," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, Vol. 3, 225-226.

nuggets of pure copper found on the upper Wabash. In 1710 several voyageurs showed Bienville pieces of pure copper and "three other sorts of metal" which they had found in the same locality. Bienville had the metal melted by two experienced miners who had been exiled from Mexico to Pensacola. They sent word to the Governor that it was pure silver. This made Bienville eager to effect the rescue of the two ex-miners, and have them taken up the Wabash to examine and report on the mines.<sup>7</sup> Before Bienville could carry out this project, he was replaced as governor by Antoine de Lamothe Cadillac and the project was then dropped.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the interest in the Wabash country engendered by the persistent reports of mines and the possibility of tapping a lucrative fur trade, there was not enough force in Louisiana to take advantage of the opportunities before them. Traders from New France, however, moved in with only the competition of the English to dampen their ardor.

The year before the War of Spanish Succession was ended in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, the French of Canada defeated the Fox Indians at Detroit. Shortly afterwards, Governor de Vaudreuil of New France ordered one of his most experienced frontiersmen, Jean-Baptiste Bissot, to go live among the Miami Indians of the upper Wabash.

Jean-Baptiste was the son of François Bissot who had been born in 1613 at Notre-Dame des Pres, Normandy. François had emigrated to New France between 1641 and 1647. On October 25, 1648, he married Marie Couillard, a native of New France, at Quebec. By this marriage, Bissot became the brother-in-law of Jean Nicolet, the discoverer of Wisconsin. In the 17th century the kings of France had established a lesser order of nobility in New France. Among the seigneuries or fiefs established was that of Vincennes, which in 1672 Louis XIV granted to François Bissot.

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7. Bienville to Ponchartrain, June 21, 1710 in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.3, 153. Bienville, born in Montreal in 1680, joined the French navy as a midshipman under his brother D'Iberville, whom he later accompanied to the Gulf Coast in 1698.

8. Cadillac came from a noble but impoverished family of southern France in the province of Gascony. He was born in 1657 and migrated to New France as a young man. He served first in the regiment of Dampierre-Lorraine, and by 1697 he had been commissioned a captain. In 1701 he established the post of Detroit which he commanded for three years. On May 13, 1710, he was named Governor of Louisiana, but he did not reach Dauphine Island until June 5, 1713. *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.3, 162-163.

9. Justin Winsor, *The Mississippi Basin* (New York, 1895) 149. Phillipe de Rigault, Marquis de Vaudreuil, was governor of New France from June 1703, until his death, October 10, 1725, except in the years 1714-1716, when he was absent from his post in France.



The seigneurie was located on the right bank of the St. Lawrence below Quebec City, opposite the lower end of the Isle of Orleans, and consisted of a frontage on the river of 70-arpenes with a depth of one league. Nobody could, in propriety, be called "Sieur de Vincennes" except the holder of this fief, because there was no other seigneurie of this name in New France or the mother country. Upon the death of François Bissot on the 26 July, 1673, his son, Jean-Baptiste, succeeded to the title.<sup>10</sup>

At the time that he was ordered to the Wabash country, Jean-Baptiste Bissot, Sieur de Vincennes, was 44 years old. He had a wife, Marie Marguerite Forestier, whom he had married on Montreal on September 19, 1696. His wife had given birth to seven children, four girls and three boys. Two of the sons had died in infancy. The one surviving son, François-Marie Bissot, as he was only 12, remained in Montreal with his mother and sisters when his father left Detroit and started up the Maumee.<sup>11</sup>

Bissot by 1715 had established himself at Kekionga, near today's Fort Wayne, and devoted himself to stopping the trade of the Weas with the English.<sup>12</sup> (The Weas were a sub-tribe of the Miamis.) He scored some successes and secured a position of great influence among the Weas.<sup>13</sup> About 1718 his son, François, by then a lad of 18, joined him. This boy was to spend the rest of his life in the Mississippi Valley and to found the post which the French of Louisiana had long desired.

Jean-Baptiste Bissot died in 1719, whereupon François-Marie succeeded to the title of Sieur de Vincennes.<sup>14</sup> More important, young Bissot assumed command of the Weas under orders from Sieur de Buisson. Despite his youth, his superiors valued Bissot's services because of the great influence he "has acquired among the savages who preserve

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10. Pierre Georges Roy, "Sieur de Vincennes Identified," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, Vol.7, 21-28; Edmond Mallet, "Sieur de Vincennes," *IHSP*, Vol.3, 43. François Bissot was laid to rest in the cemetery of l'Hotel-Dieu. Jean-Baptiste Bissot was the tenth child of François and Marie Bissot. (See Appendix A for Bissot genealogy.)

11. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol.7, 21-28, 82-83.

12. Winsor, *Mississippi Basin*, 149.

13. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 71; Edmund B. O'Callaghan, *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York*, Vol.9, 931.

for him the same attachment which they had for Sr. de Vincennes, his father." If Governor Vaudreuil had foreseen that the King in 1722 would decree that each of the 28 companies which His Majesty maintained in New France was entitled to a second ensign, he would have urged his appointment. But as there would soon be three vacancies in the establishment, the Governor planned to sponsor Sieur de Vincennes for one of these positions.<sup>15</sup>

Vincennes in 1723, while holding the rank of ensign in the Regiment of Carignan, used his influence to keep the Weas from making war on the Illinois. This action on the young Ensign's part caused the able French commander in the Illinois country, Pierre Dugue, Sieur de Boisbriant, to become interested and seek his services for Louisiana. The correspondence between them has been lost, but it is likely that the energetic commander of Fort de Chartres was planning to undertake the construction of the long-projected Wabash post, and desired the help of Vincennes. In 1724 Governor de Vaudreuil learned of Boisbriant's machinations and wrote him a letter of protest. He was surprised, he wrote, to learn that Boisbriant was thinking of "detaching Sieur de Vincennes from my jurisdiction, and that you have him quit a post where he is most necessary on account of the credit he has with the Indians." He declared that the Wabash country did not belong to Louisiana, and he objected to Boisbriant's efforts to lure Vincennes away from the service of New France. If Boisbriant persisted, the Governor promised to carry his complaint to the court. A few years before he had urged that Sieur de Vincennes be promoted--he now trusted the court would listen to his recommendation.<sup>16</sup>

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14. That the village where Jean-Baptiste died was Kekionga is established by Captain Bicville de Celeron who in 1749 commanded an expedition down the Ohio, and appealed to La Demoiselle's Miamis, who had deserted the French for the English, to return to Kekionga, "the place where repose the bones of your fathers, and those of Sieur de Vincennes, whom you much loved, and who always governed you so that everything was well." Jacob Dunn, "Who Was Our Sieur de Vincennes?" *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 12, 131.

15. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 83.

16. *Ibid.*, 84-85. Vaudreuil to Boisbriant, Aug. 17, 1724, in Dunn, "Sieur de Vincennes," *IHM*, Vol. 12, 124. Sieur de Boisbriant was a cousin of the Le Moynes. After entering the service, he had accompanied D'Iberville on his second voyage to Louisiana. Early in the autumn of 1718 he was appointed commandant for the Illinois country.

This correspondence probably brought to a head the dispute over the Wabash country which had been festering for over 28 years and had become acute after the annexation of Illinois to Louisiana in 1717.<sup>17</sup> Vaudreuil claimed the Wabash as part of New France, and its trade had heretofore gone by the Maumee to the St. Lawrence. The Wabash, however, was an outpost to the Illinois country and as such was athwart the route by which the English were feeling their way toward the Mississippi.

In 1717 the crown had chartered a new corporation, designated the Western Company, and controlled by John Law to succeed to the privileges granted Antoine Crozat in 1712. Crozat had been given an exclusive right to engage in commerce in Louisiana for the next 15 years. His venture was unsuccessful, and in 1717 he had surrendered his charter. To help insure the success of Law and his associates of the Western Company, the Crown decreed that the Illinois country, which had heretofore been dependent upon the government of New France, should now be united with the province of Louisiana.<sup>18</sup>

John Law and his associates, however, hesitated to precipitate a fight for the Wabash country. The Western Company was seriously handicapped at this time for lack of funds. In 1724 it was determined to cut the garrison of the post (Fort de Chartres), which Boisbriant had established in the Illinois country, to eight men, and to organize no new posts. Boisbriant saw the danger and informed the officials of the company that the English would move into the vacuum and win over the Indians unless the French were quick to supply their needs.<sup>20</sup> Boisbriant was probably acting under instructions from his cousin, Bienville, who was again in power in Louisiana.<sup>21</sup>

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He reached his new post, probably Kaskaskia, on May 13, 1719. In 1720 he completed the construction of Fort de Chartres, which he had begun soon after his arrival. *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 2, 182-183.

17. Winsor, *The Mississippi Basin*, 148-149.

18. The Western Company's charter, unless surrendered earlier, was to run for 25 years. Many authorities refer to the Western Company as the Company of the Indies.

19. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 55.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Bienville on September 20, 1717, had been commissioned commandant general of Louisiana. For the next eight years Bienville, in con-

Bienville was becoming increasingly worried about the encroachments of the British. In 1727 they had undertaken two projects "equally dangerous for our colony." The first of these was the establishment of an outpost on the headwaters of the Ohio "by means of which they can come down to the Mississippi . . . and take themselves to the mouth of the Wabash River and put the Illinois behind them." This would be disastrous, because the Illinois Indians would then ally themselves with the English, along with the Weas and Miamis that "provide the commerce and the security of Canada as well as Louisiana." At the moment, all these nations were trading with the British. The other British threat was directed at the Choctaws and Chickasaws to whom they had sent a number of traders and a quantity of merchandise.<sup>22</sup>

To cope with this situation, Bienville had been corresponding with officials of the Western Company. In 1726 he complained to the Ministry of the Colonies:

We have no fort at all on the Wabash, one of the most important rivers on this continent. We have always had it in mind to have one built on it. I myself had sent a plan for it to the Company. The want in which I found myself as well as the fear of not being able to maintain my enterprise for lack of the necessary merchandise prevented me from carrying it out.

If he had proceeded, he felt certain, many families from New France would then have settled on the Wabash, and we would have "not so often had so many alarms from the English who have had great designs on that river." While Governor Vaudreuil maintained a small post at Kekionga, it was of little use. Far from being strong enough to afford any opposition, its location was such that it was unable to deter the English who had access to the Mississippi by way of the Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland rivers. A full company would be necessary at the projected Wabash country post, if the English were to be checked and if the Voyageurs were to be provided a measure of security to hunt and to trap.<sup>23</sup>

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junction with his brother Serigny, was to be the administrative head of Louisiana. *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.3, 12.

22. Memoir on Louisiana by Dodun, 1726, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.3, 496-497.

23. Memoir on Louisiana by Bienville, 1726, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.3, 513-514.

While the French were in that habit of trading directly with the Indians north of the Ohio, the English carried on their commerce through members of the Iroquois Confederacy who wintered on the upper tributaries of the Ohio.

The urgings of Bienville and Boisbriant galvanized the Western Company into action. In May 1725 the Company had requested Governor Vaudreuil of New France to take steps to keep foreign traders out of the Wabash country. It suggested the construction of new posts to preserve communications between New France and Louisiana and one of these posts was to be located on the Wabash.<sup>24</sup> Later in the year, it wrote Boisbriant directing him to cooperate with Vincennes, who was in command at Kekionga in an effort to exclude the English. It was probably due to promptings of Company officials that King Louis XV shortly afterwards instructed the Governor General of New France to order Sieur de Vincennes to act with Boisbriant to secure the same objective.<sup>25</sup>

Boisbriant promptly established contact with Vincennes. His efforts were hurried by information that the Dutch from New Albany had established posts on the upper Ohio, where they had built two mills "de Bates," a fort, and several storehouses, which were abundantly supplied with goods. Since the French were short of merchandise and what they had was not of a kind to attract Indians, Boisbriant feared that the newcomers would get most of the trade. Bienville, however, urged that the fort be built, and recommended that Vincennes be placed in charge.<sup>26</sup>

When the Western Company learned of this threat, it prepared to take a stronger stand. In September 1726, a letter was forwarded by the Company to Périer de Salvert, who in August had succeeded Bienville as commandant of Louisiana, stating that the Wabash country was not yet occupied by any European power, but that if the English should establish themselves on any of the great rivers of this region, they would

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24. Phillips, "Vincennes and French Colonial Policy," *IMH*, Vol. 17, 317.

25. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHP*, Vol. 3, 86-87.

26. Phillips, "Vincennes and French Colonial Policy," *IMH*, Vol. 17, 318.

not only threaten the Illinois but could break communications between Louisiana and New France. The Company ordered Périer to establish a post on the Wabash, if this danger still threatened, and had requested Governor Vaudreuil to direct Sieur de Vincennes, "who commands at the home of the Weas-Miamis" to take charge of the post.<sup>27</sup>

The Company even expressed its willingness, if the English were becoming too formidable, to build two forts--one on the Wabash and one on the Ohio. These instructions to Périer suggested that Vincennes might be induced to enter its service for a gratuity of 300 livres in addition to his pay. The Company ended the letter by expressing a hope that if the English did not appear too dangerous and Vincennes could be bought, it might be spared the expense of building even one post. It asked Périer to determine whether Vincennes and his Weas, with the assistance of eight or ten soldiers, might not be able to hold the country.<sup>28</sup>

Périer acted promptly in seeking an understanding whereby Vincennes was to enter the service of Louisiana. In October 1727 the Company approved an arrangement by which he was to receive 300 livres besides salary.<sup>29</sup> Vincennes, however, did not resign his New France commission immediately, because as late as October 15, 1729, he was listed as an officer of New France.<sup>30</sup> By the next year, 1730, Vincennes had left Kekionga, because both the Governor and Intendent of New France complained to the court that the Weas "have been led into the government of Louisiana by Sr. de Vincennes, who is entirely separated" from New France.<sup>31</sup>

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27. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 87; Dunn, "Mission to the Ouabache," *IHSP*, Vol. 3, 257; Western Company to Périer, Sept. 30, 1726.

28. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 87-88.

29. Western Company to Périer and De la Chaise, Oct. 27, 1726, National Archives, Colonies, Transcript in Library of Congress. Hereinafter cited as NAC.

30. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 89. Vincennes on April 23, 1726, had been promoted to 2d ensign in the Canadian establishment. *Ibid.*, 86.

31. *Ibid.*, 90.

The Miamis, by this time, had separated into three groups. The largest which continued to be known as the Miamis resided on the Maumee, while the Weas had moved down from Kekionga and had settled at the village which came to be called Ouiatanon. Another group, much smaller than the other two, calling themselves the Piankashaws, had established a village several leagues below Ouiatanon.<sup>32</sup>

The long delay before Vincennes made his move can be partially explained by the slowness of communications. Word that the Company had approved his salary could not have reached Vincennes before the spring of 1728. In the fall of 1727 Governor Périer, in accordance with the Company's suggestion, had forwarded goods and provisions to supply a post on the Wabash and another on the Ohio, but the vessel in which they were shipped was checked by ice floes on the Mississippi above the mouth of the Arkansas, and was compelled to return to New Orleans.<sup>33</sup> To make matters worse, in the spring of 1728, Vincennes was taken seriously ill and was unable to undertake any projects until well into the summer. Upon returning to duty, he had traveled down the Mississippi to New Orleans to discuss the situation with Governor Périer. The Governor showed Vincennes the latest orders from the Company regarding the plan to build a fort on the Wabash.<sup>34</sup>

In October the Company had complained to Governor Périer and to Sieur de la Chaise, the Intendant of Louisiana, that it had received 50 recommendations regarding the site of the proposed post. In assessing the merits of available locations, it must be kept in mind that the object was to bar the English from the Wabash country and to keep open communications between Louisiana and New France. Consequently, it was believed that the proposed post must not be located at the confluence of the Ohio with the Mississippi, nor at the mouth of the Cumberland. Either of these locations would be too far downstream to attract the Miamis or receive their support, without which they could

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32. *Memoir on Louisiana* by Bienville, 1726, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 534. The Weas mustered 400 warriors and the Piankashaws 150.

33. Périer to Maurepas, Nov. 15, 1727, and Périer and De la Chaise to the Western Company, March 30, 1728, NAC, C 13, A 10, p. 234, and C 13 A11, p.106. New Orleans had been laid out by Bienville in 1718, and in 1722 the capital of Louisiana had moved there from Mobile.

34. Périer and De la Chaise to Western Company, April 9 and July 31, 1728, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 2, 580-581.

not sustain themselves. In addition, it was unlikely that the French could persuade the Miamis to settle in a region so far from their present homes. But if they did, it would leave no one to oppose the English on the upper Ohio and Wabash, and they could be expected to push into that region and secure its trade. Owing to these considerations the Western Company urged that the post be established in the country of the Miamis. It was suggested that Vincennes should report to Charles Henri Desliethes who had replaced Boisbriant as commander in the Illinois country.<sup>35</sup>

The new post was to be manned by ten soldiers and two officers. The Company had budgeted 300 livres for construction of the fort and 1,170 livres for the subsistence of the men during the first year. It had also allowed 800 livres for presents to the Indians. The pay of the soldiers and other expenses brought the total allotment for the year to 3,230 livres.

Périer had objected to the smallness of the Company's allowance. He protested that labor was high and that it would cost 600 instead of 300 livres to build a suitable fort. He declared also that for presents to the Indians not less than 3,000 livres should be set aside. He promised to go ahead with the project, however, and had written the Company that he would leave selection of a site for the fort to Vincennes.<sup>36</sup>

After listening to Périer's and De la Chaise's explanation of the situation Vincennes told his superiors that it would be best for him to resume his residence among the Weas, thus deferring the construction of the post. He gave as his reason that it would avoid a useless expense, because the Weas would not move down to the place where he wished to locate the fort.<sup>37</sup> It is probable, too, that he

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35. Western Company to Périer and De la Chaise, Oct. 27, 1727, NAC, C13 All, p. 93. De la Chaise had been named intendent of Louisiana on December 8, 1722.

36. Périer and De la Chaise to Western Company, March 30, 1728, NAC, C13 All, p. 190.

37. Périer and De la Chaise to Western Company, July 31, 1728, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 2, 580-581. When he started back up the Mississippi, Vincennes took with him "goods to the value of 3400 livres."



did not feel that he had sufficient funds to undertake the erection of the fort, because in the spring of 1729 Périer was still declaring that the project could not be carried through with the money made available by the Company.<sup>38</sup>

Vincennes apparently did not keep in touch with the authorities in New Orleans. There is only occasional mention of the Wabash post during the period 1729-1733, and in early 1733 Edmé Gatien Salmon, who had entered on duty as Intendant for Louisiana in late 1731, complained that it was not known if Vincennes had yet built his fort.<sup>39</sup> Vincennes, however, received his pay regularly and allowances for expenses and in 1730 was described as "useful to the Colony."<sup>40</sup>

Early in 1733, Vincennes wrote a letter describing the location of the post he had recently established on the Wabash. He reported:

the Wabash is composed of five nations who compose four villages of which the least has sixty men carrying arms, and all of them could furnish from six to seven hundred men, if it were necessary. . . . On account of the nearness of the English, it has been impossible for me to bring together all these nations because there has always been a lack of merchandize in this place. The fort which I have built is about 80 leagues in the Wabash country up the river by which the English have been able to descend and open up commerce with these nations. The place is very suitable in which to build a great settlement which I would have done if I had had troops enough.

He complained that he had no goods to trade and the English were carrying away all the furs. He believed that every year furs to the value of 30,000 livres could be obtained at the post.<sup>41</sup>

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38. Périer and de La Chaise to Western Company, March 25, 1729, NAC, C23 A11, p. 330.

39. Phillips, "Vincennes and French Colonial Policy," *IMH*, Vol. 17, 332.

40. List of Officers and Commanders of Posts in Louisiana, Aug. 19, 1732, NAC, D2 C50, p. 31.

41. Memorandum of June 23, 1716, C13, A6, 119; Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 92-94.

His need for soldiers was critical and growing more urgent. Of late, the Illinois and Miamis were growing more insolent. Twenty years on the frontier had led him to fear the Indians might be planning a sneak attack.

So far, he and his men had erected a stockade and "two houses within." It was now necessary to build a "guard house with barracks in which to lodge the soldiers." To accomplish anything he would need reinforcements of 30 men and one officer. The weakness of the garrison had already proved an embarrassment.

A study of the available evidence leads to the conclusion that Vincennes continued to live among the Weas at Quiatanon for at least four years before proceeding farther down the Wabash and erecting his new post. It was probably late 1732 before ground was broken for the new fort on the Wabash, destined to bear his name. There were evidently some French settlers around the post, as Vincennes in 1734 reported that the Chickasaws, during the previous fall, had killed six Frenchmen on the Wabash.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol.7, 92-93. Post Vincennes was first referred to as "Au Ouabache," and the first official title given it was "Poste des Pianguichats," [Piankashaw]. After Louis St. Ange assumed command, it was often called Poste St. Ange. About the middle of the 18th century the name "Vincennes" began to be applied to it, but usually it was known as "the post." Dunn, "Mission to the Ouabache," *IHSP*, Vol.3, 256.

## CHAPTER II

### Power Politics In The Wabash Country

Bienville, in July 1732, was named by the crown to replace Périer as governor of Louisiana. Five months were to elapse before he was ready to sail from Rochefort, and it was March 3, 1733, before he went ashore at New Orleans and formally assumed his duties.<sup>1</sup> Périer had proved to be a feeble administrator, so the harassed soldiers and colonists welcomed their new leader. The Western Company, having been no more successful than Crozat in developing Louisiana economically, had surrendered its charter to King Louis XV in 1732. Two events had triggered the downfall of the Company--the financial losses and scandals which had followed the failure of John Law's banking interests, and the disastrous war with the Natchez Indians and their allies which commenced with the Fort Rosalie massacre of the French in November, 1729. The French had counterattacked, and in the savage warfare which ensued, the power of the Natchez had been smashed. Even so, the population of Louisiana had increased from 700 to 8,000 during the 14 years the Company had been in charge.

Upon his return to New Orleans, Bienville found so much hostility on the part of some of the Indian Nations that drastic action was necessary. The warlike Chickasaws had been lost to the English, while the Choctaws were in contact with British traders. The Natchez, who had taken refuge among the Chickasaws, warred on isolated settlements and solitary traders, and the Chickasaws threatened to cut the Mississippi supply line which linked New Orleans with the Illinois and Wabash country. Bienville's thoughts turned to ways of breaking the power of the Chickasaws and other Indian nations friendly to the English.

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1. "Chronology of Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville," in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 3, 12.

An initial step in this direction was an order from Bienville to his commander at Fort de Chartres, Jean de St. Ange de Bellerive, to organize the Indians of the Illinois country to assist in the projected offensive against the Chickasaws.<sup>2</sup> St. Ange, however, did not believe that the time was propitious for him to take the field, because he was uncertain of the "fidelity of the Illinois who often cause him alarm."<sup>3</sup> At the same time Vincennes was declaring that the Indians of the Wabash were "no more quiet than the Illinois." He complained that he had been unable to prevent them from trading with the English, "because it would be necessary to have them all unite, and because he had no merchandise to induce them to do so," and finally, his garrison was too weak to restrain them.<sup>4</sup> Once again, he called for reinforcements of an officer and 50 men.

Bienville determined to reinforce Vincennes, as he had confidence in his commander on the Wabash. Moreover, his great influence among the Weas and Piankashaws told heavily in his favor. The same could not be said of St. Ange, whom Bienville believed was too old to undertake a vigorous campaign aimed at crushing the Chickasaws and restoring French hegemony on the Ohio and upper Mississippi. St. Ange was accordingly relieved of the command of Fort de Chartres, to make way for Captain Pierre d'Artagette, a vigorous officer of 33.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the Chickasaws began to suspect that something was amiss. Their leaders hoped to remain at peace with Vincennes and the Indians of the Wabash, so they released a Frenchman, whom they had captured, with a message telling of these desires.<sup>6</sup>

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2. Bienville to Maurepas, Aug. 25, 1733, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 198-199; St. Ange to Bienville, April 30, 1733, *WAC*, C13, A17, 194. St. Ange was a veteran French officer, his service beginning at least as early as 1685. He had assumed command at Fort de Chartres in 1730.

3. Salmon to Maurepas, May 20, 1733, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 206.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, May 15, 1733, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 201. Pierre d'Artagette was a brother of Baron d'Artagette, the commandant at Mobile.

6. St. Ange to Bienville, May 8, 1733, *WAC*, C13, A17, 229-248.

The disaffection of Vincennes had added fuel to the dispute that existed between the authorities of New France and Louisiana dating back to 1717 and the transfer of the Illinois country. Although Governor Vaudrouil had died in 1725, his successors continued to be rankled over the loss of the Wabash country. The return of Bienville to power in Louisiana galled the governor of New France, Charles de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois. He determined to crush the Chickasaw, before Bienville could perfect his plans. Before the snow had melted in the late winter of 1733, De Beauharnois ordered his commander at Detroit, Sieur de Boishébert, to organize a force of Indians to attack the Chickasaws. He sent belts and pipes to Vincennes and St. Ange and urged them to assist in the projected offensive. According to the plan "all the nations of Canada and of the lakes" were to assist in the invasion. Although Vincennes believed the hour premature, many Indians went south to carry the tomahawk and scalping knife to the Chickasaw villages. Supplies by this time were so short at his post that Vincennes was compelled "to borrow from travellers and to give the little that I have myself to take care of all the affairs which come up daily." When the nations returned and when the prisoners had been surrendered to the French, it would be necessary for the commandant "to pay for this sort of thing as well as to look for the dead if we lose any."<sup>1</sup>

The expedition came to nothing. Bienville had opposed the scheme of Beauharnois as untimely. The autumn--not the spring--he argued, would be a more opportune time for the attack, because the invaders could plunder the provisions the Chickasaws had laid up for the winter.

In spite of the war clouds which would make the exposed Wabash post a focal point for an attack by the Chickasaws, Vincennes, in the spring of 1733, determined to go to New France. He had permission to make the trip from the governor of New France, but he apparently failed to take the trouble to ask for leave from his superiors in Louisiana. He notified Governor Bienville that he was going to look after some family affairs, but he promised not to start unless everything seemed peaceful among his Indians. During his absence, St. Ange's son, Pierre, would be in charge of the fort. Vincennes, before pro-

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7. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSB*, Vol. 7, 93-94; Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, May 20, 1733, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 206-207.

8. Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, May 20, 1733, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 205-207.

9. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSB*, Vol. 7, 93-94.

ceeding up the Wabash, crossed over to Kaskaskia, where he married the daughter of Philippe Longpre.<sup>10</sup>

Vincennes was back on the Wabash in the spring of 1734. He returned with a complaint that Governor de Beauharnois required *habitants* of Illinois to buy a *congé* before he would allow them to return to their homes. He also reported to D'Artaouette that more than 100 families of New France were ready to migrate to the Wabash and Illinois but were detained by their governor.<sup>11</sup>

The spring of 1734 brought renewed activity on the Wabash. Bienville promised to furnish the 30 men and two officers that Vincennes had requested the previous year, and he ordered D'Artaouette to supply them from his troops in the Illinois country. He felt that the Wabash post was one of the most important in the colony and that it must be held at all costs. Vincennes also had in mind to strengthen his position by bringing other Indians to reinforce those already at the post. There was a village of Piankashaws on the Wabash some 60 leagues above the post and these had been trading with the English. If Vincennes could bring them down to his post, he would thus not only make his position more secure, but he would also deprive the English of a source of considerable trade.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, plans were made to increase the size of the fort to accommodate the greatly expanded garrison. A guard house and additional barracks were projected, while Vincennes had had quarters erected for himself at his own expense. To make the post strong enough to be held against a formidable attacking force, it would be "advisable merely to add a reinforcement of pikes" to the palisade.<sup>13</sup>

Bands of Indians from the Wabash country who had answered Governor de Beauharnois' call for war against the Chickasaws had reported that in 1732 they had captured or killed 34 men, women and children, and 42 in 1733. As the Governor had issued the marching orders, Vincennes had felt called on to provide the Indians with munitions

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10. Ibid., 53. Vincennes and his wife had a daughter, Maria Theresa, who married De l'Isle. Ibid. (See Appendix A).

11. Bienville to Maurepas, April 22, 1730, NAC, C13, A18, p. 142. A *congé* is a passport.

12. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 95; Dunn, "Mission on the Wabash," *IHSP*, Vol. 3, 308, 329.

13. Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, April 8, 1734, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 3, 666.

and merchandise to the value of 984 livres and 10 sous. Although he had opposed these attacks, Bienville directed Salmon to reimburse his commander on the Wabash.<sup>14</sup>

The English all the while continued to increase the volume of their trade in the Ohio Valley, and it was to check these activities that the French were giving so much attention to the Wabash fort. From the trading posts they had established on the upper Ohio, the British and their agents, the Iroquois, pushed into the northwest and southwest. Vincennes from his fort was expected by Governor Bienville to keep the nations of the Wabash (Miami, Piankashaws, and Weas) from trading or becoming allied with these rivals of France.

There were two difficulties in the way of French plans. Vincennes lacked the trade goods the Indians loved--guns, powder, shoes, "English" cloth, collars, shirts, mirrors, combs, hats, and flour--which could be bought cheaply from the English. Vincennes complained bitterly that his superiors failed to send him the necessary goods.<sup>15</sup> Many of the French soldiers were discontented and undependable. In the spring of 1735 five men deserted the Wabash post and joined the English. Desertions from Fort de Chartres were also frequent. Bienville feared that the English were seeking to win over the Choctaws and other tribes who were friendly to the French and form a great Indian confederation under their control.

Indeed, Bienville now considered the English threat to the French position in the Mississippi Valley so acute that he determined to steal a march on his rivals. France and Great Britain were at peace, but this did not deter Bienville from perfecting a scheme to destroy the power of the Indian allies of the English. His first victims would be the Chickasaw, a powerful and warlike nation. They had long been a thorn in the side of the French, frequently attacking traders and supply boats as they passed up and down the Mississippi. They also traded exclusively with the English, and their destruction would seriously affect the Carolina merchants and cripple their trading interests west of the Appalachians. In addition, the recent establishment of a colony in Georgia by James Oglethorpe boded ill for the French, because traders operating from Savannah would be able to approach the Choctaws by passing to the south of the mountain barrier.

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14. Ibid.

15. Vincennes to Bienville, April 22, 1735, WAC, C13, A20, p. 246; Bienville to Maurepas, Aug. 20, 1735, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 265-266.

16. Bienville to Maurepas, June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 297-298.

Bienville, as a pretext for war, demanded the surrender of the Natchez Indians who had taken refuge among the Chickasaws after their disastrous war with the French. This demand was rebuffed: the leaders of the Chickasaws declaring, "The Natchez form one nation with the Chickasaws, we cannot give them up."

When his emissary returned with this unsatisfactory answer, Bienville decided that the time was ripe to punish the surviving Natchez, and to make the Chickasaws understand that they could no longer obstruct the free passage of the French from New Orleans to the Great Lakes. Thus, Bienville, in 1736, voiced a theme that was to echo and re-echo for the next 129 years until it was finally resolved by the Civil War: that no nation, or group, must obstruct the free and unfettered access of the great American heartland to its natural outlet to world trade--the mouth of the Mississippi.

To insure the success of his projected campaign, it would be necessary for Bienville to employ Indian allies, as the French could muster only 13 companies of from 35 to 40 effectives each. Of these, two were in the Illinois country, one on the Wabash with Vincennes, one at Natchez, one at Natchitoches, four at New Orleans, one at the Balize, and three at Mobile. In addition, there were detachments at Post of Arkansas and Fort Toulouse. In the forthcoming conflict, one of the nations that would have to fight with the French, if the campaign were to be successful, was the Choctaw. English efforts to introduce traders among the Choctaws, and the machinations of two of their leaders, Red Shoe and Alibamon Mingo, "either of whom would sell the services of his warriors to the highest bidder," distressed Bienville.<sup>17</sup>

Writing of this situation to his superiors in the Ministry of Colonies, Bienville observed that for the past two years all his letters concerning relations with the Choctaw nation

appear so full of contradictions that when one compares the different plans that I set forth . . . to win over our nations, one might with some appearance of reason charge me with insatiability[sic]

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17. Bienville to Maurepas, April 14 and 23, 1735; Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, Feb. 2, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.1, 256, 260-262, 274-275.



or with irresolution; . . . but if your Lordship will kindly observe that I can form no plan except as a consequence of the attitude existing in this great nation.<sup>18</sup>

Bienville was apprehensive that in the end the Choctaws would succumb to the propositions coming from the English, particularly those from Oglethorpe. He therefore resolved to march against the Chickasaws in early 1736. Because of the distance involved, Bienville planned to utilize the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers to transport his main column to within 20 leagues of the Chickasaw villages. The troops would thus arrive near their goal without being unduly fatigued by a long overland march. In the autumn of 1735, Bienville proceeded to Mobile to perfect his plans and establish his operation base at that point. He revealed his scheme to the Choctaw chiefs who came to see him, and when they promised to support the expedition, he dispatched in December a courier up the Mississippi in a pirogue with a message for D'Artaguette "to levy as many soldiers as he could among the Illinois, the Canadians and the French," and to lead them against the Chickasaws at the end of March. Bienville, meanwhile, would have concentrated at Mobile all the forces available and be ascending the Tombigbee River. The two columns would then rendezvous and carry fire and sword to the Chickasaw nation.<sup>19</sup>

Vincennes, during the previous summer, had persuaded the Piankashaws and Weas to take up the tomahawk against the Chickasaws, and he had secured a pledge from D'Artaguette to co-operate with him. When they moved out, in addition to the Indians, it was hoped that they would be accompanied by every Frenchman of military age, soldier and *habitant*, on the Illinois and Wabash.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike the two preceding years, the Indians of the Illinois did not go south in the autumn of 1735 to harass the Chickasaws. The Weas also stayed on the Wabash. When asked the reason, their spokesmen told Vincennes that "the disease that had been prevalent in their villages incapacitated their young men for marching."<sup>21</sup>

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18. Bienville to Maurepas, Feb. 10, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.1, 276-277.

19. Ibid., June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.1, 298; Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol.7, 98.

20. Bienville to Maurepas, Aug. 20, 1735, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.1, 265.

21. Bienville, to Maurepas, Feb.10, 1736, *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.1, 293.

Bienville, early in 1736, returned to New Orleans to oversee the completion of the boats he had ordered for the expedition. Before leaving Mobile he had determined that it would be necessary to postpone the departure of the principal column from February to April, because the supply ship from Rochefort, with mortars and salt, had failed to put in at Mobile as scheduled. This delay could prove disastrous, so Bienville, on reaching New Orleans, dispatched a second messenger up the Mississippi with instructions for D'Artaguette to delay his departure from the Illinois country until the end of April.<sup>22</sup>

Since there was presumably no need to hurry, preparations for the expedition dragged at New Orleans and Mobile. To increase his striking force, the garrisons at Natchez, Natchitoches, and the Balize were stripped. A company of volunteers were organized at New Orleans, while a company of militia drawn from the bachelors of the capital was constituted. These units were sent to Mobile. On March 4 Bienville, after having sent off the boats with the heavier supplies and camp equipage, started for the same destination. Chevalier de Noyon remained behind under instructions to bring to Mobile the four regular companies, as soon as the rest of the boats were delivered by the contractor. It was March 22 before De Noyon and his people arrived. Other delays ensued, and it was April 3 before Bienville embarked his troops and started up the Alabama River.<sup>23</sup>

Even with the sophisticated 20th century communications gear of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, it is difficult for the battlefield commander to coordinate the movements of two or more converging columns. If the converging forces fail to arrive on the field simultaneously, as planned, the foe is provided an opportunity to beat them in detail by concentrating first against one of the columns and then turning on the others. Thus, it may be seen that Bienville's

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22. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 292; Roy, "References Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 98.

23. Bienville to Maurepas, June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 298-299. The large boat laden with rice did not reach Mobile from New Orleans until March 28. Because of the high seas encountered half her cargo had been spoiled. This caused a delay, as Bienville had to have additional biscuits prepared to replace the rice. The army which left Mobile on April 1 included one company of grenadiers, 45 strong; eight companies of infantry, each with an average strength of 30 men; a Swiss company of 100 effectives, the New Orleans militia company, 45 strong; a company of Mobile militia, 40 effectives; the company of voyageurs, numbering 42. Exclusive of officers there were 544 enlisted men in Bienville's army.

plan of operations, while bold in its concept, was fraught with hazards. To reach the Chickasaw villages, D'Artaguettes force would have to travel by land and water over 450 miles, Vincennes' over 650, and Bienville's about 540 miles.

It was a cold January day in 1736, when a *canot-maitre* came up the Mississippi and tied up below Fort de Chartres. People were dressed in buffalo robes and worsted stockings and were gathered at the landing watching ice cakes whirl down the river. In the stern of the canoe was Captain Le Blanc, who carried orders that the campaign against the Chickasaw was to begin. Couriers were dispatched by D'Artaguettes to order Vincennes to rally his French militia and Indians and join D'Artaguettes down river. Orders were sent to Sieur de Monchervaux at Cahokia to bring his Cahokias and Mitchigamiras from the Illinois. The trappers and hunters from many a winter hut on the Kaskaskia and the Merrimac came in response to the call and there was a general burnishing and sharpening of arms and an outfitting of *batteaux* and canoes. Everyone hated the Chickasaws because of their attacks on boats passing up and down the Mississippi.

By February 22, the expedition was ready to start. After a special mass in the little church and a long procession to the landing, the old men, the women, and the children saw the 30 regulars in their white coats, blue epaulets, and hats, with the bright-eyed D'Artaguettes and the black-robed Father Sénat at their head, and the 100 militia in white capots and elk-skin leggings take to the boats. Then came 200 Illinois and Missouri Indians, properly be-decked in paint and feathers, in their log canoes.<sup>24</sup>

Sieur de la Buissonnière and Sieur de Monchervaux were left behind with orders to collect the warriors of the Cahokias and Mitchigamiras and lead them to Ecorce à Prudhomme, where the main force would halt and wait for them.

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24. Stuart Brown, "Old Kaskaskia Days and Ways," *Transactions*, Vol.10, 135-136.

25. Bienville to Maurepas, June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.1, 311. The Cahokias and Michigamiras were tribes belonging to the Illinois confederacy. Ecorce à Prudhomme was on the east bank of the Mississippi, below the mouth of the Hatchie, near the present town of Randolph, Tennessee.

Unknown to D'Artaguettes, the messenger with Bienville's dispatch, telling of the change in plans, had been delayed and had not yet reached the Illinois country.

D'Artaguettes reached Ecorce a Prudhomme on February 28. A few days later he was reinforced by Vincennes and his 160 Piankashaws and Weas. In addition, Vincennes had brought with him 38 combat-hungry Iroquois. While waiting for Vincennes, D'Artaguettes had his men erect a small palisaded fort. Scouts were sent to ascertain Bienville's whereabouts, and they returned with no information. About March 8 D'Artaguettes took up the march toward the Chickasaw villages. He purposely held down the pace to allow Monchervaux to overtake him and to wait for Sieur de Grandpré who was en route to reinforce the little army with his Quapaws from Post of Arkansas. Grandpré had sent 28 Quapaws ahead with instructions to send runners to notify him of D'Artaguettes's arrival at Ecorce a Prudhomme. But on overtaking the column, they were so eager for war that none wished to return, so Grandpré waited in vain for news of D'Artaguettes's movements. When the army took the field, Militia Captain Jolibois and twenty-five men, including three sick soldiers, were left to hold the fort. When it left the Mississippi, the little army consisted of 145 French and 326 Indians.<sup>26</sup>

Nightfall, on March 20, found the army camped on the headwaters of the Tallahatchie. Here a courier arrived with news that Bienville's column had been delayed, and it would be the end of April before it reached the Chickasaw country. D'Artaguettes was badly shaken by this news. He hoped that the message had been garbled, so he sent four scouts (three Illinois and one Wea) to see if they could ascertain Bienville's whereabouts. Returning, they reported they had neither seen nor heard anything of the main column. The Iroquois, distrusting this story, asked the commander to send out another patrol, consisting of four of their people, four Illinois, a Chickasaw that had been adopted into the Weas, and an *habitant*, Framboise. These scouts were to pinpoint the nearest Chickasaw village, and ascertain the number of cabins. When they returned, they reported that they had seen about 15 cabins on a hill, five or six on a second hill, and a small fort about 40 feet long by 30 wide. There might be another 30 or 35 cabins in the village, they cautioned.<sup>27</sup>

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26. *Ibid.*, 311-312; Caroline and Eleanor Dunn, "Indiana's First War," *IBSI*, Vol. 6, 107-110. In addition to D'Artaguettes, there were Lieutenants Vincennes, Sieur de St. Ange, Dugly, and Dutisné, Ensigns De Coulangue, de la Graviere, and Frontigny, 27 soldiers, 110 *habitants*, 38 Iroquois, 28 Quapaws, 100 Illinois, and 160 Piankashaws and Weas.

27. Bienville to Maurepas, June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 312.

Before determining his next move, D'Artaguette called a council of war attended by his officers and the Indian chiefs. The Illinois and Wea leaders, when asked what they would do, replied that they would "rely upon what was decided by the Iroquois, who are cleverer" in the ways of war than they. The Iroquois said they would follow D'Artaguette. He thanked them and asked their opinion. "Since you wish to know what we think," replied the Iroquois, "we shall tell you."

"The march, which we have just made, having been longer than we expected, has used up our provisions. We have no more . . ." [And if you intend to wait for Sieur de Bienville, who perhaps will not come for ten or eleven days] ". . . we run the risk of dying from hunger." [To guard against this danger] ". . . it is necessary to attack the Chickasaw village which the scouts have located. When we have taken it we will find means of subsistence, and [while waiting for Bienville's army] we can entrench ourselves in the fort that we have captured."<sup>28</sup>

D'Artaguette liked what he heard, and orders were issued to break camp and push deeper into the Chickasaw country. Nightfall on March 24 found the column within a league of the Chickasaw's fort. Calling a halt, D'Artaguette sent four Iroquois to reconnoiter. Shortly after they had disappeared into the woods, shots were heard from the direction of the village. D'Artaguette and several of his officers interpreted these sounds to mean that Bienville's soldiers were closing in on the village from the southeast.

It was 3 a.m. before the scouts returned, and reported that all was quiet in the Chickasaw village. Satisfied that the foe was in ignorance of his approach, D'Artaguette gave the command, "Forward!" The head of the column, by daybreak, had penetrated to within one-half league of the fort. Here the little army stopped, while the horses which carried the baggage were unloaded. The Iroquois objected, stating that the depot would be too far from the point where the assault was to be launched. D'Artaguette ordered the packs reloaded.

The French and their allies then felt their way to within one-eighth league of the village--Ogoula Tchetoka. Here the horses were unloaded, and Sieur de Frontigny, with five soldiers and 15 *habitants*, took charge of the reserve supply of powder, balls, flints, and baggage. Father Sépat, who had accompanied the expedition, remained with the rear guard.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Dunn and Dunn, "Indiana's First War," *IKSP*, Vol. 8, 109-111.

29. *Ibid.*, 111-112.

A typical Chickasaw fort was an enclosure surrounded by three stockades. The tops of each stockade were about one foot in diameter and were inclined outward. These stockades were loopholed. The outer palisade was of chin height, the middle about two feet higher, and the inner about 12 feet high. These posts, which were set to a depth of two and one-half feet, were braced at the back with forked sticks, so they could not be pushed down.

The cabins, which were clustered around the stronghold, were round and built of oak posts driven into the ground, the interstices between the posts being filled with mud and straw. The roofs of mud and straw were dome-shaped; the doorways were so low and narrow that one had to stoop to enter; the floor was level with the ground. Many of the cabins were loopholed.<sup>30</sup>

By 6:30 a.m. on March 25, 1736, D'Artaguette had completed his dispositions in a defiladed area. D'Artaguette at the head of his officers and soldiers, numbering 26 including himself, formed with 73 *habillants* the center of the army; the Weas, spearheaded by the Iroquois, were on the left; while on the right the Quapaws would precede the Illinois. At a word from D'Artaguette, the battle line moved out of the hollow. When within musket range of the fort, the Illinois and Weas let go a mighty war-whoop and charged the hill on which there were several cabins.

As they neared the fort, a Chickasaw chief stepped out of the gate, holding three peace pipes, but he was shot down by the Illinois and Weas. Four or five cabins were seized and the fort attacked. From the protection afforded by the other cabins and the fort, the Chickasaws blazed away at their assailants. The Iroquois took one scalp, and captured a Tunica squaw who had been living as a prisoner among the Chickasaws. The Weas captured a woman and the Quapaws a child. One of the Iroquois planted his flag in the middle of the village. Two English tracers made a sortie from the fort and knocked it down, trampling it underfoot. The Iroquois fired at the English.

After about 15 minutes, there appeared on a nearby hill 400 or 500 Chickasaw warriors had rushed to the assistance of Ogoula Tchetoka, which was one of ten Chickasaw and two Natchez villages located on the Pontotoc bluffs. Each village, unknown to the French, was located within easy supporting distance of several others. As might be expected, the

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30. D'Artaguette to Maudrepas, Oct. 14, 1731, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 297-308; Report of Picardville on D'Artaguette's Expedition Against the Chickasaws in Dunn and Dunn, "Indiana's First War," *IHSB*, Vol. 8, 139.

arrival of these reinforcements panicked the Illinois and Weas, and despite the pleas of their chiefs they fled. D'Artaguettes, seeing that he had been deserted by 250 of his allies, shouted for his troops to fall back on the supply depot. In the retreat he was wounded, when a musket ball struck his right hand, severing three fingers. Heartened by the flight of the Illinois and Weas, the Chickasaws hounded the little army as it fell back. Soon D'Artaguettes and his people found themselves encircled. A second musket ball struck the Captain in the thigh. Leaning against a tree, he strove by his words to rouse his troops." Many of those fighting nearby called for D'Artaguettes to save himself. His servant, Pantaloon, led up his horse, and tried, with the help of some of the *habitants*, to get him to mount. He refused, insisting that his presence would encourage his soldiers and Indians to repulse the Chickasaws. While he was exhorting them, he received a third gunshot wound in the abdomen.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the wounding of their leader, Vincennes and St. Ange, along with the other officers, fought grimly on. Vincennes and his Iroquois made a determined sortie in a vain effort to rescue D'Artaguettes. In the end they succumbed to superior numbers, and most of them fell near D'Artaguettes. The small number of soldiers and militia who remained, seeing that most of their leaders had been cut down, took to their heels. The Chickasaws pursued them for nearly four leagues, and would have overtaken them, if the rain, which commenced at 10 a.m. and fell in great torrents, had not put a stop to the chase.

The battle had lasted about two and one-half hours. While the Illinois and Weas had fled, the Iroquois and Quapaws had stood by the French, and because of their valor more than 20 wounded soldiers and *habitants* were able to reach Fcorce à Prudhomme on the evening of March 29.<sup>32</sup>

Two days after the battle, the remnants of D'Artaguettes's shattered army encountered Sieur de Monchervaux, who was en route to reinforce them with 170 Illinois, five soldiers, and eight *habitants*. Upon learning of the disaster, Monchervaux returned to the base on the Mississippi. Meanwhile, Sieur de Grandpré had reached the mouth of Wolf River with all his Quapaws, where he was impatiently awaiting word from

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31. Dunn and Dunn, "Indiana's First War," *IHSP*, Vol. 8, 111-115.

32. *Ibid.*, 115-117.

the warriors sent to ascertain D'Artaguettes whereabouts. On learning from Monchervaux of the rout, Grandpré abandoned the expedition and returned to Post of Arkansas. The Illinois, who had been the first to flee, crossed the Mississippi and returned to their homes through the land of the Quapaws, while the Iroquois and Weas accompanied the French when they returned to their posts on the Mississippi and Wabash.<sup>33</sup>

When Monchervaux questioned the Tunica squaw, who had been enslaved by the Chickasaws, she told him that her late captors had 1,000 warriors, supported by 100 Natchez, and 80 Shawnee braves. D'Artaguettes, she said, had been misled by his scouts into believing that the Chickasaw villages were in a single group. At the time of the attack, she had continued, there were eight or ten English traders in the fort at Ogoula Tchetoka, with about 20 others scattered throughout the other Chickasaw villages.<sup>34</sup>

On checking with the survivors, Monchervaux ascertained that included in the booty falling into the hands of the Chickasaws were 450 pounds of powder, 1,200 pounds of bullets, and 30 jugs of brandy.<sup>35</sup>

The Chickasaws lost no time in debating the fate of their prisoners. D'Artaguettes, Vincennes, Coulange, Dutisné, the younger St. Ange, D'Esgly, Tonty, Drevet de Richardville, and Father Sénat, along with 15 or 16 soldiers had been captured. It was Palm Sunday, March 25, and the prisoners were led to a mound in the center of Ogoula Tchetoka. It was apparent to all that they were marked for death. Father Sénat heard the last confessions of his comrades. He absolved them and exhorted them to offer to God with courage, like true martyrs, the sacrifice of their lives. Before mounting the pyre, the French were stripped, insulted, and cruelly beaten. After falling on their knees, they prayed, and as they were thrown into two pyres, they sang, in the same manner as the Indians, "who judged the valor of a warrior only by the strength

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33. Rivault to Maurepas, June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 313-314.

34. *Ibid.*, 314.

35. Name and Date "Indiana's First War," *IHC*, Vol. 8, 121.



or weakness of his voice at the time when they were about to put him to death." After watching Vincennes and his comrades die, the Chickasaws were heard to say, "Truly these Frenchmen are not women but men."<sup>36</sup>

Thus died the founder of the post on the Wabash that was destined to play a vital role in the history of the old Northwest and Indiana Territory.

Two of the prisoners were spared by the Chickasaws, who hoped to exchange them for one of their leaders, Coursacral, who had been captured by Bienville. One of these men, Drovret de Richardville, was escorted to the cabin of the chief of the village of Jantilla, and for the next

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36. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSP*, Vol. 7, 100-101; Dunn and Dunn, "Indiana's First War," *IHSP*, Vol. 8, 125-127; Mallet, "Sieur de Vincennes," *IHSP*, Vol. 3, 41-42. Among the French killed in battle or burned by the Chickasaws were:

Officers of the Regular Establishment

D'Artaguet, Commandant  
St. Ange, Lieutenant  
D'Esgly, Lieutenant  
Vincennes, Lieutenant  
Dutisné, Lieutenant  
Coulange, Ensign  
De la Graviere, Ensign  
Frontigny, Ensign

Soldiers

La Croix  
Francois Leyer  
Joseph Lelange  
Pierre Guibert  
Pierre Huot  
Pierre David  
Ives le Libris  
Nicholas Beaudran  
Joseph Duval

Priest

Father Sénat

Cadets

Serard  
Desmorieres  
Tony  
Duolos

Officers of Militia  
and *Habitants*

Desessars, Captain  
De la Lande, Captain  
Langlois, Lieutenant  
Bel Ecars la Graviere  
Cargueville la Braviere  
Richardville la Graviere  
St. Cire  
Carriere  
Rochefort  
Savot  
Chauvin  
Cochon  
Allart  
Bonvillain  
Va Deboncoeur  
Monte Jean  
Masson  
Bourmon

six months he was closely guarded. He was then permitted to live with the Chickasaws, but at the end of 18 months he escaped with the assistance of an English trader, and after a difficult journey succeeded in reaching the English settlements in Georgia. Governor Oglethorpe provided him the means to return to New France. Passing through the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York, he arrived in Montreal on June 10, 1739.<sup>37</sup>

Bienville and his army, their voyage up the Alabama and Tombigbee slowed by heavy rains and a powerful current, landed at Tombekbé on April 23. Additional time was wasted while Bienville awaited the arrival of his Choctaw allies at the designated rendezvous. By the 29th most of the Choctaws' chiefs had showed up, and Bienville, still unaware that D'Artaguet's column had been overwhelmed the previous month, prepared to push on toward the Chickasaw villages. Before doing so, he held a council of war on the 30th to condemn to death a sergeant and a soldier who had plotted to assassinate their officers.<sup>38</sup>

On May 2 the French finished unloading their big boats and transferring the supplies to smaller craft. The next day, the 3d, Bienville left Tombekbé. By the 22d the French had ascended the Tombigbee to the head of navigation. Meanwhile they had been reinforced by about 600 Choctaws. May 23 found the French erecting and garrisoning a small fort to protect their boats. Bienville, on the following afternoon, moved out at the head of the allied forces. The French carried with them rations to last for 12 days. Two days later, the 26th, the French and Choctaws launched an attack on Ackia, a fortified Chickasaw village, but in the sharp fighting which ensued they were repulsed.

Sensing that his Choctaw allies might desert him at any moment and not having any mortars with which to shell the fortified villages, Bienville decided to pull back. By the 29th the French were back at the portage, where they had left their boats. Bienville re-embarked his men immediately, but they found that the river stage had dropped, which slowed their run down to Tombekbé, where they tied up on June 2. The garrison

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37. Bayard, *History of Louisiana*, Vol. 1, 333. Brovet de Richardville was the younger of four brothers, officers commanding militia and Indians. Three of Brovet's brothers had been killed in the engagement.

38. Bienville to Maurepas, June 28, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 299-301. The two men, who were subsequently executed, belonged to the company commanded by Joseph Christophe De Lussac posted at Fort Tombekbé.

was reinforced and provided with supplies and trade goods to last a year, before Bienville pushed on to Mobile. While en route down the Alabama, Bienville learned from the Indians that D'Artaguette's column had been routed. This news was confirmed when he disembarked at Mobile on June 8.<sup>39</sup>

The failure of the campaign against the Chickasaws caused bitter disappointment in Louisiana and France. People failed to realize that any defeat inflicted on the Chickasaws, unless they were destroyed, would not remove the threat to the French position in Louisiana. What especially rankled was the double defeat inflicted on French arms, the losses in D'Artaguette's little army being particularly severe. Great care had been exercised in planning the campaign to insure that the soldiers would not suffer from lack of quartermaster's, commissary, and ordnance stores. But Bienville had made a fatal error in undertaking to execute a converging attack by two columns operating in a wilderness and half a continent apart.

Red Shoe, a leader of the Choctaws, was disenchanted with the French military. Visiting Mobile soon after the disaster, he told the commandant:

The French did not know at all the way to carry on war: we had been able to take only a little village of thirty or forty men; on the other hand we had lost many men without being able to say that we had killed a single one; our troops heavily clad marched with too slow a step and so close together that it was impossible for the Chickasaws to fire without killing some of them and wounding several.

The years 1737-1739 were ones of intense activity by the French in readying another army to send against the Chickasaws. Reinforcements were sent from the mother country. Bienville made preparations for transporting a large force up the Mississippi to a point west of the Chickasaw villages. From there, the troops would march overland using oxen, horses, and Negroes to carry their supplies. The expedition left New Orleans in 1739, and in August an advance base was established at Fort Assumption. This expedition, despite the great resources expended, failed to come to grips with the Chickasaws. Bienville returned to New Orleans, after negotiating a treaty with the Chickasaws.

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39. Ibid., 301-309.

40. D. D'Artaguette to Maurepas, May 8, 1737, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 347.

and drafted a number of letters addressed to the Minister of Colonies in which he sought to justify his actions.

Meanwhile, Louis de St. Ange (whose brother had died on the pyre at Ogoula Tchepoka) had succeeded Vincennes as commander of the post on the Wabash.<sup>41</sup> He was appointed at the solicitation of his father, but Bienville commended him as one who knew the savages and was known to them. He was destined to remain in command of the post for 28 years. The white population was small, and he was the beneficent *pater familias* of the village. He advised the *habitants* in their merry-makings, and signed the church register at their births and marriages. St. Ange was promoted in 1749 to the rank of captain with half-pay and remained commander of the post until it was surrendered to the English.

His position was not an easy one. Most of the Piankashaws who had lived around the post left it and joined kinsmen higher up the river at the Vermilion villages.<sup>43</sup> This left the fort without adequate protection and cost it much of its usefulness as a trading post. It could no longer be regarded as a barrier to the English who were now working their way down the Ohio. The Cherokees and Chickasaws, apparently under English tutelage, had established villages on the Ohio. In view of the circumstances, Bienville soon ordered the fort moved to the confluence of the Wabash and Ohio.<sup>45</sup>

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41. Bienville to Maurepas, June 29, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 3, 688; Walter B. Douglas, "The Sieurs de St. Ange," *Transactions*, Vol. 4, 142-143. Louis de St. Ange in 1736 was in command of a post on the Missouri. Fort Orleans had been destroyed by the Indians several years before and another fort had been built near the mouth of the Kaw, and it was there that St. Ange was stationed. His father had written Bienville asking that he be granted the position left vacant by Vincenne's death.

42. Vaudreuil to Minister of Colonies, June 5, 1748, *NAC*, C13, A32, 254.

43. Bienville to Maurepas, June 21, 1737, *NAC*, C13, A22, 103; *Illinois Historical Collections*, Vol. 29, 153.

44. Bienville to Maurepas, September 5, 1736, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol. 1, 327.

45. Roy, "Vincennes Identified," *IHSF*, Vol. 7, 104.

For some reason Bienville's orders were not carried out. Perhaps it was because the removal would cost too much, perhaps it was because the next year the Cherokees and Chickasaws pulled back from their threatening position on the Ohio.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps there was opposition to Bienville's choice of location, for the site he had chosen was low and unprotected. The next year Bienville wrote that Sieur de la Buissonnière, who commanded at Fort de Chartres, would go in the spring of 1738 to find the most suitable place for the new post. In 1740 the location had not yet been decided upon, but Bienville was still planning to dispatch an engineer to examine the ground.<sup>47</sup> He and Salmon had decided that it would be in the interest of France to abandon the Illinois fort and build a great stone fort on the Wabash, as an effective barrier against the English.<sup>48</sup> They estimated the cost of this work at 130,000 livres. In 1741 Bienville decided that the mouth of the Cumberland was the best place for the fort. The Indians of the Wabash country, however, refused to remove there, because, they claimed, the region was subject to flooding. Bienville suspected that Canadian traders were responsible for their objections, which put an end to his machinations.<sup>49</sup>

Bienville, his failure to crush the Chickasaws having sapped his prestige, was sacked as governor of Louisiana on April 27, 1742. It was the next year before his successor, Vaudreuil de Cavagnal, reached New Orleans and assumed his administrative duties.<sup>50</sup> The new Governor planned to send traders among all the Indian nations of his province and to do all in his power to make the fur trade flourish. He hoped by this means to increase French influence among the Indians, and thus to weaken the English. Another and very important part of his program was the establishment of a fort on the Ohio, to stop the incursions of the Cherokees, and to check the ambition of the English. This fort was

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46. Bienville to Maurepas, April 26, 1738, *NAC*, C13, A23, 48.

47. King's Paper, Nov. 11, 1738, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.1, 367; Bienville to Maurepas, June 22, 1741, *NAC*, C13, A35.

48. Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, undated, *NAC*, C13, A24, 12.

49. Bienville to Maurepas, April 30, 1741, *NAC*, C13, A 26.

50. "Chronology of Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville," in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.3, 13. Pierre Francois de Rigaud Vaudreuil de Cavagnal was the son of Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil

to be of stone and would become the key to the colony. Without it, he declared, the English could sever communications between Louisiana and New France. He hoped to bring down to this fort the Kickapoos and Musquitos who had expressed their willingness to abandon their homes at *terre haute*.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Vaudreuil hoped to add to these tribes the Shawnees, who, he wrote, had promised Governor Beauharnais of New France three years before, to settle with them at *terre haute*. Soon after he heard that the Shawnees had ascended the Ohio and were ready to fall in with his plan. A year later, however, Vaudreuil had come to distrust the Shawnees because of the proximity of the English to the Wabash, and urged that they be kept at Detroit.<sup>52</sup>

De Bailly, who had the confidence of the government, backed Vaudreuil's proposals by pointing out the many advantages of a post at the mouth of the Ohio. He declared that there the soil was rich; that buffalo were numerous; that it was an excellent place for trade with the Indians and to guard communications between Louisiana and New France. He maintained that the French could deliver goods by water to this spot more cheaply than the English could haul them across the mountains.<sup>53</sup> Apparently King Louis XV gave tacit support to Vaudreuil's plan, and permission to establish the new post, but no action was taken because the authority granted was not positive or because France was too heavily committed elsewhere.

During King George's War (1744-1748), the English penetrated deeply into the Wabash country. In 1751 an English hunter was captured only a short distance from the post.<sup>54</sup> The danger from the English became so great that in 1752 it was planned to send 3,000 soldiers to hold the Wabash and Ohio.<sup>55</sup> Boufflers, who had succeeded Vaudreuil as governor of Louisiana, felt as keenly as his predecessor the danger of an English invasion of the Wabash country. He, too, believed that it was necessary to build a fort at the mouth of the Ohio. He declared also that the

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51. Vaudreuil, (unknown), December 4, 1745, *NAC*, C13, A29, 66.

52. Vaudreuil, (unknown), April 8, 1747, *NAC*, C13, A31, 52.

53. De Bailly, (unknown), 1749, *NAC*, C13, A33, 219.

54. Vaudreuil, (unknown), December 30, 1751, *NAC*, C13, A33, 187.

55. Kerlerec, (unknown), June 1750, *NAC*, C13, A33, 79. Kerlerec had replaced Vaudreuil in February, 1753.

French must supply more goods for the Indian trade. The Indians were complaining of lack of attention, while the English had established six posts among the Cherokees<sup>56</sup> All of these proposals apparently presumed that the Vincennes post should be abandoned and a new fort constructed in a better location. Nothing was done to alter or forestall these proposals, and in 1763 Post Vincennes, with the signature of the Treaty of Paris, was forever lost to France. By this treaty, King Louis XV and his ministers surrendered France's vast colonial empire on the North American Continent to Great Britain and Spain.<sup>57</sup>

#### Comments and Recommendations

There is one major theme associated with the French post on the Wabash, and that is conflict. First came the struggle between the administrative authorities of New France and those of Louisiana for control of the vital Wabash country. Next, there was the war waged by Bienville to crush the Chickasaws and their allies. In most wars against the Indians, the Europeans emerged victorious, but the Chickasaws, with the arms and ammunition provided by the British, were able to defeat the French and their Indian allies and thus frustrate Bienville's plans to eliminate them as a threat to French control of the Mississippi Valley. This was the first clash in the long series that could not be resolved until the same power controlled both the Mississippi basin and the mouth of that great river. Finally, there was the long struggle between France and Great Britain for control of the North American heartland.

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56. Ibid., December 1, 1754, and April 1, 1756, *WAC*, C13, A39, 35, 149, 181, 190.

57. The post did not take Vincennes' name for a number of years after his death. It was first called Poste au Ouabache, and the first official title given was Poste des Pianguichats. After Louis de St. Ange assumed command it was called Poste St. Ange, which was frequently Anglicized to Fort St. Anne. It was also known as Little Oviatanon, which on English maps of the area appeared as L. Wiaut. About the middle of the 18th century the name Vincennes began to be applied to the post, but it was usually known as "the post." Dunn, "Mission to the Ouabache," *IHSP*, Vol.3, 256.

A study of all available source material has failed to answer several questions about the history of the post established by Sieur de Vincennes. For the first, and most important question, there is no answer, for it has been impossible to ascertain the exact location of the French fort. It was probably located within the boundary of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, near the site of Fort Mearnsville.

When funds become available, it would be desirable for the Service to send a trained historian to France to examine archival material there to see if additional information can be found relating to the site of Vincennes' fort. If this information can be found, an archeological investigation would be in order. A study of documents on file in France might also divulge information as to the exact date the fort was founded. Moreover, a study of local sites in French repositories would probably turn up additional information on the history of the post between the years 1756 and 1763.

With regard to Vincennes' relations with the Iroquois, secondary sources consulted failed to explain the presence of the 38 Iroquois who accompanied Vincennes on the ill-fated expedition against the Chickasaw. Here too, further study in France might reveal valuable information, not available here.



## CHAPTER III

### The British Years Bring No Change

Every French post was supposed to be a mission, but there were numerous difficulties and delays before there was a mission on the Wabash. Every plan for the establishment of the post included provisions for a missionary. In 1716 Crozat, who then held the charter for the economic development of Louisiana, suggested that as the Jesuits were already in the Illinois country, they should provide a priest for the Wabash.<sup>1</sup> No action, however, was taken at this time, probably because of the change in administration of the colony. A Jesuit, Father Nicholas Ignace de Beaubois, took charge as curé at Kaskaskia in July 1720, and on September 15 the Western Company filed a petition with the government, asking that a post be established on the Wabash. There were additional delays, and it was 1724 before provision was made for a mission, once the post was established.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Bishop of Quebec had ecclesiastical authority in Louisiana as well as in New France, the church establishments in the two provinces were all but independent of each other. The Western Company, as was to be expected, exercised a great amount of influence over the church in Louisiana. In 1722, as a result of friction between certain of the missionary orders, the Louisiana authorities divided spiritual jurisdiction among them. The region north of the Ohio was assigned to the Jesuits; the area south of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi was to be the spiritual domain of the Carmelites; the trans-Mississippi was to be the preserve of the Capuchins. This arrangement lasted about six months, before the Bishop of Quebec, dissatisfied with the work of the Carmelites, gave their district to the Capuchins. A year later, in 1724, as the Capuchins failed to provide sufficient priests to suit the Western Company, it extended the area for which the Jesuits would be responsible southward to Natchez. This move alarmed the Capuchins, who

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1. Status of Missionaries at the Different Posts, Dec. 1724, *NAC*, D2 D, 10. Beaubois was born in Orleans in October 1689, and at the age of 17 he entered the Society of Jesus.

2. Demands of the Jesuits, 1725, *NAC*, A22, 155-156.

demanded a guarantee against the loss of additional territory. In 1725 the jurisdictional dispute between the orders was settled on the basis of the Natchez boundary, and confirmed by an order signed by Louis XV.

From the time of his arrival at Kaskaskia, Father Beaubois had continued to advocate the establishment of a mission on the "Ouabache." By 1726 the Louisiana authorities were satisfied that the Capuchins would be unable to supply enough priests even for the reduced region for which they were responsible. On February 20 Bienville made an agreement with the Jesuits to supply missionaries not only for their own region but also for the Indians in the Capuchins' district, and, in addition to secure the establishment of nuns at New Orleans. To implement this greatly expanded program, Father Beaubois would go to France. To assist him Chevalier de Bourgmont assembled at Dauphine Island 22 Indian chiefs and other tribal representatives who were to accompany the Jesuit Father. Just before they were to embark, the ship, the *Bellone* sank at her moorings, and so frightened the Indians that only half a dozen of them finally consented to sail for Europe.

Father Beaubois and his Indians were well received in France. They were presented at court, and the Priest was successful in recruiting nuns and additional Jesuits for duty in Louisiana. Among the priests who accompanied Father Beaubois on his return to Louisiana was Father Etienne D'Outreleau.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the Louisiana Jesuits had formally asked the Western Company for the establishment of a number of missions, one of which was to be on the Wabash. The Company agreed to

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3. Dunn, "Mission to the Ouabache," *IHSP*, Vol.3, 255-265. *The Jesuit Relations*, Vol.67, 342; Vol.70 243; Vol.71, 167. The nuns sent out at this time found the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans.

4. Statement about the Church in Louisiana before the Introduction of the Jesuits, undated, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives*, Vol.2, 569-572; Poirier and De la Chaise to Directors Western Company, Nov.2, 1727, in *Ibid.*, Vol.2, 547. At this time the boundary separating New France and Louisiana passed through the Wabash country, crossing the Wabash River at Terre Haute.

erect churches at a number of points and to maintain ten priests in the province. One of these missions was to be placed "at the fort which will be established on the Wabash."<sup>5</sup>

Father D'Outreleau was named as the first priest of the Wabash mission in the fall of 1727. He embarked for his post with a "chapel" and materials for building a house and church. The boat in which he was traveling encountered ice floes above the mouth of the White River, and the missionary lost everything but his life. Father Beaubois, who now held the office of Superior for the Jesuits in Louisiana, estimated the loss at 6,000 livres and asked the Company for reimbursement. Governor Périer and Intendent De la Chaise countered with the suggestion that the Company replace the lost "chapel" and credit the order to the sum of 2,000 livres. The Governor and Intendent also relieved Father Beaubois from the necessity of sending a missionary to the Wabash, until such time as compensation would be forthcoming.

While waiting for a settlement of the Wabash losses, Father D'Outreleau was sent to the Chickasaw post, but in 1729 he was still listed as assigned to the Wabash. The project for a Wabash mission was now dropped. An official list of missionaries in Louisiana prepared in 1731 made no mention of the Wabash.<sup>6</sup>

In 1734 the Governor and Intendent of Louisiana wrote that Father de Guienne was on the Wabash on business for the Jesuits. A missionary there was badly needed, and they requested Father Beaubois to keep de Guienne there until they could hear from the Western Company. After this no mention of a missionary on the Wabash appears in the reports of the post until after Vincennes' death in 1736.<sup>7</sup>

Father Beaubois, shortly after Vincennes established his post on the Wabash, had a serious quarrel with Governor Bienville and was expelled from Louisiana. With his departure from New Orleans the campaign to establish a mission on the Wabash lost its most influential sponsor. We know there were priests stationed in the Illinois country during these years, and it may be assumed that the curé from Kaskaskia

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5. Beaubois, April 10, 1728, *NAC*, C13, A11, 189.

6. Périer and De la Chaise to Western Company, March 27, 1729, *NAC*, C13, A13, 273.

7. Bienville and Salmon to Maurepas, April 17, 1738, *NAC*, C13, A18, 103.

visited the post on the Wabash commanded by Louis St. Ange in the years before 1749. In that year the parish records for Vincennes commence with the marriage record of a trapper from New France and a French-Indian girl. It seems that there was "some sort of church establishment" at the post prior to that date for Abbé Tanguay has written that Father Pacôme Logrand, who died on October 6, 1742, was at that time returning from a tour of duty at Vincennes.<sup>8</sup>

During the period for which there are records, the priests at Vincennes were: Father Sebastian Louis Meurin (1749-1752), Father Peter de Jannay (1752), Father Louis Vivier (1753-1756), and Father Julian Devernai (1756-1763). All of these were Jesuits. When news of the terms of the Treaty of Paris reached the Illinois and Wabash country the settlers were alarmed for they dreaded being handed over to "the mercies of the Protestant English, the ancient enemies of their country." Many of them left the area, some removing to New Orleans and others across the Mississippi.<sup>9</sup>

The advent of British rule was not the most serious difficulty, however, confronting the clergy of upper Louisiana. Following the suppression of the Jesuits in France on June 9, 1763, the Supreme Council of Louisiana had issued a decree suppressing the Jesuits in the Province, forbidding their performance of Religious functions, ordering all their property except their personal clothing and books seized and sold at public auction, and the priests expelled from the territory. Fathers Watrin, Aubert, and Meurin were turned out of their quarters and sent down the Mississippi from the Illinois country, while Father Devernai was brought over from Vincennes to Kaskaskia and sent with them. The provisions and other property of the missions were seized and sold.<sup>10</sup> This was a rather high-handed procedure, especially when we realize that the Illinois and Wabash country had been ceded to Great Britain by the Treaty of Paris on February 10, 1763, but Pontiac's War prevented the English from taking possession. The Jesuit priests, except for Fathers de la Morinie and Meurin, were bundled on the *Minerve* and exiled to France on February 6, 1764.

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8. Snea, *Catholic Church in Colonial Days*, 576

9. J. P. Dunn, "Father Gibault: the Patriotic Priest of the Northwest," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Springfield, 1910), Vol. 10, 17-18.

10. *Jesuit Relations*, Vol. 70, 281.

Father Meurin, however, insisted on returning to his beloved Illinois country, which had been left almost destitute of clergy by the expulsion order. Finally, he was permitted to do so on signing an obligation to recognize no superior but the Superior of the Capuchins at New Orleans, and to hold no communications with Quebec or with Rome.<sup>11</sup>

It was a country all but deserted by its spiritual leaders to which Father Meurin returned. In 1698 the Seminary of Quebec had been given a grant of land at Cahokia. This had been reconfirmed in 1717. In 1763 this post was held by Father Francois Forget Du Verger, and when the Illinois country was ceded to the English, he sold the property of the Seminary at Cahokia--house, land, mill, implements, and slaves--notwithstanding the protests of his parishoners, and had gone down river with the Jesuits. The only priests left in the area were two Franciscans at Fort de Chartres--Father Hippolyte and Father Collet, and of these two, Father Hippolyte withdrew in 1764 and Father Collet died in September 1765.<sup>12</sup>

Without funds and with no expectations [of any] beyond the promise of the Louisiana authorities to solicit from the court an allowance of about \$120 a year for his support, Father Meurin traveled back to the Illinois country. The task was too great for one man, and Father Meurin saw both French and Indian convert straying away from the restraints of the church. He appealed for aid to New Orleans, to Quebec, to Paris, and to Philadelphia, but at first with slight success. In 1767 Father Meurin wrote the Bishop of Quebec, Oliver Briand, describing the discouraging conditions in the region. He reported:

The Post of Vincennes is as large as our best villages here, and needs a missionary even more. Disorders have always prevailed there; but have increased in the last three years. Some come here [Kaskaskia] to be married or to perform their Easter duty. The majority cannot or will not. The guardian of the church [Etienne Phillibert] publishes the banns for three Sundays. He gives certificates to those who

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11. Dunn, "Father Gibault," *Transactions*, Vol. 10, pp. 20-21. Father de la Morinie was permitted to remain in New Orleans until spring.

12. *Ibid.*, 21.

are willing to come here, whom I publish myself before marrying them. Those who are unwilling to come here, declare their mutual consent aloud in the church. Can such a marriage be allowed?<sup>13</sup>

In June 1767, Bishop Briand appointed Father Meurin his Vicar-General for the Illinois country. On August 7 he promised two priests in the spring. To aid his Vicar-General in upholding the cross in the Upper Mississippi Valley, Bishop Briand ordered Father Pierre Gibault to the area. Born in 1737 at Montreal, Gibault had been ordained at Quebec on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1768. He celebrated his first mass on the following day in the Ursuline Church, and served a brief stint in the Cathedral of Quebec, before being assigned to the Illinois country.

It was intended that Father Gibault should locate at Cahokia, but on reaching that village in the late summer a change in plans was made. Kaskaskia was the principal settlement, and the people there desired a young priest, while those at Cahokia wanted a veteran, so Father Meurin located there, and Father Gibault took up his residence at Kaskaskia. His first recorded service there was a baptism, which took place on September 8, 1768.<sup>14</sup>

Father Gibault, in accordance with a request by Father Meurin, was named Vicar-General for the region by Bishop Briand in 1769. It was the winter of 1769 before Father Gibault visited Vincennes. His journey was fraught with peril, for hostile Indians menaced the settlements. A frontier priest, in those days of danger, always went armed. He arrived at the post in safety, and wrote Bishop Briand:

On my arrival, all crowded down to the banks of the River Wabash to receive me, some fell on their knees, unable to speak; others could speak only in

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13. Shea, *Life of Archbishop Carroll*, 116-117. Phillibert was the village notary. He died on April 25, 1786. The British, during this period, even made an effort to secure a priest for Illinois. An aide-de-camp to General Gage on June 24, 1766, wrote Father Harding, "requesting him to recommend a priest of his religion, if he knew of any well-attached to His Majesty's person and government, to go to Illinois, the King's new subjects in those parts having repeatedly applied to him for that purpose." Carleton to Earl of Hillsborough, July 17, 1769.

14. Ibid., 124-125; Dunn, "Father Gibault," *Transactions*, Vol.10, p.23.

sobs; some cried out: "Father, save us, we are almost in hell"; others said: "God has not then yet abandoned us for He has sent you to us to make us do penance for our sins . . . Oh sir, why did you not come sooner, my poor wife, my dear father, my dear mother, my poor child, would not have died without the sacraments."<sup>15</sup>

Father Gibault remained at Vincennes for two months, during which time he not only revived the faith of the Catholics, but also brought into the fold a Presbyterian family that had settled there. The parishoners gave earnest of their zeal by erecting a new church--a wooden structure of considerable height that was to serve them for the next 15 years. The priest's house was a large one with a fine orchard, a garden, and farming lands attached.<sup>16</sup>

On his return to Kaskaskia, Father Gibault found that the Spanish, who were now in possession of Louisiana, in their settlements on the opposite side of the Mississippi, had no priests. He ministered to them until 1772, when Father Dagobert, the Capuchin Superior at New Orleans, sent Father Valentine as parish priest to St. Louis, and in the next year, Father Hilary to Sainte-Genevieve. This left Father Gibault free to devote himself to the country east of the Mississippi, but it also kept him busy, because Father Meurin was old and feeble. In 1774 Father Meurin received the crushing news from New Orleans that Pope Clement XIV had suppressed the Society of Jesus. Because of the expulsion order of 1763, Father Meurin was the only priest in the Mississippi Valley affected by this directive.

In 1775 Father Gibault visited Canada, and on his return reached Michilimackinac in September. After waiting a month without finding an opportunity to reach Kaskaskia, he returned and wintered in Detroit. He had visited Vincennes in March 1775, and did not return to that point until June of 1777--Phillibert officiating in lay capacity in the absence of Father Gibault.<sup>17</sup>

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15. Shea, *Life of Archbishop Carroll*, 128.

16. Ibid., 470. This would be the second church built at Vincennes, and it was the one standing at the time of Clark's 1779 capture of Fort Sackville. The church was located on the "Old French Cemetery" lot west of today's St. Francis Xavier Church.

17. Dunn, "Father Gibault," *Transactions*, Vol. 10, 24-25; Shea, *Life of Archbishop Carroll*, 186-187.

When the French garrison and its commandant evacuated the Illinois country in 1764, Louis St. Ange was called to take command at Fort de Chartres. St. Ange, who had been in charge of the post on the Wabash for 28 years, was understandably disappointed. His new assignment was certainly no promotion, for the reason that his authority would cease with the arrival of the British. Upon his departure for the Illinois country, he turned the government of Vincennes over to Detroit de Richardville and Sieur la Coudre. Their first care was to "maintain good feeling among the Indians to prevent disorder." In addition, they were to see that the citizens kept up their fences to insure that the cattle did not stray from the Commons to the grain fields nearby.<sup>18</sup>

Although Post Vincennes had been regarded by the French as a military post, it developed a civic life of which we have fleeting glimpses. The records of the village were reported lost "through rain, rats and insects," while they were being shipped to the Illinois country after the surrender of the post to the English.<sup>19</sup> The *habitants*, however, sought to maintain title to their lands by affidavits. One title was derived from a grant by Vincennes and confirmed by Bienville, though no date was given. Major General Frederick Haldimand stated that St. Ange had apparently made about 70 grants during the 28 years he commanded the post. Most of these had been confirmed by Kerlerec during the period he was governor of Louisiana--1753-1763. Some, however, had been confirmed by Vaudreuil, who was governor for ten years preceding Kerlerec. Jean Jacques Blaise D'Abbadie, who succeeded Kerlerec, confirmed 12 titles. The earliest dated title was 1749.<sup>20</sup> In 1758, Kerlerec had reported that there were 18 or 20 *habitants* beside the 50 men who constituted the garrison.<sup>21</sup> They supplied themselves by cultivating wheat, corn, and tobacco.

The farming methods were primitive. A large plow with wooden mold-board and flexible beam was used. It was mounted on two wheels, the large one to run in the furrow, and a small one on land. It was pulled

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18. Dunn, "Documents Relating to the French Settlements on the Wabash," *HRSP*, Vol. 2, 409.

19. Haldimand to Dartmouth, Jan. 5, 1774 (Colonial Office 5, 91, 35).

20. *Ibid.*

21. Kerlerec, Dec. 17, 1754, NAC, C13, A41, 136.



by oxen.<sup>22</sup> Most farming was undertaken on the Commons of 5,000 acres, adjoining the village on the southeast, which was enclosed with pickets. On the Commons, each villager had several strips which he cultivated. These strips were separated by balks or turn-rows. Each villager was compelled by the commandant or syndic to keep up his part of the picket fence. At times, perhaps after a harvest, the Commons was used as a pasture, as the cattle were turned into the stubble.

The village assembly usually determined all matters pertaining to the Commons. After Mass on Sunday, the assembly would meet in the churchyard and determine a day for planting, or a day for harvest. The syndic presided unless the subject for discussion pertained to the church, when the priest or his representative took charge.

The *habitants* were also much interested in trade. In 1754 they had threatened to abandon the settlement because restrictions had been placed on their trade. They protested and received the support of Kerlerec.<sup>24</sup> The fur trade on the part of the Indians consisted entirely of furs and pelts. During this period, traps were used almost exclusively in catching the forest creatures. The government never allowed its traders to supply the Indians with muskets or rifles.

In exchange the traders gave coarse cloths, blue or scarlet paints, knives, hatchets, traps, kettles, hoes, blankets, and in ever-increasing amounts, whiskey. The French had to buy these trade goods from a central trading house and pay high prices. So the English traders, in many cases, were able to pay higher prices to the Indians for their furs. This caused great dissatisfaction and worry to the Indians. They liked and trusted the French trader and tended to dislike the haughty Britisher, but their skins brought more from the British. There soon came to be two factions among the Wabash Indians, one favoring the British and the other the French. These parties came to war in 1751, and the British traders and their Indian partisans were driven out.

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22. Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana--From Its Exploration to 1922*, 3 vols (Dayton, 1928), Vol. 1, 27-28.

23. *Ibid.*, 27.

24. Kerlerec, Dec. 17, 1754, KAC, C13, A38, 118.

The French government in North America depended for its economic support almost absolutely on the fur trade. For that reason the trade was closely guarded. The Indian country was divided into districts comparing roughly with the divisions agreed upon by the tribes. To each district or tribe certain traders were given an exclusive franchise to trade and no one else was permitted to encroach. Each trader was encouraged to establish a post at his headquarters and encourage the Indians to travel there to trade. The trader lived among the redmen, studied their wants, and catered to their humor.<sup>25</sup>

At the time the Wabash country was ceded to the English there were probably 70 families living in and around Post Vincennes. There were 56 heads of families who signed a memorial to Major General Thomas Gage on September 18, 1772. As already noted, there were about 70 grants of land made by St. Ange. An enclosure with a letter from Gage to Lord Hillsborough stated that at "St. Vincents on the Ouabache there were 232 inhabitants."<sup>26</sup> Some had doubtlessly left with St. Ange to join their comrades who had crossed the Mississippi. In 1768, there were reported as remaining 232 inhabitants besides 168 strangers. They possessed ten Negro slaves and 12 Indian slaves. They had 266 head of horses, 295 hogs, and nearly 1000 head of cattle. Their grain on the Commons was estimated at more than 10,000 bushels, with their tobacco at 36,360 pounds. There were three mills.<sup>27</sup>

But agriculture was still not the chief means of livelihood of the settlers. One officer reported

at Post Vincent, there is no other Money passes but Peltry and generally Furrs [sic], but I can Assure Your Excellency that no other person Except Baynton & Company have given Bond that their Peltry shall be landed at the British Market. And it is certain that theirs is not one Twentieth part of the Trade in this country, all the rest of Consequence go to the French Markets.<sup>28</sup>

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25. Clarence E. Carter, *Great Britain and the Illinois Country, 1763-1764* (Washington, 1910), 84.

26. Gage to Hillsborough, Jan. 6, 1769, found in *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Society--Trade and Politics--Library*, edited by C. W. Alvord and C. E. Carter (Springfield, 1921), Vol.16, 483-487. William Hill, Lord Hillsborough was named in January to the newly created post of Secretary of State to the colonies.

27. *CISHS-The New Regime*, Vol.11, 469.

28. Wilkins to Gage, Sept. 13, 1768 (Colonial Office, 5.87, f.63-E).

The tide of the war that had begun in 1755 turned against the French with the fall of Quebec in December 1759. Earlier in the year the loss of Fort Niagara had compelled them to abandon Forts Venango, Le Boeuf, and Presqu'Isle and retire on Detroit. In 1760 three British armies converged on New France's last stronghold, Montreal, which capitulated on September 8. Colonel Robert Rogers left Montreal five days later with about 200 men in boats--his mission was to inform the commanders of the French posts on the Great Lakes that by the terms of the surrender they were to withdraw their troops and turn over their forts to the English as soon as possible.

While Rogers and his men traveled west by water, a second column led by Colonel Henry Bouquet was starting from Fort Pitt for Detroit. With Bouquet was a conspicuous frontiersman and trusted Indian agent, George Croghan, who held the rank of major in Sir William Johnson's Imperial Indian Department. Croghan had prepared the northwestern Indians for the march by sending to them emissaries from Fort Pitt months before the English column moved out. He, himself, with a band of friendly Indians accompanied Bouquet. Whenever the army encamped, Croghan assembled the neighboring Indians to reassure them and to establish friendly relations.

Meanwhile, Rogers had met Pontiac, a powerful leader of the Ottawas, on the south shore of Lake Erie, where, after some hesitation, this influential Indian chief gave his permission to pass on to Detroit. On November 29, 1760, the Lilies of France were lowered and the Union Jack raised. Detachments of the 60th Foot were sent to occupy Fort Miami on the Maumee and Fort Michillimackinac.

By 1762 English garrisons had been established at Fort Pitt, Venango, Le Boeuf, Presqu'Isle, Niagara, Detroit, Miami, Michillimackinac, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Joseph, and Green Bay. Great Britain, at this time, was following the expensive policy of maintaining in the conquered region numerous garrisons. Each of these posts was surrounded by virgin forests and their garrisons were often at the mercy of the Indians. The French were still in control at Vincennes and in the Illinois country. Colonel Bouquet planned to complete the work of occupation early in 1763 by leading an expedition down the Ohio. He asked Croghan to accompany him.

The English were unaware that at this time Pontiac was marshaling his forces for an attack which was to cause Bouquet to postpone his plans. Sir William Johnson and his deputies of the Indian Department had managed Indian affairs as wisely as possible under the circumstances, but they were discouraged and undercut by the attitude of their superior, Lord Jeffery Amherst. His policy was based on force; he regarded the savages with contempt and saw no need of disbursing money to placate them. Johnson and his people, on the other hand,

advocated a policy based on winning the friendship of the Indians by treating them as human beings, and in a kindly way adapting policies to their primitive ways. <sup>29</sup>

The English soldiers and the British traders were extremely offensive to the Indians. The soldiers, unlike the French, would have nothing to do with the redmen, refusing to allow them to loaf about the forts. Many of the British fur traders were men of the worst sort. They had the characteristic commercial disregard for sentiment. To these [base] individuals the Indian was an inferior being, to be cheated, outraged, robbed, and sold rotgut whiskey, as best suited their money-making efforts. Many of these people had no regard for the helpless settlers on the frontier, as long as they themselves escaped with their profits. If it were necessary to go farther to explain the sudden rising of the Indians in Pontiac's war, one could point to the long and close friendship of the French traders with the Indians, the result of which was to prejudice the Indians against the English.

Word of the Treaty of Paris, ceding all the country between the Appalachians and the Mississippi to Great Britain without so much as consulting the Indians, caused this sullen hatred to explode into war.

So well-planned and executed was Pontiac's conspiracy that by mid-summer of 1763, the English had been dislodged from eight of their forts in the area north of the Ohio. Detroit and Fort Pitt had been held, but they were surrounded by hostile Indians. Two thousand English soldiers, traders, and settlers had been killed or captured. Thousands of English settlers were compelled to flee, while traders were plundered of goods valued at nearly F 100,000. Much of the good work done by Bouquet and Croghan would have to be redone.

In August the tide turned against the Indians. Colonel John Bradstreet, with reinforcements, reached Detroit, while British regulars under Bouquet smashed the redmen at Bushy Run, east of Fort Pitt. The next year, 1764, Bouquet marched westward from Fort Pitt to liberate the hundreds of whites held captive by the Indians. A rapid march brought the column to the banks of the Muskingum in the heart of the Indians' country. Bouquet summoned the Shawnee and Wyandot warriors to his camp, ordered them to leave their chiefs with him as hostages,

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29. Albert T. Volwiler, "The Imperial Indian Department and the Occupation of the Great West, 1758-1766," *Transactions*, Vol. 32, 103; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol. 1, 36-40.

go back to their villages, and bring all the white people living among them. The Indians returned, bringing in 206 prisoners, who were reunited with their families. Bouquet, having accomplished his mission of freeing the captives and humiliating the war faction among the Ohio tribes, returned to Fort Pitt.

While the small English garrison at Oujatanon had been surprised and captured by the Indians, there was no attack on Vincennes. The reason the Indians did not attack Vincennes and the posts in the Illinois country was because the English had not yet taken possession. St. Ange had been governing the Illinois country to which Vincennes was attached for administrative purposes since the departure of Neyon de Villiers in 1764. He had orders to surrender the region to the English as soon as they put in an appearance. But because of Pontiac's War the British had been unable to take possession.<sup>30</sup>

The first attempt by the British to assert ownership was made by a force under the command of Major Arthur Loftus, who was ordered to proceed to the Illinois country from Mobile by way of New Orleans. His force of 351 men of the 22d Regiment as it ascended the Mississippi was fired on by Indians near Ellis Cliffs. Several of his men were killed, and Loftus abandoned the expedition. After another unsuccessful attempt to reach the Illinois country from Mobile, it was determined by the British authorities to send the next expedition down the Ohio from Fort Pitt.

By 1765 all the forts that had been lost by the English had been recovered, but the Illinois country was still to be garrisoned. Here on the banks of the Mississippi, two years after the Peace of Paris had been signed, the French flag still floated over Fort de Chartres, one of the strongest forts in the New World. At Vincennes, Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and neighboring settlements lived hundreds of French settlers and traders. Many of the Indians regarded the French as their friends and brothers. Pontiac had retired into this region determined to defend his last place of retreat against the hated British.<sup>31</sup>

To the Englishman of 1765, the Illinois country seemed as far distant and as difficult to occupy as the guerilla-infested rain forests

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30. Volwiler, "The Imperial Indian Department," *Transactions*, Vol. 32, 103; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol. 1, 36-40.

31. Volwiler, "The Imperial Indian Department," *Transactions*, Vol. 32, 103; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol. 1, 44.

of Vietnam seem to an American today. Thomas Hutchins, a veteran English officer who spent a number of years in the Ohio valley, considered it more difficult to conquer the western Indian confederacy than to capture a dozen La Habanas with their Morro Castles. Numerous desertions from the 34th Regiment occurred as soon as it was announced that this unit was to occupy the Illinois country.

Colonel Bouquet wrote General Gage, who had replaced Lord Amherst, that the only way to occupy the region was by negotiations, and he recommended Croghan as the fittest person in America for the task. Gage was distressed because his efforts to throw troops into the Illinois country had failed and was relieved when Croghan, upon his return from London, offered to undertake a mission to the Illinois tribes. Gage supplied him with £ 2,000 in gold and silver, and with presents valued at £ 1,200. He also issued orders to all military officers stationed along the road to Fort Pitt to permit Croghan's presents to pass unmolested, and to furnish him with provisions, and--at Fort Pitt--with battcaux.

Croghan left Philadelphia in January 1765, in advance of his train of 80 packhorses transporting his presents. Shortly after his arrival at Fort Pitt, news came that unruly frontiersmen of western Pennsylvania had assailed his train, burned or made off with most of his presents, charged him with corrupt relations with the richer and more prosperous Indian traders, and said they would kill him if he returned. These people objected to the imperial policy of making large presents to the Indians; of guaranteeing to them possession of their lands until voluntarily sold; and to the reopening of the Indian trade.

Charged with corruption, with his presents destroyed, Croghan faced his difficult task with serious handicaps. In the emergency, he went to the local Indian trading house of Trent, Simon, Levy, and Franks, and they repaired his loss by advancing to him Indian goods valued at over £ 2,000.<sup>32</sup>

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32. Volwiler, "The Imperial Indian Department," *Transactions*, Vol. 32, 103-105. Croghan was in England in 1763 and 1764. In his absence his chief assistant and future successor, Thomas McKee, carried on such negotiations as were necessary. Pontiac's conspiracy, Johnson's reports, and Croghan's visit to London resulted in a better appreciation of the work of the Indian Department and in a new plan for the management of Indian affairs based largely upon the policies advocated by the Indian officials.

Croghan, in the meantime, had sent Lieutenant Albert Fraser of the 78th Infantry to make a reconnaissance of the region. Fraser visited Vincennes and found "60 farmers who raised a considerable quantity of Wheat and Tobacco, and have a good stock of cattle." He observed that traders at the post looked toward New Orleans for markets for their pelts and a source of supplies to replenish their stock of trade goods.<sup>33</sup>

Learning that Fraser had encountered difficulties with the Indians which compelled him to go to New Orleans rather than returning to his base, Croghan started down the Ohio from Fort Pitt in two bateaux on May 15, 1765, accompanied by a party of friendly Delawares, Shawnees, and Senecas, and a few whites. It took Croghan 22 days to reach the mouth of the Wabash, where he found a breastwork, built--as he supposed--by Indians. The Wabash, he noted in his journal, ran through the "finest countries of the world." Hemp, he observed, might be raised in great quantities. He then dropped downstream a few miles to dispatch couriers to St. Ange. At daybreak on June 8, six miles below the mouth of the Wabash, his party was attacked by 80 Kickapoos. In the ensuing fight, Croghan lost two white men and three Indians, while most of his party, including himself, were wounded. A surrender was unavoidable, and the victorious Kickapoos plundered the party.<sup>34</sup>

Subsequently, the Indians confessed that they had made an error, and they expressed sorrow for what had occurred. They supposed, they said, the Indians accompanying Croghan were their bitter enemies, the Cherokees. The Kickapoos escorted Croghan and his people the rest of the way to Post Vincennes.

Croghan was destined to be the second Englishman to record his impressions of Post Vincent, as he called the post on the Wabash. On June 15, he wrote: "We started early and about 1 o'clock reached the Wabash," six miles below Vincennes. Proceeding up the west bank, Croghan sighted the village on "the east side of the river." He reported that it was inhabited by

about eighty or ninety French families . . . being one of the finest situations that can be found.

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33. Jacob P. Dunn, "Documents Relating to the French Settlements on the Wabash," IHSP, Vol. 2, 410.

34. P. T. Barry, "The First Irish in Illinois," *Transactions*, Vol. 7, 63-64. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol. 1, 40-41; George Croghan, *A Selection of George Croghan's Letters and Journals Relating to Tours into the Western Country--November 16, 1750--November 1765* (Cleveland, 1904), 120-143, 125-151.

The country is level and clear, and the soil very rich, producing wheat and tobacco. I think the latter preferable to that of Maryland and Virginia. The French inhabitants . . . are an idle, lazy people, a parcel of renegadoes from Canada, and are much worse than the Indians. They took a secret pleasure at our misfortunes, and the moment we arrived, they came to the Indians, exchanging trifles for their valuable plunder.

A Piankashaw village was located nearby. Post Vincent, Croghan reported, "is a place of great consequence for trade, being a fine hunting country all along . . . [the Wabash], and too far for the Indians, which reside hereabouts, to go either to the Illinois, or elsewhere, to fetch their necessaries."<sup>35</sup>

Croghan forwarded dispatches to St. Ange, but he was not permitted to write to the English commander at Fort Pitt. He was satisfied that the French at Vincennes were encouraging the Indians in their hostility to the British. Croghan left Vincennes on June 17, on horseback, for Ouiatanon. From there he continued on to Detroit, having spent about two months among the people of the Wabash Valley.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the British commander at Fort Pitt was anxiously waiting to hear the results of Croghan's expedition. On receipt of a message dispatched by Croghan from Ouiatanon, where in the period June 23 to July 25 he had negotiated a number of treaties of peace with the Indians, orders were issued for Captain Thomas Sterling to take possession of the Illinois country. Sterling was ready, and at once left Fort Pitt with 125 Highlanders of the 42d Regiment. Sterling's command reached Fort de Chartres on October 9, 1765. After surrendering his authority to Captain Sterling, St. Ange withdrew to the west bank of the Mississippi, leaving the country that was to be known as the Northwest Territory in the hands of the British.<sup>37</sup>

Within the next several years, a third English officer, Captain Thomas Hutchins, visited and recorded his impressions of Vincennes and the Wabash country. The Captain reported, "The Wabash is a beautiful River with high and upright banks, less subject to overflow, than any other River (the Ohio excepted) in this part of America." At its

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35. Croghan, *Croghan's Journals*, 141-143.

36. *Ibid.*, 143-150.

37. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 44-45.



At its mouth the river was 270 yards in width, and it was navigable, except during periods of drought, by barges and batteaux drawing three feet to Ouiatanon. Above Ouiatanon, except during periods of high water, the river was navigable by canoes to the "Miami carrying place."

Land bordering on the river was very fertile. There were large prairies, covered with "fine, long grass," while the timber was "large and high, and in such variety, that almost all the different kinds growing upon the Ohio, and its branches . . . may be found here." A silver mine had been located about 28 miles above Ouiatanon, on the north side of the Wabash. There were also a number of salt licks near the river. In his reconnaissance of the Wabash Valley, the Captain had seen coal deposits, and "plenty of Lime and Free Stone, Blue, Yellow, and White Clay, for Glass Works and Pottery."

There were two French settlements on the Wabash, Ouiatanon and Vincennes. The first of these was an estimated 150 river miles above the mouth of the river, while the second was midway between. At the time of Hutchins' visit, Vincennes contained about 60 settlers and their families. These people, Hutchins wrote

raised Indian corn--Wheat; and Tobacco of an extraordinary good quality . . . They breed horses (brought originally by the Indians from Spanish settlements on the western side of the River Mississippi) and large flocks of Swine and Black Cattle.

The settlers also traded with the Indians for furs and deerskins to the sum of 5,000 pounds annually. A good grade of hemp was raised in the lowlands bounding the Wabash. Grapes and hops thrived, as did apples, peaches, pears, cherries, currents, gooseberries, and melons.

Hutchins, although he was a captain in the 60th Regiment of Foot, made no mention of a fort at Vincennes. At the same time, he reported that at Ouiatanon there "is a small stockade fort on the western side of the Wabash, in which about a dozen families reside."<sup>38</sup> This constitutes strong evidence that by the late 1760s the fort established by

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38. Thomas Hutchins, *A Topographical Description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina* . . . (London, 1776), 26-29.

Vincennes in 1732 had fallen into disrepair and had been dismantled by the settlers, who used what timbers they could salvage to construct dwellings, outbuildings, and fences.

Great Britain at the close of the French and Indian War found herself in possession of a new region extending from the Appalachians to the Mississippi, which had to be integrated in some way with the Atlantic Seaboard colonies. This tremendous transfer of territory opened up tempting vistas to the colonial gentry on the Atlantic Seaboard, whose investments were usually in unsettled land. "Any person who neglects the present opportunity of hunting out good lands . . . will never regain it," advised George Washington, who was accumulating whole tracts of this wilderness, himself, from Pennsylvania to Florida. But the British home government moved to restrict the older colonies. George III assumed by a proclamation issued on October 7, 1763, direct rule over all the areas obtained from France and Spain, and created three new royal colonies: Quebec, East Florida, and West Florida. The territory north of the Ohio was not included in any one of these. An order from the King forbade the colonial governors to sell or grant lands to anyone beyond the headwaters of the rivers flowing into the Atlantic. This order came to be called the "Proclamation of 1763." Until further notice, this region was reserved as hunting grounds of Britain's Indian allies.

The "Proclamation Line," if strictly enforced, would have barred white settlements beyond the Appalachians. But it was not intended to be permanent. Croghan's descriptions of the fertile lands northwest of the Ohio roused the land-hungry English. Indian agents of the royal government at Fort Stanwix, on Hard Labor Creek, and at Lochaber, negotiated treaties which opened to settlement large areas of the "Indian Reserve." Promoters organized temporary colonies--Vandalia in 1769, and Transylvania in 1775.<sup>39</sup>

Vincennes and the fertile Wabash Valley drew the attention of the land speculators. The earliest land-claims about Vincennes rested on a reputed grant by the Indians. According to the citizens of Vincennes, the Indians of the Wabash country, at a council held in 1742, had ceded to them the region from Pointe Coupee to the mouth of the White River. At the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1755, the recorder of

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39. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol. 1, 45-46; *The American Heritage Pictorial Atlas of United States History* (New York, 1966), 77.

deeds had disappeared with the treaty. In the years after 1742, it was said that the Indians had expanded the original grant, extending it 40 leagues west and 30 leagues east of the Wabash.<sup>40</sup>

Louis Viviat, a merchant in the Illinois country, in 1775, undertook to negotiate with the Piankashaw Indians for the purchase of two large districts situated on the banks of the Wabash. Viviat acted as agent of an association of individuals known as the "Wabash Land Company." At Vincennes on October 18, he secured a grant from 11 Sachems of the Piankashaw tribe.<sup>41</sup> For 400 blankets, 22 pieces of stroud, 250 shirts, and an assortment of baubles, the chiefs ceded to the Wabash Land Company two huge tracts.<sup>42</sup>

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40. *American State Papers, Public Lands*, (Washington, 1832), 701.1, 36. A Congressional committee subsequently rejected the citizens claim on the grounds that if there had been such a grant, it had been made to the French Monarch, and in time it had passed to the United States in accordance with the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

41. Dillon, *Historical Notes of the North-West Territory*, 118-123. Associated with Viviat in this venture were: Governor Dunmore of Virginia; John Murray, son of the Governor; Moses and Jacob Franks of London; Thomas Johnson and John Davidson of Annapolis; William Russell, Mathew Ridley, Robert Christie Sr., and Robert Christie, Jr., of Baltimore; Peter Campbell of Piscataway; William Geddes of Newton Chester; David and Moses Franks of Philadelphia; William and David Murray, Nicholas St. Martin, and Joseph Page of the Illinois Country; and Francis Perthuis of Vincennes.

42. *Ibid.* The boundary of the first tract was to commence at the point where Cat River debouches into the Wabash, about 52 leagues above Vincennes; then down the Wabash to Pointe Coupee (12 leagues above the post). The land ceded was to extend to a depth of 40 leagues on the east side of the Wabash and 30 leagues on the right bank. The second tract was to commence at the mouth of White River (about 12 leagues below Vincennes) and continue down the Wabash to its mouth. Like the first, this grant was to extend 40 leagues east and 30 leagues west of the Wabash. The land between the two cessions was to be "reserved for the use of the inhabitants of Vincennes, with the same width or breadth . . . as is granted" the Wabash Land Company.

To strengthen the claims of the Wabash Land Company of which he was a promoter, Governor John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, of Virginia recognized the grant made by the Indians in 1742 to the inhabitants of Vincennes. The dreams of the promoters of the Wabash Land Company for huge profits from the sale of about 37,500,000 acres were shattered by the Revolutionary War. Following the Treaty of Paris, agents of the Company petitioned Congress for a confirmation of all or at least part of their claim on numerous occasions between 1781 and 1810. Each time, they were rejected.<sup>43</sup>

After taking possession of the Illinois Country in the fall of 1765, the British were in no hurry to occupy Vincennes, and nothing but the exigencies of another war brought it a garrison. The stockade posts had rotted down and disappeared. A more forlorn settlement could not have been found in North America than that in the Wabash country just preceding the Revolution. Jean Baptiste Racine de St. Marie, a notary, was the ranking official at Vincennes. To add to the misery of the *habitants*, General Gage was alarmed to learn that a great number of strangers had descended upon the post. In January, 1769, he declared that "Strollers and Vagabonds from Canada, Detroit, Illinois and other Places have assembled here, to live a lazy kind of Indian life or taken Shelter from Justice."<sup>44</sup>

Apparently, numerous reports were received during the next three years of French violations of rules regarding trade with the Indians. for in 1772, Gage issued a proclamation ordering all the inhabitants of Vincennes and the Wabash country to abandon their homes and to remove at once to some of the English colonies. A copy of this proclamation in French was forwarded to the British commander in the Illinois country, Lieutenant Colonel John Wilkins. On receipt of it, Colonel Wilkins was to man and arm "a galley, under the command of an intelligent officer, who will proceed to St. Vincents, assemble the white people and see that the proclamation is read to them. He will then demand an answer."<sup>46</sup>

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43. George R. Wilson, *History and Art Souvenir of Dubois County* (Jasper, 1896); Dillon, *Historical Notes of the Northwest Territory*, 123.

44. Gage to Hillsborough, Jan. 6, 1769 (Colonial Office, 87, 75).

45. Ibid. April 8, 1772 (Colonial Office, 90, 281).

46. Gage to Wilkins, April 8, 1772 (Gage Collection-American Series, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan). Colonel Wilkins of His Majesty's Royal Regiment of Ireland had assumed command at Kaskaskia in September 1768.

Gage's communication took three months to reach its destination. By that date Colonel Wilkins had left the service, and Captain Hugh Lord was in charge at Fort Gage, near Kaskaskia.

As the Wabash was known to be low at this season of the year, Lord determined not to outfit a galley. A Frenchman was accordingly entrusted with "His Majesty's order." On his return, the messenger told Lord that the inhabitants proposed to send deputies to Gage's headquarters to explain their position.<sup>47</sup>

The *habitants*, meanwhile, responded in a spirited memorial that they were not vagabonds but peaceful cultivators of the soil. They protested that they had no means of transporting their wives and children to the other colonies, "with only a vain hope of being received as other subjects." They declared that their land titles were derived from "his most Christian majesty," the King of France, and that they were protected by the Treaty of Paris. They furthermore denied all the charges Gage had made against them.<sup>48</sup>

It was April 1773 before the memorial reached Gage's New York headquarters. Gage knew that it was customary for the French to give post commanders in the Indian country authority to grant lots contiguous to their posts, which when approved by the Governor of the Province were deemed valid and registered. As the grants made at Vincennes were "dependent on the Province of Louisiana," Gage had written for the *habitants* "to transmit without delay a list of all settlers, to mention each by name, the date of the grant, by whom granted, by whom confirmed, and where it was registered." If they would do this, it would throw light on the justice of their claims. If it were then determined to "proceed with proofs," Gage would recommend that permission be requested from the Spanish to examine the archives at New Orleans.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>. Lord to Gage, Sept. 11, 1772 (Gage Collection-American Series, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.). Wilkins had been dismissed from the service for misappropriation of funds. Major Isaac Hamilton, Captain Lord's predecessor, acting under orders from General Gage, had destroyed Fort de Chartres on account of the ravages of the Mississippi. The courier was paid £ 200 for his services. Carter, *Great Britain and the Illinois Country*, 155-156.

<sup>48</sup>. Inhabitants of Post Vincennes to Gage, Sept. 18, 1772 (Gage Collection-American Series, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.). The memorial was signed by Ste. Marie, commanding.

<sup>49</sup>. Gage to Dartmouth, April 7, 1773 (Gage Collection-English Series, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.).

The distance was too great and no deputies came to provide Gage with documentary information regarding the *habitants'* claims or titles to the land in and around Vincennes.<sup>50</sup> After restudying the memorial, General Gage on May 5, 1773, wrote Lord Dartmouth, as Secretary of State to the Colonies, that he could not "venture to decide who have taken land without authority." He believed that there might be some of both kinds.<sup>51</sup>

Gage soon departed for England, and General Haldimand was left to handle the situation. He wrote Lord Dartmouth that the plan of removal was not feasible and that most of the derogatory accounts of conditions at Vincennes had come "from jealous and self-interested Traders."<sup>52</sup> He wrote the citizens of Vincennes that King George III would protect their rights under the Treaty of Paris and would grant them every opportunity to prove title to their lands. Those that appeared just, he would confirm. But in accordance with the Proclamation of 1763, no more grants would be made.<sup>53</sup>

On the eve of the Revolution, Parliament in 1774 passed the Quebec Act, extending the border of Quebec southward to the Ohio River. This placed Vincennes and the Wabash and Illinois country under the jurisdiction of the British commander at Detroit. The Quebec Act was construed by the Whigs on the Atlantic Seaboard as another grievance which helped bring on the Revolution.

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50. Ibid. Jan. 6, 1773 (Gage Collection-English Series, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.).

51. Gage to Dartmouth, May 5, 1773 (Colonial Office, 302). William Legge, Lord Dartmouth, had succeeded Hillsborough as Secretary of State to the Colonies in 1773.

52. Haldimand to Dartmouth, Aug. 4, 1773 (Colonial Archives, 358).

53. Haldimand to Gage, Jan. 5, 1773.

## CHAPTER IV

### Clark Invades the Illinois Country

The American Revolution, which began in April 1775, had not been in progress many months before the British began utilizing the warlike Indians against their rebellious colonists. The war was far away, however, and during the first two years had little effect on Vincennes and the other settlements of the Illinois and Wabash country. Although Vincennes was now a part of the Province of Quebec, it was 1777 before the British authorities moved to take charge. On April 19, Edward Abbott, who held the office of lieutenant governor and superintendent of Indian affairs for the Ohio country, reached the post from Detroit.

On his trip into the wilderness, Abbott was accompanied by a handful of French militia. A brief stop was made at Ouiatanon, where they found a large number of Indians. These Indians demanded gifts, and though numerous presents were passed out, the redmen were unimpressed, remarking that "their ancient Father [the French] never spoke to them without a barn full of goods." Abbott, however, did not believe the presents were "thrown away, as I left them seemingly well disposed to His Majesty's service."

Abbott, on his arrival at Vincennes, was compelled to draw on Mr. Dunn for large sums of money. After discussing the situation with St. Marie, he learned that "no person bearing His Majesty's commission has been to take possession." The *habitants* nevertheless received him with respect and expressed a willingness to obey his orders. A patrol was organized to make a reconnaissance toward Fort Pitt to see if it could learn anything regarding the Rebels' plans.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Abbott to Carleton, May 25, 1777, found in *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, Vol.1, edited by H. W. Beckwith (Springfield, 1903), 313-316. Abbott, who held a commission in the Royal Artillery, had been appointed Indian Agent for the Ohio country in 1775. Abbott drew on Dunn for £ 7,532 for his account and for 6,428 livres in favor of St. Marie.

By early July, Abbott had organized the villagers into three companies of militia, mustering 50 men each. Large numbers of Indians now descended on Vincennes and caused Abbott many anxious moments. As the old French fort had been dismantled and the village was extensive, Abbott had the two-story house in which he had established his headquarters stockaded. A courier was sent to Kaskaskia with orders for the commander in the Illinois country, Phillipe de Rochblave, to send four pieces of artillery from Fort Gage.

In discussing the citizens' title to their land, he learned that very few of them had deeds to their property, except for grants given them by James Ramsay. Nine years before, Ramsay had visited Vincennes as a representative of Colonel Wilkins and had administered oaths of allegiance to the *habitants* and had examined their deeds. Many of the villagers had destroyed their deeds after showing them to Ramsay, whom Abbott considered a scoundrel.

The latest information from Rochblave was not good. According to reports from New Orleans, Spain was preparing for war against Great Britain; Governor-General Bernardo de Gálvez had published an amnesty for all deserters who would return to the colors. Abbott was accordingly worried when he wrote the British commander in Canada, Major General Guy Carleton, pointing out that Vincennes, which he considered the key to Canada, was vulnerable. To ward off attack, it would be good policy for Carleton to rush troops to the Wabash country.<sup>2</sup>

As the year drew to a close, fatigue details composed of the Vincennes militia completed the stockade, which was designated Fort Sackville, by the Lieutenant Governor, in honor of George Sackville, better known as Lord George Germain. The stockade was quadrangular--the side next the river was 275 feet in length; the side facing the village's main street was 190 feet; the side fronting the church 210 feet; and the side fronting toward the southwest, 150 feet. Midway along each front was a salient angle. The logs constituting the stockade extended 11 feet above ground surface, while the gate faced main street. Abbott's quarters were located in the northeast quarter of the stockade.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Ibid., July 9, 1777, Colonial Office Records, "Q Series, (M.G.11, Vol. 14--Public Archives of Canada).

3. *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, Vol.1, 311; "Plan of Fort Sackville," prepared by Henry Duvermer, Dec. 22, 1778, found Indiana State Library, file No. 912.772, I Kn V 70 d(1770). In Lord North's



Abbott knew that he would have to leave the area soon, for the Indians would soon be returning from their winter's hunt, and would demand presents--ammunition, whiskey, and trade goods. These demands, in view of Sir Guy Carleton's call for strict economy, would have to be refused, thus rousing the Indians' ire. Rather than risk an unpleasant confrontation, Abbott determined to return to Detroit. Advised of the impending departure of his immediate superior, Rocheblave visited Vincennes in late January. There he urged him not to leave, but if he must--to come to the Illinois country and take command of Fort Gage. Abbott resolutely held to his decision.

Abbott left Vincennes on February 3. Four days before, the citizens had drafted a memorial, expressing hope that "the distressing divisions between the Mother Country and the Colonies will soon end." Once again, they declared "their attachment to the Government of His Majesty."<sup>2</sup>

After a "painful journey of thirty-three days through the woods," Abbott reached Detroit on March 7.<sup>6</sup> Within the month, he wrote Lord Germain, by passing the chain of command, enclosing a copy of the memorial. He called to His Lordship's attention "a poor people so entirely attached to the Crown, who now think themselves cast off from His Majesty's protection, but fierce in their allegiance to defend Fort Sackville against all enemies of Great Britain [sic]."<sup>7</sup>

Before the Revolution settlers from Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Virginia had been moving westward across the Appalachian watershed and squatting on lands legally closed to them by the Proclamation of 1763.

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government, Lord George Germain held the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies, and he opposed every measure, short of absolute submission, to end the War of the Revolution.

4. Rocheblave to Saldimand, Feb. 8, 1778, Draper Mss. 5 J 125, pp. 116-117.

5. Memorial to Abbott, Jan. 30, 1778, Colonial Official Records, 2 Series (M. G. 11, Vol. 15--Public Records of Canada).

6. Abbott to Carleton, April 25, 1778, found in *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, Vol. 1, 317-318.

7. Abbott to Germain, April 3, 1778, Colonial Official Records, 2 Series (M. G. 11, Vol. 15--Public Records of Canada). In October Captain Abbott was ordered to the West Indies.

They trickled into western Pennsylvania and Virginia, and into the area that was destined to be known as Kentucky. These pioneers were a rugged lot, intent on owning and clearing land, and possessed of a callous disregard for the rights of any Indians encountered. The Indians of the Ohio Valley struck back in an effort to check this tide, and Lord Dunmore's War resulted. The Indians suffered a crushing defeat at Point Pleasant, Virginia, in 1774.

The Indians, with the British and Americans at each others throats, were destined to become pawns in this conflict. Now the Indians of the Ohio Valley were able to find strong allies--the British on the Great Lakes. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Hamilton had assumed command at Detroit in 1776. He urged on Lord Germain a policy of furnishing the Indians arms and ammunition, as well as daring leaders, and directing them to carry the war to the Pennsylvania and Virginia frontiers. There was no need for the chiefs to question this support. In former years the French of New France and Louisiana had armed them to war against the intruders who were pushing westward across the Piedmont and into the mountains. Hamilton urged his partisan leaders to guard the Ohio and destroy all Americans attempting to pass.

Among the American frontiersmen there was one sentiment toward the Indians--revenge. For awhile their vengeance fell on the Indians alone. Simon Kenton, Lewis Wetzel, and Adam Poe searched out the Indians as they would wild animals. This failed to stop the raids, and the border warfare became more terrible as each side extracted life for life. One man, however, recognized that the source of the frontier devastations was the the presence of the English posts in the Northwest, and he made plans for their capture. He was George Rogers Clark.<sup>8</sup>

Clark was born in Albemarle County, Virginia, on November 19, 1752. He received little formal schooling, but he learned surveying from his grandfather. His physical appearance commanded respect. Big--six feet two inches tall--rugged, auburn haired, with hazel eyes, Clark stood out wherever he went.<sup>9</sup> He was too young to have participated in the French and Indian War, where General George Washington received much of his training. His training as a surveyor, however, enabled him to become acquainted with details of terrain. Little is known of his role in Lord Dunmore's

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8. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol.1, 52-54; *The American Heritage Book of the Revolution* (New York, 1958), 298-299.

9. "Gen. G. R. Clark--Size--Character," Draper Mss, 35 J 162, p.155.

War, but he was either a company commander or served on Lord Dunmore's staff. At the close of that conflict, he was offered a commission in His Majesty's service, but declined. For several years preceding the conquest of the Illinois country, he spent considerable time going and coming between his home in Virginia and the new lands in Kentucky, where he took part in several Indian skirmishes. At this period of his life, he was chiefly interested in acquiring land for himself and others in the new country.<sup>10</sup>

When a county government was organized by the Kentuckians, Clark represented it in the Virginia House of Burgesses. It was not primarily as a legislator that he visited Williamsburg in the closing days of 1777. In his travels west of the mountains, he had conceived the daring scheme of wresting the country north of the Ohio from the British. There was, he knew, a British garrison at Detroit of about 300 regulars, besides 600 French militia and Indian allies. From Michilimackinac to the Ohio River there were militia companies in varying stages of organization. At Vincennes there were known to be three militia companies, while at Kaskaskia and at the other villages in the Illinois country Rochblave--the commandant--had organized the *habitants* into military units. The mission of these organizations was for protection against the Indians as well as service under the Crown. The French had taken an oath of allegiance to His Majesty, but their patriotism was suspect. There were approximately 8,000 Indian warriors in the country north of the Ohio, most of whom the British counted as their allies.<sup>11</sup>

Many of these warriors were organized into war parties to raid the western settlements. Rewards were offered by Lieutenant Governor Hamilton for prisoners, and the Americans accused him of also paying for scalps, thus giving him the name, "Hair-Buyer." Clark, during 1777, investigated the strength and organization of the foe by sending spies into their country. It was his opinion that he could conquer it, including Detroit, with 500 men.<sup>12</sup> He counted on talking the French and some of the Indians into joining him against the British.

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10. James A. James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Chicago, 1928), 8-29.

11. *George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois*, Milo M. Quaife, editor (Chicago, 1920), Vol. 15.

12. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, found in *Collections of the Illinois Historical Society* (Springfield, 1912), Vol. 8, 116.

Although Clark's education was limited, he possessed persuasive powers of a high order. Meeting with Governor Patrick Henry on December 10, the big, young surveyor succeeded in winning his sympathy for his pet project. After calling into consultation Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and Henry Lee, Governor Henry, on January 2, 1778, prevailed on the Burgesses to vote Clark authority to raise seven companies of militia of 40 men each and to draw on the State for \$1,200. Clark thus prepared not only to put an end to the Indian raids, but at the same time to conquer for Virginia a western empire.

Colonel Clark, as he had been commissioned, was given two sets of instructions. One, intended for the public, especially for the Burgesses, directed him to proceed to Kentucky with his troops to defend the settlements against the Indians. The other directed him to organize his army with all secrecy and dispatch for the capture of Kaskaskia and Vincennes and, if possible, Detroit itself. With characteristic alacrity Clark made his preparations and leaving Williamsburg, he started for Fort Pitt on January 4, 1778.<sup>13</sup>

He authorized his old friends and neighbors, Leonard Helm and Joseph Bowman, each to raise a company in Virginia and join him on February 1 at Redstone, Pennsylvania. William Smith was sent to recruit a company on the Holston and join the expedition at the Falls of the Ohio. Captain William Harrod raised a company--composed partly of men from Kentucky and the rest from western Pennsylvania. A sizeable force was soon recruited, but because of the jealousy of Virginia and Pennsylvania and the opposition to sending troops so far away, the members were reduced to 150. He expected 200 men from the Holston River country, but politics played a hand here too in persuading many not to serve. Clark finally set out in flatboats from Redstone, Pennsylvania, on May 12, 1778. His ability to pick competent subordinates is shown by the selection of his three company commanders--Joseph Bowman, Leonard Helm, and William Harrod, each of whom had previously proven his ability as an Indian fighter and leader.<sup>14</sup> Each soldier was a skilled hunter, a deadly marksman with his flintlock rifle, and inured to long marches and all kinds of hardships. Nearly all were Virginians, the leaders as well as most of the men were old acquaintances. They were fearless, and yet, like most frontiersmen, they were cautious.

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13. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol.1, 53-54; *American Heritage Book of the Revolution*, 299.

14. Henry to Clark, Jan. 2, 1778, and Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, found in *CHS*, Vol. 8, pp. 34, 117.

Brief stops were made at Fort Pitt and Wheeling to take on supplies. The little army stopped at a small fort at the mouth of the Kenawha and learned that 200 Indians had attacked the post the previous day. Clark, keeping his mind on his mission, refused to be diverted and permission was denied his men to pursue the war party. Continuing downstream, the little army reached the Falls of the Ohio on June 1. Besides the soldiers, there were in the flatboats about 20 families who had wished to emigrate to Kentucky and had availed themselves of this opportunity to avoid marauding Indians who infested the area west of Fort Pitt. Some of these were families of soldiers enlisted by Clark's lieutenants. Clark, after reconnoitering the area, determined to fortify Corn Island, at the head of the Falls. This would constitute a base to withdraw to in the event of a repulse, and here he would still be able to shield the Kentucky settlements from the foe.

Disappointed in the small number of men from the Holston country who reported to him, he found it necessary to call for aid from the Kentucky County government. In response to this appeal, Captain John Montgomery raised a company. Clark now told his men that he planned to advance against Kaskaskia, and some of them protested that they had enlisted for the defense of Kentucky and would not proceed a step farther. Clark was a man of action. To cope with possible mutiny he placed guards over the boats, and patrolled the camp to prevent the escape of those desiring to desert. A few of the Holston country men succeeded in slipping through the cordon, but most of these were quickly apprehended.<sup>15</sup>

While at the Falls, Clark received word of the alliance between the United States and France. This made him even more hopeful about his chances of winning over the *habitants* of Vincennes and the Illinois country.

Clark's little army cast off from the Falls on June 24, 1778, a date made certain by the eclipse of the sun which occurred that morning. After subtracting losses through desertion and counting the new men recruited in Kentucky, the force mustered 175 officers and men. No horses or wagons were taken; the only supplies were those that could be carried on the troops' backs. The men had received little formal military train-

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15. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 220-223.

ing which is considered so essential to success in modern war. During their month at the Falls, the companies were "drilled and trained in such basic duties as guard."<sup>16</sup> There were no uniforms. The men dressed in frontier garb of long fringed coat, leather breeches and moccasins, with headgear of wide-brimmed hat or coon-skin cap. Clark's soldiers were a hardy group and capable of taking care of themselves in the wilderness. Their commander was a born leader, who soon impressed his will upon them.<sup>17</sup>

Traveling in flatboats, with the oars double-manned, the little army dropped down the Ohio, which was at a good stage. Running day and night, they reached the mouth of the Tennessee in four days. Here they encountered a party of Virginia hunters returning from Kaskaskia. Clark questioned them and learned that there were no British troops on the upper Mississippi and that the French militia were ignorant of his approach. Not wishing to set the hunters free and risk their giving information to the foe, Clark persuaded them to join him. Ten miles farther down the Ohio, the expedition went ashore three miles above abandoned Fort Massac, where the boats were hidden in a ravine.<sup>18</sup> Clark had determined to march overland. If he had continued down the Ohio to its mouth and then up the Mississippi, the foe would have had ample warning, as this was the route followed by most travelers and hunters.

Clark chose a difficult and little frequented route to Kaskaskia, 120 miles to the northwest. For the first 50 miles, the country was very difficult and the men were exhausted in boating their way ahead through the underbrush. The column now entered a vast prairie, where there was danger that it would be discovered. On the third day, Guide John Saunders became confused and lost his way, and for a few hours it seemed as if the expedition would fail for want of knowledge of the proper route.<sup>19</sup> Clark was worried, fearing that Saunders might be

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16. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 220-223.

17. Temple Bodley, *George Rogers Clark* (Boston, 1926), 61.

18. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 118-119.

19. Saunders was one of the Virginia hunters who had joined the expedition at the mouth of the Tennessee.

a spy, intent on leading the column into an ambush. Saunders was told that he would be sent out under guard to find the trace and if he failed he would be put to death. The trail was quickly rediscovered, and henceforth the only difficulty that marred the march was a scarcity of game caused by a drought.

On the evening of July 4, 1778, after six days on the march, the last two without rations, the army reached the Kaskaskia River about one mile above and across from the village. Clark questioned a French family living here, learning that the village militia was well organized but did not suspect his coming. He soon found sufficient boats to cross his troops to the west side of the Kaskaskia.<sup>20</sup>

To capture Kaskaskia and Fort Gage, Clark employed one of the most important principles of war--surprise. In addition, through careful planning of details, he succeeded in creating the impression, once he was discovered, that resistance was useless, because he was advancing in overwhelming force. As the surrounding country was inhabited by Indians who were friendly to the French, it is difficult to understand how the Virginians were able to enter the village and fort undetected.

By midnight, the army was across the river and prepared for attack. Clark divided his force--one-half to assail Kaskaskia and the other to capture Fort Gage which commanded the village. He led the detachment against the fort, where the men arrived without the knowledge of the militia. The gate was open and unguarded, and the Americans proceeded to take possession. Philippe de Rocheblave, the commandant, was rudely awakened and made a prisoner. The other half of the army marched into Kaskaskia, where it was divided into four- or five-man teams to patrol the streets. The soldiers warned all inhabitants that anyone found outside his cabin would be shot. Within 15 minutes, Clark, without firing a shot, was in possession of the village and fort. Only when an army is opposed by an improperly trained and led enemy can such a bloodless victory be scored.<sup>21</sup> In addition, there is strong evidence that several of Rocheblave's enemies joined Clark after dark and acted as guides.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Bowman to Hite, July 30, 1778, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 613.

21. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 120.

22. *Philippe de Rocheblave and the Rocheblave Papers*, Fergus Historical Series, No. 34.

To maintain the initiative, Clark sent Captain Bowman with 30 men, mounted on horses impressed from the villagers, to seize the other towns to the northwest. Starting early on the 5th, Bowman's column occupied Prairie du Rocher about 15 miles distant. The same evening St. Phillipe, about nine miles farther, was reached, where the news had not yet arrived that the Americans had invaded the Illinois country. Bowman used well the military maxim of never allowing enemy civilians to precede troops. On the next day, the 6th, his little force galloped into Cahokia, 60 miles from Kaskaskia, and received the surrender of the villagers.<sup>23</sup> The French settlements along the Mississippi in the Illinois country were in Clark's power within 48 hours.

Clark was an able diplomat as well as a skillful soldier. He realized that his force was insufficient to hold a country occupied by a hostile population. At first, he encouraged the people to believe all the stories the British had told them of the ferocious Big Knives. After terrifying them to the point of begging for their lives, he announced that he would spare them if they would take the oath of fidelity to the United States, which everyone promptly did.<sup>24</sup>

As has usually been the case in rural French villages, the priest was the most influential man in the community. Many of the *habitants* were at first not willing to submit, but Father Gibault, better informed as to the dispute between Great Britain and her colonies, saw that the interest of his flock required that they side with the Virginians--a wise decision as the Illinois country, exposed to attack by the Continental troops on the east and the Spaniards on the west, could not depend on British aid. Among all the villagers, now that their old military leaders were gone, no man's influence was so important as Father Gibault's. For ten years he had ministered to the spiritual wants of his people, had advised them in this business and other affairs, had baptized their children, had given consolation to their sick, and had buried their dead. The astute American leader understood this, and was pleased when, after the capture of Kaskaskia, the Priest came with a half-a-dozen elderly citizens to ask the privilege of assembling his people in the church that they might prepare for their separation.<sup>25</sup>

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23. Bowman to Hite, July 20, 1778, found in *CHS*, Vol. 8, 613.

24. John Reynolds, *Pioneer History of Illinois* (Chicago, 1887), 93, 97.

25. Dunn, "Father Gibault," *Transactions*, Vol. 10, 25.



When Clark informed Father Gibault that his people would not be molested in any manner, not even in the practice of their religion, the Priest felt that it would be to his interest to aid the Virginians. In his promise of religious toleration, Clark was wiser than even he realized, for the church had suffered under British rule. While the French authorities of Louisiana were responsible for the expulsion of the Jesuits, it had occurred after the country had been subjected to Great Britain. Moreover, church property, and especially that of the Seminary at Cahokia, which had been illegally disposed of, had not been restored. The British commandants had been repeatedly asked to restore the Cahokia mission property, but they had refused.<sup>26</sup>

From the time Clark made his declaration of religious toleration, Father Gibault was heart and soul with the Americans.<sup>27</sup> When he heard that Clark was planning an attack on Vincennes, he volunteered to go there and win the French over to the American cause. Clark had brought with him from the Falls a copy of the Treaty of Alliance between France and the United States, which was now of great assistance in dealing with the *habitants*. Father Gibault informed Clark that Lieutenant Governor Abbott had returned to Detroit and that there were no British troops at Vincennes. He believed that he could travel to that post and, by presenting a copy of the treaty and explaining the courteous treatment received by the Kaskaskians, win the inhabitants over to the Virginians' side. Father Gibault, not wishing to seem to act in other than a spiritual capacity, asked that some one be allowed to accompany him to act as a political agent. He assured Clark that he would personally oversee all details. Dr. Jean Laffont was selected to accompany the Priest. Clark prepared an address to the citizens of Vincennes, authorizing and directing<sup>28</sup> them to organize their own militia and garrison at Fort Sackville.

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26. Ibid., 26.

27. Ibid., 26-27.

28. Although Father Gibault has received much of the credit for the first capture of Vincennes, the address to the inhabitants, as well as the instructions, were given by Dr. Laffont. Ten years later, in a letter to his superior, the Bishop of Quebec, Father Gibault denied having taken any hand in getting the people of Vincennes to repudiate their oath of allegiance to His Majesty.

The little party set out from Kaskaskia on July 14, to visit and reconnoiter Vincennes--a post Clark had feared to approach a fortnight earlier. The British, along the Great Lakes, had not yet recovered from the effect of Major General John Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga the previous October. They were bracing to be ready for a thrust from Fort Pitt toward Detroit. Troops had been recalled, and British prestige with the Indians of the Northwest had ebbed. Father Gibault and Laffont accordingly encountered no difficulty in reaching their goal. A few partisans had been left by Abbott, and they withdrew as soon as they learned the purpose of the mission. Two days after he reached Vincennes, Father Gibault called his parishioners together in the village church, adjoining Fort Sackville, where he administered to them the oath of allegiance to the United States. By August 1 Father Gibault and Laffont were back at Kaskaskia with the welcomed news.

Colonel Clark now redeployed his small command. His instructions from Governor Henry were so phrased that if he wished he could have dismantled the forts and have retired with the captured cannon to the Falls of the Ohio, but this action would have reduced the enterprise from a sweeping conquest to an unexpectedly successful raid. Such an idea was foreign to Clark. To hold the vast territory gained would require at least a regiment, and the period for which the men had enlisted was about to expire. He prevailed on most to re-enlist, and sent home those who refused. The billets of those who left the service were filled by French volunteers. To hold his gains, Clark left his cousin, Captain Bowman, at Cahokia, while Captain John Williams took charge at Fort Gage. The most dangerous of the detached assignments would be given to his most experienced officer, Captain Helm. A Virginian, Helm was perhaps 40 years old, and had spent most of his life as a scout on the frontier. He understood Indians and was suited for the difficult command at Vincennes.<sup>29</sup>

Clark, himself, would deal with the Indians of the Illinois country. Riding to Cahokia, he called the tribes to a conference. After several weeks of negotiations he gained the support of many of them. As they greatly outnumbered his force, it was only through his thorough understanding of human nature that he was able to bring them over to his side. Through frequent visits to the Spanish lieutenant governor, Francisco De Leyba at St. Louis, Clark gained his wholehearted support of the American cause.<sup>30</sup>

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29. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, Vol.1, 59-61.

30. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 238.

On reaching Vincennes, Captain Helm and his people pulled down the British flag left at Fort Sackville by Lieutenant Governor Abbott, and after wrapping it around a stone, dropped it into the Wabash. The Indians were then called together, and Helm presented the chiefs with two belts of wampum, one red, and the other green. They were told that if they were disposed for war to take the red belt--if for peace, the green.

Old Tobacco of the Piankashaws told the Virginians that "they did not speak to be understood, that [he] never saw an instance or heard tell of such a thing, as at a conference to present good and evil at one and the same time," and he kicked the belts. Lagesse, a Potawatomi leader, replied that if he "had not listened [sic] to the advice of the old men of his nation, and considered the situation of his wife and children, he would before then have struck a tomahawk in some of their heads."

"You are young and foolish," Helm retorted, and went on to say that the Virginians would push on to

Detroit thro' Indian country, that if they found any fires (Indian Villages) in their road, they should tread them out, and if any barriers should be raised (forts built) to stop the road, they should throw them down--That if any Indians stood in the way they might chance to be wounded by the splinters--that on their arrival at Detroit they should shut up their (Governor Hamilton) like a hog in a penn [sic] to fatten, and then when he should be enclosed long enough & fattened they would throw him into the river--That they should get a great reinforcement from the falls of the Ohio, and with their friends at the Illinois [sic], they should make six hundred men.

The Indians answered that it was unnecessary for "such brave men, who could with so much ease tread out their fires, to wait for reinforcements . . ." <sup>31</sup>

While many of the Piankashaws made peace with the Americans, the tribes of the upper Wabash remained hostile. Clark thereupon reinforced Helm with a detachment led by Lieutenant John Bailey.

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31. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark in the American Revolution With the Unpublished Journal of Lieut. Col. Henry Hamilton*, edited by John D. Barnhart (Crawfordsville, 1951), 111-112.

Helm and Bailey, with 25 Virginians and a like number of Vincennes militiamen, started up the Wabash in batteaux to reconnoiter toward Detroit. Nearing Ouiatanon, they landed a short distance downstream and worked their way cautiously forward through dense undergrowth. To guard against ambush, Helm divided his column. One-half circled to the rear and slipped into the stockaded fort through its unguarded rear gate. The Indians, who were led by Black Fish, gave up without a fight. A council was held, at which the Indians warned Helm that if he went much farther toward Detroit, he would encounter Colonel Hamilton with 100 regulars and 1,000 Indians. Helm then proposed that the Indians of Ouiatanon sign a treaty. They declined, saying that they lacked authority to do so. Helm then told them to go to their villages and see if their leaders would come to a council. When they returned, the Indians said their chiefs declined, but as Helm had been kind to them, they would keep him posted as to Hamilton's movements.

Confronted by a shortage of food and ammunition, and not fully trusting the French, Helm prepared to return to Vincennes. Before doing so, he liberated the Indians, asking them to return to their villages and tell their chiefs of the Big Knives' desire to live in peace with their red brothers.

Arriving back at Vincennes, Helm put his people to work strengthening the fort. Within a short time, five of his Virginians deserted. Helm, satisfied that he could not count on the French militia, had Lieutenant Bailey return to Kaskaskia with the rest of the able-bodied Americans.<sup>32</sup> In November, Helm purchased from Captain Francois Bosseron a number of ells of red and green serge, which he had Madame Godere sew into a flag--an ensign destined to become the first American flag to fly over the fort.<sup>33</sup>

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32. William Brickley to Draper, Nov. 1845, Aug. 1858, and Oct. 14, 1866, Draper Mss., 8J. Several sick soldiers, accompanied by several of their comrades, made their way to Fort Nassac.

33. Lasselle, "Notes on Alice of Old Vincennes," *IMH*, Vol. 4, 84-85. Helm paid to St. Marie for 5 ells of red serge for the flag, at 9 . . . 45. Paid to Mr. Dajenet for 3 3/4 ells of green serge at 10 . . . . . 37. Paid Madame Godere for making the flag . . . . . 25"

From these entries we can obtain a fairly good picture of the flag. It consisted of two stripes--one of red and the other of green. The extra length of the red stripe of 1 3/4 ells--the French ell being 40 inches in length--being cut off to from the shield in its proper place, which left the flag about 11 feet in length. Whether a coat of arms was blazoned on the shield is not known. The cost of the flag was about \$20, but it was a famous flag because it was the first American flag to fly over a fort in the Old Northwest.

## CHAPTER V

### Governor Hamilton Goes To Vincennes

The British commandant at Detroit at this time was Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton. Known to the American frontiersmen as the "Hair Buyer," Hamilton, who held a commission as captain in the British Army, had been in command of the Department of Detroit and its dependencies--which included the Illinois and Wabash posts--since 1776. To defend this vast area, he had part of the 8th Regiment, some Royal Artillery, the Detroit militia, and the Detroit Volunteers--a newly constituted corps organized by him by authority of the government of Quebec, with all the pay, rank, and privileges of the regular establishment.

Hamilton was a bachelor, of middle age, of medium size and build, and according to his friends, "endowed by nature with a kind heart and refined habits." Despite the opinion of many Americans, his morality was above reproach and in every sense he was "an estimable character."<sup>1</sup> He was not, however--as events were to prove--an individual possessed of the necessary ability and strength of will to cope with the big, burly, auburn-haired Virginian--George Rogers Clark.

Governor Hamilton first learned of the invasion of the Illinois country on August 6, 1778, when Francois Maisonville, one of his partisans, reached Detroit and reported that the Rebels had seized Kaskaskia and had thrown De Rocheblave in irons. Hamilton was incensed to learn that his unfortunate subordinate was being confined in a pig pen, ankle-deep in filth, and that "indignities" had been offered Madame de Rocheblave by the crude Virginians.

Couriers were dispatched to notify General Frederick Haldimand and the commanders at Forts Niagara and Michilimackinac of the attack. Preparations were inaugurated to recover the lost settlements, provided Haldimand was agreeable. De Celeron was rushed to Ouiatanon with "Belts and Speeches" for the Weas and other Indians of the Wabash. He was to relay to Hamilton as soon as possible all information he could secure

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1. R. L. Schieffelin to Draper, Sept. 30, 1875, Draper MSS., 45J.

as to "the disposition of the Indians, the Numbers and . . . views of the Rebels." He was to continue down the Wabash to Vincennes and take possession of Fort Sackville and see that the few small cannons at that post were spiked and the trunnions knocked off.<sup>2</sup>

On September 15, Hamilton received a message that General Haldimand had sanctioned his proposal to recover the Illinois settlements. The next several weeks were busy ones for Hamilton and his aides. The militia companies were paraded, and the Governor was delighted to learn that most of them were eager to volunteer their services. Indeed, the only limit to the size of the expedition would be the number of bateaux available. Captain Richard B. Lernoult of the 8th Regiment gave permission for Lieutenant Shourd, two sergeants, and 30 privates to go along.

In accordance with Hamilton's orders, steps had already been taken to facilitate the transportation of the little army over the portage separating the watersheds of the Maumee and Wabash. Carriages were repaired, while the bateaux were overhauled. Captain Alexander McKee, with a small detachment (one lieutenant, one sergeant, 12 militiamen, a boat-builder, and a carpenter) started for the carrying place on the 27th. Members of the Quartermaster's, Commissary, and Ordnance Departments spent hours issuing and boxing stores and trade goods. Hunters and traders were questioned, and after it was ascertained that the Indians were "well-disposed" toward the British, Hamilton dispatched messengers to their villages to apprise them of his plans and urge them to order out their warriors.

While final preparations were being pushed, Hamilton camped his troops on the Detroit Commons. One day after the troops were formed to have the Articles of War read to them and to take an oath of allegiance to King George III, Father Potier appeared and gave his blessings to "the Catholics present, conditionally, upon their strictly adhering to their oath, being the more engaged thereto as the indulgence and favour of their prince, merited their best services and had exceeded their most sanguine expectations."

On October 6, 1778, Hamilton ordered his troops to strike their tents. As soon as the men had packed their equipment, they were marched to the landing. Captain Grant kept a close watch on the 7th as the

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2. Report by Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton on His Proceedings from November 1776, to June 1781, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 176; *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 102-103. The Swiss-born Haldimand commanded British forces in Canada at this time.

soldiers, after loading the boats, embarked. Besides Hamilton, the little army consisted of 4 regulars, 8 irregulars, 70 militia volunteers, and about 60 Indians.<sup>3</sup> Hamilton would have preferred to have had more artillery, but Captain Lernoult, who would be in charge at Detroit during Hamilton's absence, could spare only one field piece-- a 6-pounder. This was placed in the center of the line of vessels, while the Indians, with their partisan officers and interpreters were divided to form the front and rear divisions in their canoes.

During the embarkation itself there was little excitement, except for one Indian, who, having secured some whiskey, got out of hand and had to be placed under arrest. But as the boats pulled away from the Detroit landing--the volunteers and Indians exchanging good-byes with their loved ones who had crowded the banks to see them off--the artillerists decided to fire the 6-pounder in a parting salute. The piece was fired. The shock of the recoil started the seams, and the vessel began to sink. Everyone sprang to. The vessel was beached, the cannon and stores transferred to another vessel, and they set out again.

The flotilla proceeded a short distance down the Detroit River, before the approach of darkness compelled them to land and camp at River Rouge. Although Hamilton knew little about the military, he saw that guards were posted, and the officer-of-the-day, the sergeant-of-the-guard, and the sentries schooled in their duties. The boats were moored to provide for their security during the hours of darkness.<sup>4</sup>

The run down the Detroit River was resumed on the 8th day of October. As the convoy slipped downstream, the wind shifted to the northwest and it started to snow. With the wind growing stronger by the hour, Hamilton knew that the waves on Lake Erie could swamp the boats. He had his men land and camp for the night on Rosse Island, near the point where the river discharges into the lake.

By the next morning it had stopped snowing, and Hamilton discussed with his principal subordinates the advisability of hazarding a passage across the western end of Lake Erie at this season. Hamilton, in view of the great distance to be covered, determined to take his chances on the lake, although it was late in the year. It was noon before the waves subsided sufficiently to allay fears of swamping the boats, and the British cast off.

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3. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 177-178; *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 103-105.

4. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 105.

The expedition had to navigate 36 miles of open water, facing the probability of steering without stars because of the storm, in the October darkness that came early at this latitude. When they were still a long way from shore the boats were no longer visible to each other. The lead boats carried the guides, and at this point, Hamilton ordered them to display lights for the guidance of the boats astern. About 11 p.m. the wind shifted; it started to rain and "a heavy swell roll'd in." As they neared the lee shore, Hamilton and his people feared that their craft might be swamped. For a while they rowed on, but as the waves became rougher, they lay on their oars and turned the sterns to the swell till Hamilton was satisfied the boats that had lagged could make out the lights in the lead boats. He then called on his men to pull for the shore. The convoy finally made land, and the troops disembarked on an "ouzy beach," well away from the terrifying stretch of rocky coast, and but within a mile of their goal--the mouth of the Maumee.

The wind now began to whoop, and it blew with such violence that the soldiers were unable to pitch their tents or kindle their fires. Nevertheless, they were happy, for they knew that had they not passed the dangerous rocks before the storm swept in, they would all have perished.<sup>5</sup>

De Celeron, who was enroute back from Ouiatanon, met Hamilton on the 10th and reported in a loud voice that the Rebels had invaded the country of the Miamis. While the others in Hamilton's boat gaped, the Frenchman said that the Americans were at the portage. Hamilton, however, knew De Celeron lied, because he had heard from some Indians that De Celeron had fled Ouiatanon before Helm's arrival, "taking with him, [moreover], some Packs of Peltry."

Feigning indifference, Hamilton remarked, "That is not new." He suspected, having heard that the Frenchman had been spreading stories calculated to disturb his Indian allies, that De Celeron had become a traitor to the British cause, so he ordered him to proceed to Detroit. At the same time, a message was dispatched to Captain Lernoult at Detroit, apprising him of Hamilton's suspicions.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Ibid., 107-108.

6. Hamilton to Haldimand, Oct. 14, 1778, found in *CHE*, Vol.1, 354-55; *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 108-110.



Ascending the Maumee, the British reached the foot of the rapids on October 11. There Hamilton found Captain Grant, who had previously arrived with the sloop *Archangel* with 14 tons of provisions for the expedition. Later in the day, the detachment of the 8th Regiment (one subaltern, a sergeant, and 31 rank and file) reported to Hamilton as reinforcements. The next day, the 12th, the commander of the regulars, Lieutenant Shourd, was lost when his fuzee accidentally discharged, shattering his leg. Hamilton placed his surgeon in charge of the lieutenant and dispatched them to Detroit in a bateau manned by six men. At Detroit the leg was amputated, but infection set in and the lieutenant died.

Because of the extremely low water, worsened by the cold wave, it took the expedition from the 11th to the 29th to make the portage from the Maumee to the Wabash. It was cold, hard work dragging the boats up over the rapids. As many as 50 men were detailed to pull the artillery bateaux upstream "against the current which passing swiftly between slippery rocks, made it difficult for the men to keep their footing." Governor Hamilton reported, "Officers to a man shewed a good example in sharing the fatigue, and the Indians with the utmost alacrity assisted till the last boat was got over safely."

At Miamitown, during the period October 25-28, Hamilton met with several Indian tribes that had been summoned there. War belts were exchanged, after which Hamilton sang the war song. After he had presented gifts, he dispatched runners to the Shawnees and other nations through whose lands he would pass, inviting them to join him, or, if they did not wish to take up the tomahawk, to watch and report on the Rebels' movements. Ammunition was forwarded to these people as a present from the British.<sup>7</sup>

While at Miamitown, Hamilton learned that Old Tobacco and his son, Young Tobacco, had established close ties with the Virginians, while The Grande Coté, another Piankashaw leader, had declared that he would "act in conformity with his elder Brothers," the Kickapoos and Weas.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 178-179; *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 110-116; Hamilton to Haldimand, Oct.14, 1778, found in *CIHS*, Vol.1, 354-355.

8. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 115-116.

Having negotiated the portage, the expedition put its boats in Little River. The water was so unseasonably low that the boats would not have floated, except for a beaverdam built four miles downstream. Reaching the dam, Hamilton had it cut, and all the lead boats swept through the gorge. After the advance flotilla had passed, a bateau was scuttled in the gorge to allow the water to pool, preparatory to the arrival of the next of the boats, which passed through on November 1. The expedition experienced difficulty in passing Les Volets Swamp, beyond which Aboite River discharges into the Little. To enable them to continue, Hamilton had his men dam both streams to back water into the swamp. When the water was raised to a sufficient depth, the dam on Little River was cut, and the craft passed down. A similar obstacle was encountered at Langlois Creek, and it was overcome in a like manner on November 7. Passing through the dam, the boats continued downstream to an area, where Little River widens, with "almost continued ledges of rock and large stones." Great difficulty was experienced in passing these obstacles. The men were in the water from 10 a.m. till after sunset, by which time only one bateau had reached the foot of the riffles.

On the 9th at 3 p.m., the lead vessel entered the Wabash. Here Hamilton ordered his men to land, and the bateaux were pulled ashore to be calked and repaired. Recent rains caused the Wabash to rise rapidly on the 10th. It turned cold that night. Snow was falling in the morning when Hamilton sent three pirogues upstream to the riffles to bring down the remainder of his 100,000 pounds of supplies. On the 12th, Hamilton drilled and practiced his cannoneers and regulars. The Indians were excited and amazed as the gun crew of the 6-pounder hit a small target at a range of 300 yards. All the craft had been repaired by nightfall. There was a heavy fall of snow on the night of the 13th, and it was 11 a.m. the next day before the expedition cast off. The cold snap caused the Wabash to crest and fall.<sup>9</sup>

The mouth of the Mississinewa was passed on the 18th, and it was six days later before the expedition sailed by the mouth of the Eel, which was unseasonably low. Shortly before sunset on the 24th, the convoy reached a point where the Wabash was covered by a sheet of ice. Hamilton determined to pass this barrier before it could be reinforced by chunks of ice that were drifting downstream. Five hours were required to beat a way through this barrier. Ice cut the men's legs

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9. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 116-121.

as they worked in water up to their waists. Hamilton and his people encamped on the night of the 28th, a mile above Ouiatanon. The next morning, Major Jehu Hay, who had visited the village, returned and reported that the Virginians at Vincennes had received "every countenance and encouragement from the French traders."<sup>10</sup> For their efforts, the French had been rewarded--J. M. P. Le Gras, with a commission as major and François Bosseron, with the rank of captain.<sup>11</sup> An officer by the name of Helm, he reported, was in charge at Vincennes, while Colonel George Rogers Clark commanded on the Illinois.

To recall the Indians who were hunting, Hamilton had the 6-pounder discharged, while he visited Ouiatanon which was composed of "a double range of houses enclosed with a Stockade 10 feet high." He counted 90 cabins. The British and their savage allies took advantage of their stay near the village to dry their provisions and powder, and to repair their boats. On December 2, Major Hay went to the fort, and after accepting a loyalty oath from the inhabitants, hoisted "the St. George's Ensign, which--the Indians were informed--was to be understood as a guarantee of protection and security of their lands." While the colors were being raised, a sergeant and six privates from each detachment presented arms, and a salute of three rounds was fired from the 6-pounder.

The next day, the 3d of December, Hamilton met with the Wea chiefs, who told him that on the approach of Helm's people, their war chiefs had consulted with De Celeron, who told them that they must "hide the War belts they had received at Detroit." They admitted that they had been afraid to take up "the hatchet as their families were exposed too much to the inroads of the Virginians." They now acknowledged their error, and handed over to Hamilton the flags given them by Helm.

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10. Major Hay, Hamilton's most trusted subordinate, was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Listed as an ensign in the 60th Regiment in 1758, Hay had served at the siege of Detroit in 1763. Draper MSS, 8J, 50-53.

11. Le Gras was a native of Quebec, while Bosseron was born in Kaskaskia and educated in Canada.

At 11 a.m. on the 5th, Hamilton re-embarked his command. The inclement weather continued. Rain, high wind, snow, and sleet were encountered as the expedition pushed slowly down the Wabash. Below the mouth of the Vermilion, the Wabash became wide enough to permit the divisions to row abreast. Parties were now put ashore on each side of the river to reconnoiter in advance of the slow moving convoy. On the 10th the cold was so intense and the winds so strong that Hamilton determined to remain in camp. The next morning there was a great quantity of ice floating on the river, and he became alarmed that the Wabash would freeze. At 9 a.m. the force re-embarked, and the advance was resumed.<sup>12</sup>

When within two days' run of Vincennes, a scouting party sent by Hamilton brought in four prisoners, a lieutenant and three privates. They said they had been ordered out by Captain Helm from Fort Sackville to learn the whereabouts of the English. The lieutenant had in his pocket two commissions--one signed by Captain Helm and the other by Lieutenant Governor Abbott. Hamilton gave the prisoners' arms to his Indians, but resolved not to make examples of them, because he hoped to win the French by a policy of leniency. At the same time, he did not wish to arouse his Indians by "an instance of severity."<sup>13</sup>

Before continuing his advance, Hamilton on the 16th dispatched a number of patrols. These groups were to establish roadblocks on the traces leading from Vincennes to the Illinois country and to the Falls of the Ohio; to intercept all couriers, secure their dispatches, but not to harm them. The party sent to watch the Illinois Trace captured two messengers sent by Captain Helm to alert Clark to the approach of the British.

Major Hay, with a strong detachment (Captain La Mothe's Company and the regulars) was sent to confer with the leading citizens of Vincennes. He was accompanied by several Indian chiefs who were to "conciliate" the Piankashaws living near the post and to show the French what they might expect if they resisted. Hay was authorized to warn the *habitants* that unless "they quitted the Rebels and laid down their Arms, there was no mercy for them."

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12. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 121-146.

13. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 179-180; *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 146.

It was snowing on December 17, as the British and their allies re-embarked. As Hamilton rounded a bend in the river and sighted Vincennes, he was surprised to discover at a landing, a mile above the post, the boats used by Hay's detachment. They had been beached, and were guarded by several soldiers. Helm's red and green flag snapped in the breeze above Fort Sackville, causing Hamilton to believe that the Rebels had been reinforced and that the French planned to stand by them. Hamilton ordered his men ashore, and "drew them up with a double front," while he scaled a nearby hillock to get a better view of the village and fort. From this vantage point he was able to make out Major Hay with his men, drawn up near the Piankashaw village.

Hay, on sighting Hamilton, sent a runner with news that "the inhabitants were bringing in their arms, not designing to make any resistance." Advised by several of the principal inhabitants that Captain Helm had been deserted by the French militia, Hamilton placed himself at the head of the regulars, and accompanied by the cannoneers with the 6-pounder, proceeded to the fort. When he arrived in front of the "Wickett," Hamilton was hailed by Captain Helm.<sup>14</sup>

The Virginian, who liked his toddy, had taken post at the wickett beside a loaded cannon. With slow match in hand, and a bottle in the other, Helm inquired, "What terms can I expect?"

"Your situation does not admit of any other than being treated with humanity," Hamilton replied. Whereupon, the wickett was opened and Hamilton entered and took possession of Fort Sackville.<sup>15</sup> In the fort, he found two iron 3-pounders, mounted on truck carriages, two unmounted swivel guns, and a small quantity of ammunition. Thirty-two stout horses that had been purchased for the Continental Congress were presented to his Indian allies by Hamilton. Inspecting the fort, he found "a miserable stockade, without a well, barrack, platform for small arms, or even a lock to the gate."

It had taken the force 77 days to travel 600 miles. This slow progress, Hamilton attributed "to the extraordinary difficulties of the way owing to an uncommon drought"; the severity of the season, and the inevitable delays at the Indian villages. There were days when the expedition logged only half a league. Frequent stops were

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14. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 147-148.

15. *Ibid.*, 148; Brickley to Draper, Nov. 1845 and Aug. 1858, Draper MSS., 8J, 3-4. Le Gras and Busseron had urged Helm not to fire the cannon, as by doing so he would uselessly expose the citizens.

made to enable Hamilton to meet with Indian leaders and present them gifts. A few of the redmen volunteered at each village to accompany the expedition.<sup>16</sup>

Hamilton kept a tight rein on his Indian allies. Not a shot was fired nor any *habitant* injured in person or property. By the time that his force had reached its goal, it had increased to 500 strong. The health of the soldiers was excellent; no one was on sick call. Since leaving Detroit not an instance of drunkenness had been reported to the Governor, although rum was issued whenever fatigue or foul weather made it necessary.

After the boats had been secured and provisions landed, it was time to discuss the next move. There were two courses open--they could carry the war to the Rebels in the Illinois country, or they could hold onto and convert Vincennes into a strongpoint. Among arguments advanced for pursuing the latter course were: (a) it would give the British command of the lower Ohio by which the Spanish had supplied Clark with munitions; (b) communications between the Illinois and the Falls of the Ohio via the Illinois and Buffalo Traces would be severed; (c) it would encourage the Delaware and Ottawa Indians of the White River to rally to their support; (d) the reconquest of the Illinois country would compel Hamilton to divide his force as a garrison would be left at Fort Sackville; (e) the Indians would not remain much longer in the field; and (f) Hamilton, checking with his quartermaster and commissary, found that certain provisions were starting to run short. Learning from the *habitants* that the country between Vincennes and the Illinois posts was subject to flooding at this season of the year, Hamilton, who--unlike George Rogers Clark--lacked that mystique which shrouds all great captains, determined to strengthen his position at Fort Sackville, and wait for reinforcements in the spring before continuing his campaign.<sup>17</sup>

Taking a census, Hamilton discovered there were 621 inhabitants, of whom 217 were eligible to bear arms. Several men, however, were known to be absent hunting buffalo.

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16. Report of Hamilton, found in *CYAS*, Vol. 8, 181.

17. *Ibid.*, 181-182.

The *habitants* were ordered by Governor Hamilton to assemble in the church at noon on the 19th. When he addressed them, he reproached them for their treachery and ingratitude to the crown, but he went on to declare that since they had laid down their arms and sued for protection, they should be secure in their persons and property as soon as they renewed their oaths of allegiance. A policy of conciliation, he believed, might induce the French of the Illinois country to follow their example. An oath drafted by Hamilton was read twice and explained, and the citizens cautioned "against that levity they had so recently given proof of." The oath was administered, and they kissed a silver crucifix at the foot of the altar, after which 250 men capable of bearing arms signed their names or made their marks to a paper containing the written oath.<sup>18</sup> It read:

We, the undersigned, declare and acknowledge to have taken the oath of allegiance to Congress, in doing which we have forgotten our duty to God and have failed in our duty to man. We ask pardon of God and we hope from the goodness of our legitimate sovereign, the King of England, that he will accept our submission and take us under his protection as good and faithful subjects, which we promise and swear to become before God and before man. In faith of which we sign with our hand or certify with our ordinary mark, the aforesaid day and month of the year 1778.

Those who had accepted commissions from the Congress handed them over to Hamilton, and all those who had laid down their arms and had taken the oath of allegiance were given back their weapons, and if they so desired, granted passports to go and hunt buffalo.<sup>19</sup>

In view of his decision to spend the winter at Vincennes, Hamilton turned large working parties out for the purpose of reinforcing the defenses of Fort Sackville. At first, he proposed to strengthen the works by changing its square "form to triangular, with a Block House in Each Angle," but Major Hay came up with a proposal that would be "less Expensive and more easily defended with a small force." Hay's plan called for leaving the stockade as it was, and to build a block-house" at the North West Angle and another at the opposite Angle, each

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18. Ibid., 182.

19. Ibid., 182-183.

securing two faces of the square, the small saillant angles in each face of the square to be removed."<sup>20</sup> Before any work was done on the fort, Hamilton had one of his men prepare a drawing of existing conditions. This drawing was forwarded to General Haldimand.

The Vincennes militia, 250 strong, was paraded under arms on December 27. Meanwhile, a magazine had been constructed, and the powder, both that belonging to His Majesty and to the *habitants*, was stored within.<sup>21</sup> The next day, the 28th, a barracks designed to quarter 50 men was completed, along with a guardhouse near the main gate. A six-man working party was turned to digging a well which was completed on January 7.<sup>22</sup> Hamilton made the rounds on the 6th, and found the carpenters framing a second barracks, 40 feet long by 18 feet wide, while the *habitants* were squaring oak logs for a blockhouse.<sup>23</sup> By the 15th the second barracks had been framed.<sup>24</sup> A new "Union flag" was hoisted on the 18th, and a salute fired in honor of the Queen. Hamilton, on January 27, reported that "all timber and scantling for one of the blockhouses was finished and ready for raising." Meanwhile, the second barracks had been clapboarded.<sup>25</sup> The next day the southeast blockhouse was raised. It was "muskett proof," had five gun ports, and its lower story was loopholed.<sup>26</sup> On the 30th a 3-pounder was mounted in the blockhouse.<sup>27</sup>

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20. Hamilton to Haldimand, Jan. 24, 1779, found in *Collections of the Illinois Historical Library*, Vol.1, 390.

21. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 157.

22. *Ibid.*, 158, 162.

23. *Ibid.*, 162; Hamilton to Haldimand, Jan. 24, 1779, found in *Collections of the Illinois Historical Library*, Vol.1, 390.

24. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 164.

25. *Ibid.*, 165, 171.

26. *Ibid.*; Hamilton to Haldimand, Jan. 24, 1779, found in *Collections of the Illinois Historical Library*, Vol.1, 390; Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 183-184.

27. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 172.



Work on the blockhouse to be raised at the northwestern angle of the fort was started on February 6.<sup>28</sup> On the 9th the "little salient angle in the N.E. side of the Fort [was] taken down, the Stockades made to range with that front, and lined,"<sup>29</sup> and the following day the salient angle in the southeast face next to the churchyard was taken down. The northwest blockhouse was raised and framed by the 18th.<sup>30</sup> On the 22d the blockhouse was completed, except for hanging the five shutters, which could not be done, as the ironwork had not been forged. A 3-pounder was mounted in this strongpoint.<sup>31</sup> The two salient angles not defended by blockhouses were "loopholed and lined, having platforms" for the soldiers to stand on in firing.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the parade ground had been graveled.<sup>33</sup>

Hamilton wore two hats. While he was commander of a small army charged with the mission of recovering the lost posts and carrying the war to the foe, he was also responsible for the administration of the area. In this capacity he made a survey of the area's economy. On the last day of the year, he went upstream to Kelso Creek to examine two mills. The sawmill, he found, would be unserviceable when the Wabash was in flood, while Cartier's gristmill on Snapp Creek was "poorly secured against land floods."<sup>34</sup>

Hamilton recorded on New Year's Day that diligence and industry would "speedily pay themselves in this country," as the extensive meadows "supply abundance of pasture for Cattle in Summer," while the hay "is sweet and strong. . . Cattle could easily be foddered thro' the Winter, but the people are in general too lazy to make sufficient provisions." The soil was rich though light: tobacco, corn, wheat,

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28. Ibid., 174.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 175.

31. Ibid., 177. Like the southeast blockhouse, this one had two stories--the lower was loopholed for infantry and the upper embrasured for cannon.

32. Hamilton to Haldimand, Jan. 24, 1779, found in *Collections of the Illinois Historical Library*, Vol.1, 390.

33. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 183-184.

34. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 159, 161.

millet, pease, and vegetables thrived. Sugar was made from the Maple. The woods were "distant half a league in some parts . . . from the Village." The soil was thin and sandy, "but black & fertile." Below the top soil was gravel to a considerable depth," so that Wells are readily sunk and the water is cool and wholesome, without this circumstance the place would not be habitable, as in Summer the river is very low, the water hot & fishy!"

The cornfields were not fenced, all the cattle were "pennd in one common enclosure of about 2000 Acres . . . Most of the farmers content themselves with harrowing over the old stubbles, and sow their grain without any other precaution." The harrow usually employed was rake-shaped--with a ten-foot shank and with teeth about 8 inches in length, drawn by one horse. They used

no manure even for Tobacco, tho the quantity of filth about their houses would furnish great abundance. . . . Their barns are rarely weather proof, being carelessly covered with bark, instead of shingles or thatch which are very easily procured.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, Indian scouting parties were pushing out along the Illinois Trace toward Kaskaskia and along the Buffalo Trace toward the Falls of the Ohio. A small boat expedition (30 men with an officer) was sent down the Wabash to its mouth, to intercept any boats Clark might send up the Ohio.<sup>36</sup>

The Indians who visited the fort after its recapture seemed pleased to find the British back in control. Runners were sent to contact John Stuart, the agent for Indians to the south, with letters proposing a spring meeting at Vincennes or on the Tennessee River to reconcile differences between the Southern Indians and the Shawnees and other northern nations. If the tribes could agree to settle their differences, a general offensive would then be possible against the frontiersmen who had rebelled against His Majesty's government.<sup>37</sup>

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35. Ibid., 159-160.

36. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 183-184.

37. Ibid., 184-185; Hamilton to Haldimand, Jan. 24, 1779, found in *Collections of the Illinois Historical Library*, Vol.1, 389-391. Four war parties were to be sent out by the Southern Indians (the Chickasaws,

In an effort to bluff the Spaniards into cutting off shipments of war material being sent up the Mississippi to Colonel Clark and the Kentuckians, and to concentrate on their own defense, Hamilton forwarded a letter to Captain Bloomer at Natchez, outlining plans for the Indian alliance. A second dispatch, conveying identical information, was intrusted to an individual who Hamilton believed would betray his trust and show it to Don Bernardo de Gálvez, the Spanish Governor-General at New Orleans.<sup>38</sup>

As soon as the scouts returned to the post, Hamilton had others take their place on the Illinois and Buffalo traces. So well did the Indians discharge their mission that for a time they prevented all information of the situation at Vincennes from reaching Colonel Clark. Although a number of Indian nations of the Wabash Valley had expressed support for the English and told of their distrust of the Virginians, there was only one chief who was eager to take action. This chief, Egushewai, of the Ottawas, volunteered to lead a party down to the mouth of the Wabash. Hamilton was agreeable. The Ottawa proceeded to carry out their mission. After remaining for some time at that point without taking any prisoners, Egushewai led his people westward into the country about Kaskaskia.

Hamilton's mistake--in halting to secure his position at Vincennes instead of pushing on--was soon apparent. Many of the Indian warriors returned to their villages or left on their winter's hunt, and on January 3 the Detroit militia started home. There were also desertions. Toward the end of January, a corporal and seven men from Le Mothe's company, slipped out of the post in the night, taking a canoe and their officers' baggage with them. Up till this

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Cherokees, Choctaws, and Creeks): (a) one toward the Illinois country to attack Clark at Kaskaskia; (b) one to the Ohio to assist the Shawnees; (c) one to Vincennes to make peace with the Indians of the Wabash and to cooperate in the attack on Clark; and (d) one to take position at the mouth of the Tennessee to attack shipping on the Ohio.

38. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 184; Hamilton to Haldimand, Jan. 24, 1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 1, 390-391. Although Hamilton felt certain that the Spanish would enter the war against his country, he had received no information "by which I may venture to act on the offensive against the subjects of Spain, which I ardently desire as there would be so little difficulty in pushing them entirely out of the Mississippi." Hamilton to Haldimand, Jan. 24, 1779, found in *Collections of the Illinois Historical Library*, Vol. 1, 391. Spain entered the war against Great Britain in June 1779.

moment, these people had given no inkling of their perfidy. Hamilton supposed that they had been shaken in their loyalty to the crown by "ill-intentioned people among the French at St. Vincennes." Hamilton bitterly recalled:

One of the deserters was brother to Gibault, the priest, who had been an active Agent for the Rebels, and who's vicious and immoral conduct was sufficient to do infinite mischief in a Country where ignorance and bigotry give full scope to the depravity of a licentious ecclesiastic. This wretch it was who absolved the French inhabitants from their Allegiance to the King of Great Britain. To enumerate the Vices of the Inhabitants would be to give a long catalogue, but assert that they are not in possession of a single virtue, is no more than truth and justice require, still the most eminently vicious and scandalous was the reverend Monsieur Gibault.<sup>39</sup>

The Wabash began to rise rapidly on February 7,<sup>40</sup> and by the 16th had spilled over its banks, drowning many cattle.<sup>41</sup> On the 18th the water backed up in Kelso Creek, and the sawmill was compelled to suspend operations. Hamilton had the river opposite the fort sounded, and the "depth was found to be 30 feet which in summer was but 10 feet in the same place." Villagers who had gone out in search of their cattle were able to rescue several, bringing them in to the high ground in pirogues.

People familiar with the area told Hamilton that the flood waters were a foot higher than they had been the previous year, when 400 cattle had drowned. When he looked out across the Commons, it was one vast lake, two leagues across.<sup>42</sup> The weather during the second two weeks of February was unseasonably warm, which contributed to the flood by causing a rapid melting of the snow on the upper reaches of the Wabash's watershed. By the 18th the peach trees were in bloom and the apple trees in bud at Vincennes.<sup>43</sup> On the 19th the

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39. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 184.

40. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 174.

41. *Ibid.*, 175.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

Wabash crested and began to fall slightly, but on the 21st there were heavy rains which caused the river to inch upward again.<sup>44</sup>

By February 22 Fort Sackville was in a "tolerable state of defence." During the day, Francois Maisonville returned from a patrol in pursuit of the seven deserters, bringing with him two Virginians (Lapsley and Shannon), whom he had captured on the Ohio. Calling Hamilton aside, Maisonville told him he had discovered--four leagues below the post--14 fires, but he had been unable to determine whether they had been kindled by Virginians or Indians. To investigate this report, Hamilton ordered out Captain Guillaume La Mothe and Lieutenant Jacob Shieffelin with 20 men. The Wabash had flooded the lowlands, so it would be necessary for the patrol to make a considerable detour. Masonville, although he was fatigued as a result of his previous mission, volunteered to show La Mothe and his people the way.<sup>45</sup>

As he felt certain that these fires had been built by the foe, Hamilton ordered ammunition issued and stockpiled in the blockhouses. The Vincennes militia was called to arms, and working parties were turned to erecting scaffolding for small-arms fire in the north and south angles of the fort. These scaffoldings were designed for infantrymen to stand on, so they could fire over the 11-foot palisade, instead of through loopholes.

Absent soldiers were recalled from the village, as were the paroled prisoners, including Captain Helm. Extra rations were brought in--corn and rum, both staples of 18th century frontier warfare. Hamilton was annoyed when Captain Bosseron of the Vincennes militia failed to report at the fort until sundown. Unknown to the Lieutenant Governor, Bosseron had been making arrangement to insure that a large stock of powder hidden by the *habitants* was made available to the Americans, when they entered the village. When he finally reached the fort, Bosseron explained his tardiness with "many professions of Loyalty and sincerity."<sup>46</sup>

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44. Ibid., 174-175.

45. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 185.

46. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 178.

## CHAPTER VI

### Clark Leads His Column On An Epic March

As the Christmas season of 1778 approached, Colonel George Rogers Clark and his followers anxiously awaited news that the Continental Congress had dispatched a column against Detroit, but instead they learned that Governor Hamilton had taken the field and had reoccupied Ouiatanon. They also knew that the British had sent bolts and presents to the Indian nations. At first, Clark believed these activities were directed against the American expedition outfitting at Fort Pitt. Soon, however, word arrived from the Falls of the Ohio that Brigadier General Lachlan McIntosh's troops, instead of marching on Detroit, were spending their time drilling and building bases to facilitate the anticipated campaign.<sup>1</sup> This information caused Clark to have second thoughts about the object of the British column reportedly descending the Wabash.

Captain Bowman, the commandant at Cahokia, now arrested a man called Denny, who was using the Indians to maintain contact with the English at Detroit. When confronted with the evidence--one of his letters that had been intercepted--Denny admitted his guilt. Clark

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1. The summer of 1778 was over before General McIntosh had completed his preparation and led his army out of Fort Pitt. He called a halt 30 miles below the forks of the Ohio, near the mouth of Beaver Creek, and began erecting a fort. Here at Fort McIntosh, as he named the post, he established his headquarters on October 8. McIntosh remained at the fort until November 5, awaiting the arrival of additional supplies, before he pushed on. During the next fortnight his army made only about 50 miles. Reports having been received that the British and Indians were massing to meet him, McIntosh halted and built a stockade on the west branch of the Tuscarawas, a tributary of the Muskingum, and named it Fort Laurens. After placing a bold fighter, Colonel John Gibson, in command at Fort Laurens with 150 men, McIntosh--in December--returned to Fort Pitt with the rest of his force and went into winter quarters. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 2 vols. (New York, 1921), Vol. 1, 123-126.

punished the man by having him tied to the tailgate of a cart and given a lash at each door in the village. Before being released, Denny was branded on the hand.<sup>2</sup>

Clark decided that Hamilton would attack Kaskaskia first, as it was the strongest post in the Illinois country. To secure prompt intelligence of Hamilton's activities, Clark sent out a number of spies. [The term "scouts" and "spies" were used interchangeably during the Revolutionary War.] These people, because of the precautions taken by Hamilton, were unable to learn anything regarding the whereabouts of the foe or his intentions. Several of Clark's spies were captured by British patrols.

The weather had now turned bad, and Clark was at a loss over what to do. Several of his principal subordinates were certain that Hamilton, because of the weather, would not push beyond Quiatanon. But when the fortnightly courier from Vincennes failed to arrive as scheduled, Clark began to suspect that something was amiss. Either the British had occupied Vincennes, or Captain Helm, taking cognizance of the flooded condition of the countryside, had not sent out runners as ordered.

In case of an attack, Clark determined to pull his garrison out of Cahokia and unite all his troops for a stand at Kaskaskia. Before implementing this decision, Clark decided to consult with the *habitants* and tell them how they were to act should the British recover their village. Because of the cold and snow, Clark delayed his departure several days. When there was no break in the weather, Clark finally started for Cahokia.

It was snowing when the Colonel and his seven bodyguards rode out of Kaskaskia, but it soon stopped. Clark, as he rode along, saw that six or seven men had passed down the River road since the snow had let up. Several gentlemen in carriages had accompanied Clark's party. One of the carriages mired down at a creek crossing, three miles from Kaskaskia, within a short distance of where seven of Egushewai's Ottawas lay in ambush. Before leaving Fort Sackville, Egushewai had been cautioned by Hamilton that if he had an opportunity he was to capture the leader of the "Big Knives." But under no circumstances was he to harm Clark. Considerable time was lost while the carriage was freed from the mire. The only thing that saved Clark was the inability of the foe to distinguish him at 80 yards from his heavily muffled comrades, for

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2. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CMS*, Vol.8, 132, 261.

the Ottawas feared that if they opened fire they might kill him. Not knowing how close he had been to being captured or killed, Clark and his party pushed on to Prairie du Rocher, where they spent the evening dancing at Captain Barber's.

Meanwhile, the seven Ottawas had rejoined Egushewai and the remainder of his war party, who were camped nearby. Later in the day, a hunter stumbled on the Indians' encampment but got away. Shortly thereafter, the Indians captured two Negro woodcutters along the banks of the Kaskaskia River. Egushewai wished to kill the Negroes, but Charles Beaubien, one of the three white partisans with his party, prevailed on him to release them.

Subsequently, when Egushewai returned to Fort Sackville and reported, Hamilton disapproved of Beaubien's actions. He was convinced that if the Frenchman had kept his mouth shut, the Ottawas would eventually have been able to spring a surprise and capture Clark and several of his subordinates on their return to Kaskaskia. Indeed, he even accused Beaubien of treachery, although Clark's reports make no mention of this.<sup>3</sup>

About midnight, an express rider arrived with news that the Negroes --who had been cutting wood on the Kaskaskia--had encountered a white man (Beaubien) and a number of Indians. After being asked several leading questions by the white man, they were told that Governor Hamilton, with 800 men, was within three miles of Kaskaskia and planned to attack Fort Gage that night. This news caused the dancers to stop and mill. All eyes focused on Clark. He called to two of his officers, telling them to see that the horses were saddled, as he hoped to reach the fort before it was invested. Several of his followers, having recovered their wits, begged Clark not to retrace his steps, as by now Kaskaskia would certainly have fallen and Fort Gage would be encircled. One proposed to spirit Clark across the Mississippi to the Spanish side. Clark, after a moment's reflection, told the orchestra to resume playing, and that they should divert themselves until the horses were ready.

While the dancers whirled about, he dashed off a note to Captain Bowman. He was to march for Kaskaskia with his company and all the volunteers he could raise. He was to be cautious and not fall into a trap

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3. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CHS*, Vol. 8, 132-135, 261-263; *Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 184-185. Beaubien held the position of interpreter to the Miamis.



and if he found he was too late he was to retire across the river to Ste. Genevieve. Clark, before departing, saw to it that he and his men were dressed as hunters. The ground was covered with snow and a full moon made the night almost as light as day.

As they approached Kaskaskia, Clark and his people were struck by the silence. They were delighted to see that there were no tracks on the freshly fallen snow. When they re-entered Kaskaskia, Clark was pleased to see that preparations had been made to receive the foe. Clark kept his soldiers and the volunteers at their posts throughout the night.

Clark sent for Father Gibault and found him terribly frightened, as he was certain the British were about to retake the post, unless it was reinforced by Bowman's people from Cahokia. He told Father Gibault that he wished him to cross to the Spanish side, taking his public papers and funds with him. This proposition was pleasing to Father Gibault, and he departed. Ice floes were a hazard, and the Padre was unable to reach the west bank of the Mississippi, being compelled to camp on an island in inclement weather for three days, with only one servant.

Clark, before morning, determined to burn that part of the village near Fort Gage, as he feared these buildings would provide shelter to an investing force. As there was no possibility of escape, he resolved to compel Governor Hamilton to pay the highest possible price for the post. His only hope was that Captain Bowman would arrive in time to enable them to hold out sufficiently long to cause Hamilton's Indian allies to tire of a siege.

Shortly after daybreak, Clark assembled the villagers, and he inquired of them if they planned to defend their homes. If they would, he would pull most of his troops out of Fort Gage and join them. Should the foe remain in camp until the weather moderated, it might be possible to surprise him. One look told the stern Virginian that the Frenchmen would be unreliable soldiers, and he feared that they might volunteer to fight, for if the British were as numerous as reported all would be lost. The *habitants*, however, were not interested in fighting against seemingly overwhelming odds. Their spokesmen protested that Clark's entire force, even when reinforced by the militia, "would make but a poor figure against so considerable a party." It might be wise, they hinted, for all to seek "Spanish Protection," as the British would take possession of the houses near the fort and set fire to that stronghold. These sentiments were too much for the fiery Clark, and he exploded. As soon as he could control his temper, he gave them a tongue lashing and ordered them out of Fort Gage.

He was determined to make himself "appear to them as desperate as Possible." They were told to bring all their provisions into the fort, for he planned to put the village to the torch. A hastily organized demolition team set fire to the buildings near the post which Clark had marked for destruction. As the dwellings were covered with snow, there was no danger of the fire spreading. By nightfall the villagers had employed their carts and brought into the fort and turned over to Clark provisions to last for six months.

An excited *habitant* now dashed into Kaskaskia and gasped out the news that he had seen a war party of Indians heading for the island on which Father Gibault had taken refuge. The Priest's brother-in-law told Clark what he had heard. Clark gave an order for the alarmist to be arrested and hanged. The villagers crowded about the stockade to see if they could save their friend. Fortunately for the man under sentence, Clark's people began quarreling about how best to dispatch him. Several argued that he should be tomahawked, others that he should be hanged, while a few held out for burning. This gave time for the condemned man's wife and seven small children to be paraded before Clark. Their pleas moved the grim Virginian. He relented and ordered his men to release the *habitant*.<sup>4</sup>

The weather had moderated by the time Captain Bowman reached Kaskaskia the next morning with his company and a company of volunteers from Cahokia. While fatigue details strengthened the fort, spies moved out to see if they could learn any details of the foe's movements. Clark hoped to take the initiative and attack the British in their camps, rather than stand siege and allow Hamilton to take possession of Kaskaskia. The settlers now had a change of heart. Instead of treating them more severely after the arrival of Bowman, Clark now managed them with the greatest kindness and granted their every request. Within a few days, Clark's influence had zoomed. Several of the village leaders reproached them for their conduct, stating that Clark had treated them as they deserved.

Within a few days, the scouts returned with intelligence that the great army that had caused the panic consisted of about 40 Indians and a few whites. They had followed this force a considerable distance as it retired via the Illinois Trace.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 136-137, 263-269.

5. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 137, 264-265.

Clark now suspected that Hamilton's column was in possession of Vincennes, and that he might expect an attack in the near future. To reinforce his position with the French, Clark ordered the volunteers who had accompanied Bowman to return to Cahokia. Before they left, they were presented with a handsome stand of colors, and those that were ill-armed were issued new arms and accoutrements. As they began the return to their village, they paraded about Kaskaskia and soon were viewing themselves as "superior" to the men of that village. This caused such animosity between the men of the two places that Clark was compelled to hold a conference to salve ruffled feelings.

As the days passed, Clark became increasingly uneasy, as he had time to reflect on the situation: he feared that within several more weeks or months all the Illinois country, except Fort Gage, would be again in possession of the British.

So desperately was he in need of information regarding the English activities at Vincennes that he ordered out a cavalry patrol to take a prisoner. High water compelled the horsesoldiers to turn back short of their goal. Just when Clark was fretting the most, the Spanish merchant, Francis Vigo, reached Kaskaskia from Vincennes.<sup>6</sup>

Vigo had been born in Mondovi in northern Italy in the Kingdom of Sardinia. The date of his birth is in dispute, however, most authorities cite either 1740 or 1747. While a youth, Vigo enlisted as a private in a Spanish regiment and was posted to Cuba with his unit. From La Habana, his battalion was shipped to Louisiana. Upon being discharged at the expiration of his enlistment, Vigo started for the Arkansas country, determined to become a fur trader.<sup>7</sup>

Slowly working his way up the Mississippi Valley, by 1772 he had reached the newly established trading post of St. Louis. Here he established his headquarters and became a partner in the firm of Vigo and Yosti. From this base Vigo carried on his trade, buying furs of the neighboring Indians and selling supplies to the settlers. Both Indian and settler looked upon him as their confidant. In 1778, when Fernando de Leyba was made Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana with his headquarters at St. Louis, he became a silent partner of Vigo.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 266-268.

7. Dorothy Riker, "Francis Vigo," *IMH*, Vol.26, No.1, p.12.

8. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of St. Louis City and County* (Philadelphia, 1883), Vol.1, 191; "Colonel Francis Vigo and George Rogers Clark," *Illinois Catholic Historical Review*, Vol.10, 139.

After the capture of Kaskaskia by George Rogers Clark, Vigo came into close contact with the Americans and decided to espouse their cause. Previous to this time, the Spanish authorities in New Orleans and St. Louis had been giving aid and comfort to the Americans, although Spain was not yet at war with Great Britain. The man who helped to secure this Spanish aid was Oliver Pollock, an Irish immigrant who was engaged in the mercantile business in New Orleans. He had gained a high reputation for himself in business circles and was on friendly terms with the Spanish authorities. Being also a zealous partisan of the American cause he was selected as commercial agent for Virginia and later for the Colonies. He was able to secure aid from the Spanish Governor-General, Don Bernardo de Gálvez, in the form of special privileges for American shipping in New Orleans, and in permission to send arms and ammunition to the colonies by way of the Mississippi River.<sup>9</sup>

Vigo was undoubtedly encouraged to assist Colonel Clark by de Leyba's sympathetic attitude and by Father Gibault. Clark at this time was desperately in need of money and supplies. His method of paying for supplies was by Virginia paper currency. Drafts upon Virginia currency were inflated, and the inhabitants of the Illinois country were reluctant to accept it. Here Vigo was of assistance, backing Clark's paper money with his own, and furnishing supplies out of his own stores. He also lent Clark money, receiving drafts upon Pollock in return. The first draft, dated December 4, 1778, was for \$8,716.40. The others were smaller, amounting to about \$2,500.<sup>10</sup> With this help and that of a few other French traders, Clark was able to maintain his little army.

Captain Helm was known to be in need of supplies, so in early December Vigo agreed to proceed to Vincennes and to provide the necessary articles, as he had a store at that place and was well known to the *habitants*. He set out from Kaskaskia on December 18, unaware that on the previous day Vincennes had been recaptured by Henry Hamilton. Arriving on the Embarrass River within six miles of the post on Christmas Eve, Vigo was surprised and captured by a band of Indians led by Lieutenant François de Quindre. He and his traveling companion, Renaud,

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9. James A. James, "Oliver Pollock, Financier of the Revolution of the West," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol.16, 71-75.

10. 30th Cong., 1. Sess., House of Representatives, Report No. 216.

were taken before Hamilton who held them prisoner. Although he may have suspected Vigo of being friendly with the Virginians, he could prove nothing.<sup>11</sup> So far the measures taken to prevent news of his recapture of Vincennes from reaching Clark had been successful, but now Hamilton made a grave blunder. On January 14 he released Vigo, after extracting a promise that he would do nothing detrimental to the British cause on his way back to St. Louis. Vigo kept his promise, but as soon as he reached home he set out again for Kaskaskia. He arrived there on January 29 and gave Clark the first accurate news to be had of the recapture of Vincennes.<sup>12</sup>

Vigo had kept his eyes opened. He told Clark that Hamilton had 500 fighting men--regulars, militia, and Indians. But not wishing to conduct a winter's campaign, Hamilton had sent off most of his Indians, with instructions to return in early spring. The departure of the redmen had reduced the Britisher's effective force to about 80 officers and men. While Hamilton was keeping a tight rein on his people, Vigo felt that the English did not expect a visit from Clark and his Virginians, and if they could make a rapid march they might be able to surprise the foe.

Clark's position was critical. Hamilton had interposed his force between the Americans and their principal source of reinforcements and supplies. In the spring --as soon as he was rejoined by the Indians of the Wabash and reinforced by those from the south-- Hamilton would have a force of sufficient strength to sweep all before him. Clark had three alternatives: he could abandon his conquests and retire on the Falls of the Ohio; he could remain at Fort Gage and risk capture in the spring; or he could seize the initiative and attack the British in their comfortable winter quarters.

Clark did not hesitate. As he saw it, his only chance was to strike first and heat the foe in detail. The inclemency of the weather and the terrible conditions of the few traces would be to his advantage, because it would cause the British to relax their vigilance. Clark reasoned that they would not believe that anyone could be so "mad" as to attempt a march of 80 leagues through a drowned country

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11. *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark*, 155, 163-164; "Memorial of Francis Vigo" in House Report No. 216, 30th Cong., 1. Sess. Renaud was a Canadian trader.

12. *Ibid.*

in the dead of winter. He called a meeting of his officers at which he explained the situation. His energy and enthusiasm fired them; they liked what they heard. No time was squandered in perfecting plans. A courier was sent galloping to Cahokia with orders recalling Captain Richard McCarty and his volunteers.<sup>13</sup>

Clark knew that the Wabash would be in flood at this season, and that, if boats had to be built after his troops had reached that river, the British would be alerted to his approach. Consequently, he determined to send a bateau around to Vincennes by water.<sup>14</sup> This craft would carry the artillery and heavy supplies. A large bateau was accordingly purchased from one of the Kaskaskia merchants, and outfitted as a row-galley, mounting two 4-pounders and four swivel guns. Clark named his cousin, Lieutenant John Rogers, to the command of this vessel, which was christened *Willing*.<sup>15</sup>

Rogers and his company, 46 rank and file, cast off on February 4. His orders were to drop down the Mississippi, and to ascend the Ohio. Turning into the Wabash, he was to ascend that river to within 10 leagues of Vincennes, to hide his boat, and await orders. No vessels were to be allowed to pass down the Wabash, except those manned by friends. As his galley made her way up the Wabash, spies were to be sent in advance to guard against ambush. If Hamilton should attempt to escape down the Wabash, Rogers was to pursue.<sup>16</sup>

All the inhabitants crowded the bank to watch *Willing* get under way. Never before had they seen a bateau outfitted as a warship. Much was expected of her,<sup>17</sup> for she was far superior to any vessel Hamilton could outfit.<sup>18</sup>

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13. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 138, 155, 266-268.

14. A bateau is a light, flat-bottomed boat, tapering toward the ends, and adapted for use on rivers.

15. The *Willing* was named for James Willing, who in 1778 had led a raiding party down the Ohio and Mississippi from Fort Pitt to Natchez and Manchac. Willing's boat was named the *Rattletrap*.

16. Clark to Rogers, Feb. 3, 1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 100.

17. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 139.

18. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 268-269.

Not trusting the villagers because of the recent panics, Clark said nothing to them of his plans until 10 a.m. on February 4, when Captain McCarty's volunteers arrived from Cahokia. That evening Clark gave an expensive banquet and dance in honor of McCarty's people to which the Kaskaskians were invited. Both the men and women of Kaskaskia now became interested, and by noon the next day a company of volunteers had been organized. Captain Francois Charleville was elected to command the Kaskaskia company. The addition of this unit gave Clark 170 fighting men, organized into two militia companies (McCarty's and Charleville's) and three companies of Virginians led by Captains Bowman, Worthington, and Williams.

A pack train having been organized and supplies distributed, Clark at noon on February 5 alerted his captains to have their men ready to march at 3 p.m. By the designated hour, the captains had formed and inspected their units. Clark now gave the word, and the column moved out. They were accompanied as far as the Kaskaskia River by Father Gibault and the villagers. While they were waiting to cross the river, the Padre made a few well-chosen remarks and granted those of his people serving with Clark absolution.

Clark, counting Rogers' detachment, had only 215 effectives, yet he never doubted that he would succeed. He realized, however, that the odds against him were heavy. The soldiers would be called on to make a 240-mile march across a wilderness with every river to be crossed in flood. To keep up the men's morale, he let them shoot game and feast on the flesh at the end of the day's march. Each company in turn invited the others to an evening of feasting and dancing. The company, whose turn it was to entertain, would be well-supplied with horses to insure that there would be a quantity of game.<sup>19</sup>

A light rain fell throughout the afternoon of the 5th, and night-fall found Clark's little army encamped a league east of the Kaskaskia River. The troops remained in camp on the 6th and moved out early on the 7th. Although it had rained throughout the 6th, the weather was unseasonably warm, so there was no suffering. The lowlands were flooded to a depth of several inches and the trace was a ribbon of mud, but the column pushed rapidly ahead and logged nine leagues before Clark called a halt. The troops, for security, pitched their camp in

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19. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 269-270.

a square, the baggage in the middle.<sup>20</sup> On the 8th the march was across "large and level plains," where the water was slow to run off. Despite these difficult conditions spirits were high.<sup>21</sup> Moderate progress was made on the 9th. Once again, the rain had started to beat down.<sup>22</sup> A river, Casco Fork, had to be crossed on February 10. As it was too high to ford, trees were felled so that they spanned the torrent. The rain continued to pour, so the soldiers had to be careful as they crossed the logs to keep from slipping. A miserable night was spent without tents near the river.

On the 11th the column forded a number of streams-- Horse Creek, Paddy Creek, Skillet Fork, and Brush Creek.<sup>23</sup> The next day, the 12th, found the little army pushing across Long and Six-Mile Prairie, where the company in charge of providing meat killed a number of buffalo. It had stopped raining, but the Illinois Trace was so muddy that it was almost impassable. When the men camped at the edge of the woods, they were so fatigued that many of them dropped off to sleep--thus missing a buffalo meat feast. The plains were about 15 miles across, and it was after dark before the pack train came up with the main column. According to the best available information, the Americans were within 21 leagues of Vincennes.<sup>24</sup>

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20. Camp on the evening of the 7th was a short distance beyond where the town of Sparta now stands, 17 miles from the Kaskaskia. Draper Mss., 24 J 7.

21. Among the prairies crossed was Grande Côte, northeast of today's Coulterville. The troops spent the night of the 8th a little north of present day Nashville. Ibid.

22. Clark's camp on the 9th was near the head of Big Muddy, not far from Jefferson City. When Lyman C. Draper reconnoitered the area in the 1880s, he pinpointed a "good spring and camp ground east of the Big Muddy," where he believed Clark had camped. Ibid.

23. One of these streams was identified by Captain Bowman as the Saline River. Beck's *Gazeteer and Map* for 1823 identify Bowman's Saline River as Skillet Fork. Ibid., 24J 7-8. The army camped on the night of the 11th at a spring one mile and a half west of Blue Point. Horse Creek was crossed near the southwest corner of Section 25, Township 1 South, Range 4 East, while Skillet Fork was crossed at the northwest corner of Section 4, Township 1 South, Range 5 East.

24. Bowman in his journal referred to these prairies as the Cot Plains. Clark and his people spent the night of the 12th several miles northwest of today's Mount Erie. Bowman's Journal, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 157; Draper Mss. 24 J 8.



On the 13th the army reached the Little Wabash. Normally, three miles of dry ground separated the Little Wabash and Fox River, but with the streams on a rampage, the ground in between, known as Sugar Grove Island, was inundated.<sup>25</sup> Clark ordered the men to camp on the heights, while he turned a fatigue party to fashioning a large canoe. Even Clark was skeptical, but to boost his men's spirits, he led them to believe that little difficulty would be experienced in crossing the water barrier. As only a few could work at a time, steps were taken to allow the rest to relax and amuse themselves. The soldiers, he knew, had waded farther, but so far they had not encountered water much above their knees. Clark knew that once his people forded the Little Wabash, there could be no retreat.

By 4 p.m., on the 14th, the canoe had been completed and launched. A picked crew was placed aboard and sent to reconnoiter the drowned lands between the Little Wabash and the Fox. They were to see if they could locate some dry ground on the west bank of the Fox. When they returned, the leader reported he had found about a half-acre of high ground, and he had blazed trees from there back to camp.

February 15 was a warm and wet day. Clark turned his men out at daybreak. A working party was ferried across the Little Wabash and landed on the opposite bank. Standing in water up to their hips, the soldiers built a platform on which to place the baggage. The baggage was then ferried across the river and placed on the platform. Next, the horses were swum across and reloaded with their packs, while the rest of the troops were ferried across the rain-swollen river. As soon as the soldiers had caught their second wind, Clark assigned the men who were sick to positions in the canoe. The march across the drowned land then began. Keeping a sharp watch for the blazed trees, the column waded forward until it reached the dry ground pinpointed by the scouts the previous evening. The army was shuttled across the Fox in the canoe, while a fatigue party erected a platform on the left bank of the stream. The baggage and horses were crossed in the same manner as heretofore. After the men assigned to the quartermaster had adjusted the packs, they proceeded to follow the trail broken by the main column.

Nightfall found the column camped on the heights east of the Fox. Morale was surprisingly high, as the men gathered around their camp fires and teased one another "in consequence of something that had happened in the course of this ferrying business," as they called it. All now joked about the drummer boy who had used his drum as a boat. The

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25. Clark reached the Little Wabash via the ridge which separates Miller Creek from a slough.

soldiers, even the militia, now began to believe themselves "superior to other men and that neither the Rivers or seasons could stop their progress." Their entire conversation was now "what they would do when they got about the enemy,"<sup>26</sup>

Orders were issued that evening that henceforth there would be no further promiscuous firing of small-arms. On February 16 the force pushed on through the rain. Bompas Creek was crossed. Clark and his officers were disturbed to learn from Commissary Kennedy that rations were beginning to run short. An early start was made on the 17th. Several streams were forded, and as the head of the column approached the Embarrass River, Clark called for Kennedy. He was to take three men across the Embarrass, and work his way forward to a plantation opposite Vincennes. There they were to attempt to make off with several canoes. In addition, Kennedy was to keep his eyes open.

It was an hour before sunset when the main column reached the Embarrass. Clark, seeing that the river had spilled over its banks, turned his army down the ridge parallelling the river to the west. As the soldiers had moved down into the bottoms, they encountered mud and water. It was long after dark before any dry ground on which to camp was pinpointed. Meanwhile, Kennedy had returned and reported that he had been unable, because of the flood, to reach the east bank of the Embarrass.<sup>27</sup>

At daybreak on the 18th the Americans heard the Fort Sackville morning gun. The march down the right bank of the Embarrass was resumed. As they pushed ahead through the woods the soldiers crossed some "fine land." It was 2 p.m. when they came out on the bank of the Wabash, at a point believed to be three leagues below Vincennes.<sup>28</sup> While the others camped, a fatigue party put together a raft. Four volunteers crossed the Wabash in the craft--their mission was to go up to Vincennes and steal boats.

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26. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779; Bowman's Journal; Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 140, 157, 270-271.

27. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 157, 271-272.

28. Clark's people reached the Wabash at the site of today's St. Francisville.

Early the next day (the 19th) Captain McCarty's people built a canoe. By the time they had finished, the volunteers returned and reported that because of flood waters they had been unable to find any dry land. Captain McCarty and three of his men now embarked in the canoe. Within a league of the dreary camp, they sighted smoke--from four large fires--and turned back. McCarty believed these were camp fires.<sup>29</sup>

Clark was undaunted. Orders were issued for two men to take the canoe and go downstream and contact the *Willing*. They were to tell Lieutenant Rogers to push up the Wabash, as the men were starving. The men for the last two days had had no rations. Game was scarce in the area and many of the provisions had spoiled on the march from Kaskaskia. Many of the soldiers--especially the French volunteers--were accordingly "much cast down."<sup>30</sup>

The camp was unusually quiet on the morning of the 20th. All the troops were very hungry, and many of the French spoke of abandoning the expedition and returning to their homes. Clark laughed off their fears, and told them he would be glad if they went out and killed some deer. As for himself, Clark had no idea of abandoning the campaign, especially as there were plenty of horses that could be butchered if the situation continued to deteriorate. He conducted himself to lead all to believe that he was certain of success. He felt that if they were not discovered in the next 48 hours, they would find a way to cross the booming Wabash. To keep the men's thoughts off their difficulty, Clark put them to work building canoes.<sup>31</sup>

About noon the sentry posted on the river hailed a boat with five passengers. When the vessel landed, it was found to contain five Frenchmen and some provisions.<sup>32</sup> Brought before Clark, the *habitants* explained that they were en route to join a hunting party down the Wabash. As yet, word of the army's presence had not reached Governor Hamilton, while the inhabitants, they continued, were well-disposed toward the Americans. They told Clark that the British had strengthened the fort;

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29. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 158, 272.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 158, 272-273.

32. A local historian, O. P. Baker, identified two of these men as Peter Hernot and Nicholas Cardinal. Draper Mss., 23 J 117.

that Hamilton's force of regulars and militia had not been diminished in the weeks since Vigo's departure; that Captain Williams' brother had made his escape and Maisonville had been sent in pursuit. They also told Clark that they had passed two canoes adrift.

Clark ordered Captain Worthington to take a party and recover the canoes. Worthington and his people found and returned with one of the derelicts. Later in the day one of Bowman's men killed a deer, which was divided and rationed to each company.<sup>33</sup>

By daybreak on the 21st Clark, having secured sufficient small craft, began crossing his command. A small rearguard, the excess baggage, and horses were left on the west bank. The troops were landed on a small knoll, dubbed the lower Mamell.<sup>34</sup> Captain Williams with two men was sent to scout a route across the flooded plain. They spotted two men in a canoe and gave chase, but they were unable to overtake them.

The five hunters told Clark at this time that he could not reach Vincennes that night, if at all. Clark and his lieutenants believed differently. At an order from Clark, the little army started forward. By dusk the Americans had covered a league, wading much of the way through water that frequently reached their armpits. Camp for the night was made on the 2d Mamell.<sup>35</sup>

His guides told Clark that the next dry land was several leagues distant at the Sugar Camp.<sup>36</sup> Clark--at daybreak on the 22d--ordered out a party in a canoe to make soundings. The canoe soon returned

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33. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 158, 273.

34. The Lower Mamell can be easily pinpointed. It is located in the southeast quarter of Section No.21, Township 2 North, Range 11 West. This site and others on Clark's march from the Wabash to Vincennes, were visited by the author and Superintendent A. W. Banton on June 11, 1967.

35. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 158-159, 273. The 2d Mamell is located in the southwest quarter of Section 23, Township 2 North, Range 11 West.

36. The Sugar Camp was located about one-half mile northwest of the Cathlinette Prairie Surveys, adjacent to what in 1779 was a large pond.

and the officer in charge reported the water was too deep. Clark then went out himself. He found that there were no points where the water was over neck-deep. By the time he had returned to the bivouac, he had determined to employ the canoes to shuttle his people to the Sugar Camp, which would take at least 24 hours. He now had second thoughts--his men had had nothing to eat on the 21st and the loss of so much time could be disastrous. As he disembarked, the men congregated around. Clark spoke to one of his officers, and though they did not know what he had said, a number of the men became badly frightened. He reacted to this situation with his characteristic alacrity. Scooping up some water in his hand, Clark mixed in some gunpowder and blackened his face. He then let go a mighty whoop and waded into the water without a further word. The soldiers fell in one after the other. He called for those nearest him to begin singing a popular marching song.<sup>37</sup>

The sick had been placed in canoes. It had been Clark's intention to have his troops shuttled across the deepest water, but when the water was about waist deep one of the men called that he thought he felt a path with his feet. An examination satisfied Clark that the soldier was correct, and concluding that the trail would follow the high ground, the column waded on. The army reached the Sugar Camp without further adventure. Soon after going into bivouac, the cold and hungry men heard the fort's evening gun.<sup>38</sup>

A cold front now crossed the Wabash Valley, and the weather--which had been unseasonably warm for February at this latitude--turned cold. Ice from one-half to three-quarters of an inch formed during the night on the slackwater and near the shore. Before putting his column in motion on the 23rd, Clark assembled his officers and men. He gave them a talk, and concluded by saying that once they had crossed the flooded Horseshoe Plain to their front, they would sight the goal for which they had endured so much. Without waiting for a reply, Clark stepped

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37. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 159, 273-274.

38. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 159, 274-275. The trail followed by the little army was known as the Buttes' Trail. This trail led from the vicinity of the 2d Mamell to Vincennes, passing to the south of the Grand Morass. Cawthorn to Draper, April 22, 1890, Draper Mss. 25 J 91-106. The *habitants* visited the Sugar Camp annually to tap the maples.

into the water. The men let go with a "Huzza!" and prepared to follow their indomitable leader. Before a third of the soldiers had entered the icy water, Clark called to Captain Bowman to bring up the rear with 25 of his best men. Bowman was to put to death any who held back.

The crossing of the flooded Horseshoe Plain was the most trying experience encountered since leaving Kaskaskia. As heretofore since ferrying the Wabash, the canoes were utilized to transport the "weak and benumbed." By the time that he reached the middle of the plain, Clark, himself, felt that even his superior strength was being sapped. To make matters more embarrassing, there were no longer trees or bushes for the men to cling to. Until leaving the Sugar Camp, the line of march had led across a heavily timbered flood plain. Now Clark feared that many of the weaker would drown. He shouted to the men in charge of the canoes to push ahead and land their passengers on the first dry ground. They would then return and pick up those who had straggled. A number of the strongest were told to push ahead, with orders that when they got a certain distance they were to pass the word back that the water was getting shallower, and when they approached the woods near the Grand Morass they were to cry, "Land!"<sup>39</sup>

The plan worked. Encouraged by the shouts, the exhausted men pushed on, the stronger supporting those on the verge of collapse. As the head of the column neared the woods, the water deepened. Entering the woods, the soldiers found to their dismay that the frigid water was up to their shoulders. The trees, however, were life-savers, as the men were able to cling to them, while the weaker people were able to support themselves by grabbing hold of old logs that were afloat, until such time as they could be pulled into canoes and shuttled to a "delightful Dry spot of Ground of about Ten Acres." The "strong and Tall" gathered wood and built fires. Many of the less fortunate, as they struggled toward this haven, stumbled and fell with their lower extremities in the water--upper on dry land. The stronger rushed to the rescue. Two sets of brawny arms would seize

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39. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 159, 275-276. The Grand Morass, even during the summer, was an all but impassable swamp. It was located about midway between the Sugar Camp and the Wabash. Cawthorn to Draper, April 22, 1890, Draper Mss., 25 J 91-106.

a man who had faltered and drag him ashore. The sun had come out, and fortunately for the Americans the day had turned quite warm.<sup>40</sup>

Clark and his people were very lucky, because at this hour the men in one of the canoes sighted a similar craft crowded with squaws and children coming toward them across the flooded plain. The soldiers pursued and quickly overhauled the Indians. Aboard their prize, they discovered a quarter of buffalo and some "corn, Tallow, Kettles, etc." The food was invaluable. Clark had a broth prepared, which was ladled out to the weaker men. Most of the little army received some, but "a great many would not taste it but gave their part to" their weaker comrades. When he released the Indians, Clark warned them not to return to Vincennes.

By noon the command had recovered its strength. Clark and his men now resumed the march across the plain. After crossing a narrow deep lake in canoes and marching some distance, they gained a copse of timber known as Warriors' Island.<sup>41</sup> The area was heavily wooded, and the Americans scrounged for nuts (hickories and pecans). Several of the soldiers scared up a fox and chased him up a linden tree. A man climbed the tree, knocked the fox down, to be caught and killed by those below. The beast was divided and eaten. One of Charleville's Frenchmen took the entrails, wrapped them around a stick, scorched them in a fire, and devoured them.<sup>42</sup>

While the men rested on Warriors' Island, Clark and several of his officers advanced to the edge of the woods. From their vantage point they could see, at a distance of two miles, Fort Sackville and the village. There were no intervening trees or brush to hinder their view, and as the men feasted their eyes, they forgot that they "had suffered anything[;] that all that had passed was owing to good policy . . . ." The terrain between them and their goal was level, and the flooded swales were covered with migratory ducks. Several men on horseback (Mitchell Deboyca and Nicholas Trottier) were out shooting ducks

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40. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 159, 276.

41. Warrior's Island was located on a slight elevation about half-way between the 10-Acre Copse and Bunker Hill.

42. Brickley to Draper, Nov. 1845 and Aug. 1858, Draper Mss., 8J 23.

this afternoon not over one-half mile away. Clark sent several of the Frenchmen captured on the 20th to take one of the hunters without alarming the others. This mission was successfully discharged.<sup>43</sup>

Clark, on questioning the prisoner, was delighted to learn that Governor Hamilton was unaware of his approach. He reported that the British had that day completed strengthening the stockade, and that there was a large number of Indians in and around the village. Clark realized that his situation was critical, for if he were defeated, retreat would be impossible. The reinforcements aboard *Willing* would be of slight consequence. But what was important was that he had succeeded in placing his little army within striking distance of the foe without arousing his suspicions. If he continued to act boldly, he could win the day. All the odds, however, were not on Hamilton's side. Clark knew that many of the French were passively if not actively pro-Virginian. One of the Piankashaw chiefs, Tobacco Son, had openly declared in front of Hamilton that he was "Brother and Friend to the big knife."

As a large number of hunters were about, Clark realized that there was scant possibility of his force remaining undiscovered until night-fall, so he determined to boldly announce his presence.<sup>44</sup> A letter was addressed to the *habitants* of Vincennes:

Being now within two Miles of Your Village with my Army determin'd to take your Fort this Night and not being willing to surprize you I take this step to request of such of you as are true citizens and willing to enjoy the liberty I bring you, to remain still in your houses, and those (if any there be) that are friends to the King, will instantly repair to the fort and join the fair Buyer Genl and fight like Men and if any such as to do not go to the fort, shall be discovered afterwards, the [sic] my depend on severe punishment, on the contrary those that are true friends to liberty may depend on being well treated and I once more request they shall keep out of the streets for every person I find in arms on my Arrival I shall treat as an Enemy.<sup>45</sup>

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43. Baker to Draper, May 19, 1884, Draper Mss., 18 J 117; Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, Bowman's Journal, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CHS*, Vol. 8, 140-141, 159, 276-277.

44. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CHS*, Vol. 8, 277.

45. Bowman's Journal, found in *CHS*, Vol. 8, 159.



To deceive the foe, Clark embarked on a war of nerves. It was stated within hearing of the hunter that the army had come from Kentucky. Several officers, who were known to reside in Kentucky, sent messages to friends of theirs in the village. When the soldiers spoke of their numbers, they spoke of "near 1000 of us."<sup>46</sup>

When the *habitant* left the copse, Clark and his men anxiously watched his passage across the flooded plain and into the village. As Clark trained his glass on Vincennes, he saw that the arrival of the hunter had created much excitement.

The hunter entered the village simultaneously with roll call at the fort. When he made known his mission, *habitants* with no interest in the struggle sought shelter in their houses, while those favoring the American cause headed for the Commons. No one took it upon himself to alert the English. When questioned by the British as to what had caused the excitement, the villagers explained that they were watching for Captain La Mothe. Several persons whom Hamilton suspected of having had intercourse with the foe, including Moses Henry, were being held in the fort. Mrs. Henry went to the fort to take her spouse provisions, and whispered the news to her man. Henry in turn passed the word to his fellow prisoners, including Captain Helm.

Clark and his men watched as a large number of villagers came out onto the Commons, and pointed wildly across the flooded prairie toward the woods in which they were sheltered. There was no alarm gun from the fort or beating of the "long roll" which surprised the Americans because they believed that their approach would certainly trigger violent action by the British. Clark feared that the information he had secured from the hunters was false, and that the English already knew of his coming and were braced to meet him.

It was nearly sundown, when Clark passed the word to move out. The army advanced off Warriors' Island in two battalions; the first consisting of three companies--Williams', Worthington's, and Charleville's, and the second--Bowman's and McCarty's companies. Within a few minutes, Clark's soldiers were in view of the *habitants*. The five villagers who had joined them on the 20th acted as guides, as the Americans waded forward, drums beating and colors snapping in the breeze. To make his numbers appear greater than they were, Clark had his people move slowly, with a great amount of marching and counter-marching. Before leaving Kaskaskia the militia had supplied themselves with 10 or 12 stands of colors, which were now displayed to advantage.

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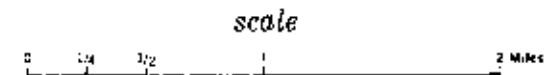
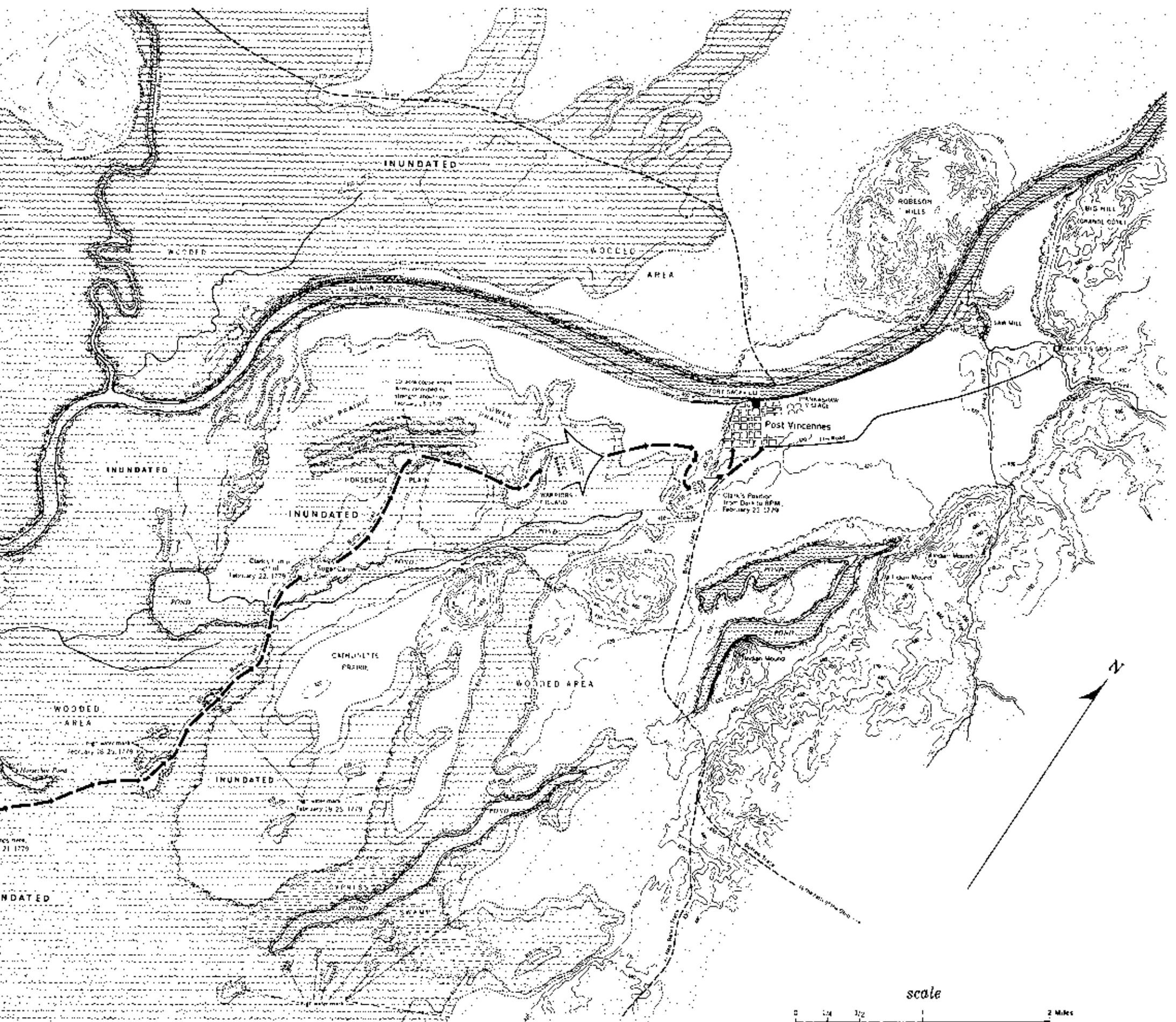
46. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CINS*, Vol.8, 141, 278.

GEORGE ROGERS CLARK National Historical Park

THE APPROACH MARCH — February 18-23, 1779

**Legend**

	Clark's Line of March		Not Wooded		Inundated
	Camp		Intermittent Stream		Wooded
	Trail		Wooded		High water mark
	Trace		Not Wooded		Contour of Elevation above sea level
	Mil		Wooded		Not Inundated
	Clark's Line of Advance		Stream		
	Command				
	Battalion				
	Company				



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NOTE

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THIS SCALE DRAWING OR MAP IS NOT AVAILABLE ON MICROFICHE.

*HISTORICAL BACK MAP*  
SEE ~~DRAWING NO.~~ *ON APERTURE OR* IN ORIGINAL

~~DOCUMENTS/REPORTS.~~

The plain across which the advance was made had a number of swales and low ridges that ran in an oblique direction to the village, so Clark took advantage of one of these to make a covered approach. Frequently only their colors--affixed to long poles--were visible at a distance. Several additional hunters having been captured, Clark had mounted most of his officers who were then ordered to ride back and forth across the field in view of the fort.

It was dark by the time the army was halfway across the prairie. Clark now altered his line of march and forded several ponds. It was 8 p.m. by the time the Americans had gained the heights (subsequently named Bunker Hill) southwest of the village. Clark called for lieutenant Bayley. The Lieutenant was to push ahead with 14 Virginians and open fire on Fort Sackville, while Clark--with the rest of the army--occupied Vincennes.<sup>47</sup> While Bayley and his soldiers crept forward, the two battalions took possession of the main street.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, Bowman's Journal, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 141-142, 160, 279-280; Draper Mss., 2 J 62-63, 10 J 68. One of the color bearers was Jean Baptiste Jarris, an ensign in Charleville's company.

48. Main Street has always been the same from the time Vincennes was a French village until today. Henry S. Cawthorn, "St. Francis Xavier's," *The Catholic Record*, March 12, 1891. Bowman's battalion entered Vincennes along today's Prairie Street, while Clark's advanced via Main Street. Draper Mss. 2 J, 62-63, 10 J 211, 27 J 99.

## CHAPTER VII

### Clark Captures Fort Sackville

The distance was too great for the British sentries posted in the Fort Sackville blockhouses to spot the Americans as they caught their second wind on Warriors' Island. Although the distance was only one and one-half miles, their suspicions were not aroused by the activities of the duck hunters. Lieutenant Governor Hamilton's first inkling that the foe might be lurking in the vicinity was when he learned of the excitement in the village caused by Clark's message. As a precautionary measure, he turned out the Vincennes Militia--three companies strong. Major LeGras and Captain Bosscron, along with several privates, failed to fall out, and Hamilton suspected treachery. About sunset the two officers reported, and the British, not anticipating a night attack by Americans, relaxed their vigilance.<sup>1</sup>

Hamilton at dark on February 23, 1779, retired to his quarters in Fort Sackville. Captain Helm, for whom the Governor had developed a fondness, was sent for, and the American suggested a game of cards to help pass the evening. Hamilton was agreeable. They were startled about five minutes after candles had been lit by a loud crack. The Governor leaped to his feet, exclaiming, "That was a shot! What is its meaning?" Helm said it was nothing, as the Americans would not make a night attack. The game continued. A second shot drew Hamilton's attention once more, but again the Captain called him back to the game. Moments later there was a volley, whereupon the Britisher leaped to his feet and shouted, "What is the meaning of this firing?" All was then quiet, and Hamilton, as he sat down and shuffled the cards, remarked, "My Indians seem disposed to honor me tonight."

Helm, after picking up his hand, threw it down and exclaimed, "No, those are Clark's rifles, and you'll be his prisoner before this time tomorrow!"<sup>2</sup>

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1. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 186.

2. Keel to Draper, Feb. 9, 1882; Brickley to Draper, Nov. 1845, and Aug. 1858, Draper Mss. 6J 65-66 and 8 J 1-4.

Hamilton was still unconvinced. He could not shake the smug self-confidence that told him it was impossible for Clark's army to cross the rain-swollen rivers and flooded lowlands to assail him in his stronghold. Once again, he chided Helm that the shots had been fired by some of his Indians returning from a hunt, or perhaps "there was some riotous frolic in the Village." This time, however, he excused himself and went downstairs. Emerging from his quarters, he started across the parade ground to discover the source of the shooting. Several balls whistled close to his ears, and he shouted for his men to man the blockhouses, but not "to fire till they perceived the shots to be directed against the Fort." A ball now passed through one of the gunports and struck Sergeant John Chapmen in the chest. Hamilton now had the "long roll" beaten. The soldiers occupied the blockhouses and platforms with orders not to fire until they could be certain of hitting their mark.

A sharp fire-fight developed. The Americans enjoyed a pronounced advantage, because they were armed with rifle-muskets and sheltered by the nearby church, houses, barns, and picket fences. (The pickets were well set and about six-foot in height and provided excellent protection.) Surgeon John McBeath, who was in the village when the fighting commenced, rushed to the fort, and as he passed through the gate he narrowly escaped death. Reporting to Hamilton, he claimed that as soon as the first shots were fired, the lady of the house where he was quartered told him that Colonel Clark, with 500 men from the Illinois Country, had attacked the village.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, Clark had ordered Captain Bowman's battalion to reconnoiter and dig in. Bowman's people crossed the main street and threw up breastworks within 120 yards of the fort's gate. Material for the breastworks was secured by tearing down picket fences and razing outbuildings and abandoned houses. Picked men from Bowman's unit slipped forward and occupied the ground between the Wabash and the northeast palisade. Here they took cover, with the flood-swollen river at their feet and the top of the bank at their heads.

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3. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 186.

Although the night was dark, the Americans wounded five of the garrison, in addition to Sergeant Chapman. The weather was so cold that the wounded were carried into Hamilton's quarters. Officers quartered in tents around the parade ground found themselves exposed to the fire of the Rebels, as the logs in the palisade were "so poorly set up that one might pass the hand clench'd between." With the cannon mounted in the blockhouses, the British gunners were able to dislodge Clark's sharpshooters from the church and the churchyard fence, as well as several nearby houses and barns. When day dawned, Hamilton and his people saw that the villagers had sided with the Americans, and he despaired of Captain La Mothe's patrol being able to regain the stockade.<sup>4</sup>

Ammunition was scarce with the Americans, for most of theirs was aboard *Hilling*. Fortunately for Clark, several of the inhabitants, among them LeGras and Bosseron, on learning of Hamilton's order that they turn in their weapons and ammunition, had buried the "greatest part of their powder and Ball." On entering the village, the Americans had made for the homes of these men, and they had supplied them with ammunition.

Tobacco's Son had placed himself at the head of about 100 Kickapoo and Piankashaw warriors and had announced that he wished to join the Americans. Clark halted the Indians as they prepared to assail the fort, and told them he was glad that they had rallied to his side. It would be best, he explained, if they waited until morning before committing their forces, as in the confusion of a night attack it would be impossible to tell friend from foe. Tobacco's Son was agreeable and recalled his warriors. At the same time, a number of Indians who favored the British evacuated Vincennes.<sup>5</sup>

Having closely invested Fort Sackville, Clark at daybreak made a careful reconnaissance. All his troops, except 50 held in reserve to repulse a sortie, were posted in and around houses, behind the picket fences which enclosed the settlers' gardens, behind the breastworks thrown up by Bowman's battalion, in ditches, and along the riverbank. Clark saw that the foe's cannon were emplaced on the second floors of the two blockhouses at opposite angles of the fort. The gunports were 11 feet above the ground, and--fortunately for the Americans--so badly planned that a number of Clark's sharpshooters were able to

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4. Cawthorn, "St. Francis Xavier's," *The Catholic Record*, March 12, 1891; Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 186.

5. Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779 and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 142, 281.

take cover within 20 or 30 yards of the stockade. While the projectiles from the cannon did little harm to Clark's people, they damaged a number of nearby houses. So effective was the fire of the Americans that the British were compelled to close the gunport shutters. In a successful effort to goad the English into raising the shutters, they cursed them. Whenever the cannoneers loaded a gun and raised the shutter to fire, at least 50 rifles would be sighted on the port. Clark, subsequently voiced the opinion, "if they had . . . stood to their Artillery . . . the greatest part of them would have been destroyed in the course of the Night as the greatest part of our men Lay within Thirty yards of the Walls." Similar tactics, though on a reduced scale, were employed against any of the foe daring to fire his musket through a loophole.<sup>6</sup>

The actions of Captain Bowman and others were directed toward convincing Hamilton that storming parties were being organized. Men within 30 feet of the stockade's northeast angle<sup>7</sup> started tunneling from a point on the river bank. This it was hoped would be interpreted by the foe as the beginning of a mine. Clark, however, did not feel he had sufficient time to besiege Fort Sackville. Time, he realized, was on the side of the British, as they could expect the Indians to rally to their cause.<sup>8</sup> If *Willing* failed to arrive or if Hamilton could not be bluffed, the mining operations would be pushed.<sup>9</sup>

Captain La Mothe, hearing the firing, returned to Vincennes to discover the fort surrounded. Clark had learned from several of the villagers of the departure of La Mothe's patrol and had sent a party to intercept it. The Americans, in the darkness, failed to contact La Mothe and his people. La Mothe spotted the foe first, and he and his men hid in a large barn, from where they watched the American patrols as they passed within 20 yards. Two of his people (Jervais and Roy) lost their nerve, and when La Mothe's attention was diverted elsewhere, they slipped away.

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6. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 281-283. Men who had visited or been stationed in the village were posted in the houses nearest the fort. Brickley to Draper, Nov. 1845 and Aug. 1858. Draper Mss. 8 J 1-4.

7. There was a narrow belt of ground between the top of the river bank and the flood-swollen Wabash at this point. This area was in defilade and provided Bowman's people a safe haven from which to snipe and sap.

8. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 283.

9. *Ibid.*, 283-284.



By midnight the two Canadians had been captured and brought to Clark's command post, located in a house on the north side of main street near the river.<sup>10</sup> Clark learned from them that La Mothe and his men were hovering about awaiting a favorable opportunity to slip into Fort Sackville. As most of the British partisans were either in the fort or with La Mothe, Clark began to fret. He foresaw that, unless there was an unexpected development, Hamilton would be compelled to surrender. At the same time a reinforcement of 20 men, although considerable to the garrison, would not alter the situation. It might be good strategy, he reasoned, to let La Mothe rejoin Hamilton, rather than allow him to rendezvous with the Indians. Shortly before dawn on the 24th, Clark recalled all his men, excepting a few pickets. The firing ceased. Orders were passed that in event La Mothe's patrol approached there was to be no alarm, unless the capture or death of all the partisans was assured.

La Mothe fell for the ruse. He and his men passed within ten feet of one of Clark's officers. The password was given, and a relieved Hamilton, who had despaired of again seeing the Canadians, had his men throw ladders over to them. As they reached the top of the stockade, with their "Arms in their hands," several of Clark's soldiers let go a shout. This caused the wildest panic. Some of the men leaped down off the stockade, while others fell to the ground, 11 feet below. Scrambling to their feet, these people again scaled

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10. According to a deposition filed by Michel Brouillette in 1823, a house had stood at the west end of Market Street (today's Main Street) near the river. Sometime before 1792 it passed to Pierre Cornoyer. Then about 1806, for some reason, probably because it was not occupied," the said house had been pulled down in a frolic."

While the lot was vacant it was used as an access by those who wanted to get to the river. Later R. P. Price bought the lot from George K. C. Sullivan and built a house on it. Town officials then decided that the lot should have remained a street and sued Price in 1823 for obstructing it. Thus it was that Brouillette gave his deposition about an earlier house on the lot and said, "that when General Clarke [sic] came to Vincennes with his army from the Illinois the said house was occupied as his headquarters, that he recollects perfectly from the circumstances of five Indian Prisoners being killed before the door of said house." *Indiana History Bulletin*, Oct. 1948, p. 185; Ltr. Dunn to Bearss, July 27, 1967. Miss Caroline Dunn is Librarian in the William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana State Historical Society.

the ladders. All succeeded, as Clark had hoped, in rejoining Hamilton, except Maisonville. Betrayed by his cousin (Montburn) he was captured.<sup>11</sup>

The firing now resumed. Clark recalled, "I believe that more Noise could not have been made by the same Number of men[.] [Yet] Their shouts could not be heard for the fire arms." By sunup Clark's troops invested the stockade at distances from 60 to 100 yards. The firing now subsided.<sup>12</sup>

Clark had learned of the capture of the two Virginians by Maisonville, and he feared that they were carrying important dispatches addressed to him from Williamsburg. To save these papers, which he mistakenly believed the couriers to be carrying, Clark at 8 a.m. called for a cease fire. A captain in the Vincennes militia (Nicholas Cardinal), carrying a white flag, advanced with a message drafted by Clark to Hamilton, reading:

In order to save yourself from the Impending Storm that now Threatens you[,] I order you to Immediately surrender yourself up with all your Garrison Stores &c. &c. for if I am obliged to storm, you may depend upon such Treatment justly due to a Murderer [.] Beware of destroying Stores of any kind or any papers or letters that is in your possession or hurting one house in the Town for by heavens if you do there shall be no Mercy shewn you.<sup>13</sup>

Hamilton assembled his officers and read to them the ultimatum, and on finishing he told them that he intended "to undergo any extremity rather than trust to the discretion of such sort of people as we had to deal with." They voiced their approval of his stand. Next Hamilton had the men formed, and he revealed to them his determination to hold fast. The regulars assured him "they would defend the King's Colors to the last, adding a homely but hearty phrase, that

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11. Bowman's Journal, Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, and Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 160, 186-187, 283-284.

12. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 284-285.

13. Bowman's Journal and Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 160, 187.

they would stick to me as the shirt to my back!" They then gave out with three cheers. The Canadians were unenthusiastic, and they bowed their heads.<sup>14</sup>

Hamilton then drafted his reply, "Govr. Hamilton begs leave to acquaint Col. Clark that he and his Garrison are not disposed to be awed into any action Unworthy of British subjects."<sup>15</sup>

The fighting now resumed. Clark had to be careful to keep his men from unnecessarily exposing themselves. Demands were voiced that they be permitted to storm the fort. Clark rejected these proposals as too rash. His men blazed away at "every crack that could be discovered in any part of the Fort." Several of the garrison were cut down, wounded, and it was suicidal for the English to employ their cannon.<sup>16</sup> La Mothe's volunteers began to fret, complaining within Hamilton's hearing that "it was very hard to be obliged to fight against their countrymen and relations."

As the French made up half his effectives, Hamilton became alarmed. The six wounded regulars were a sixth of his dependable force. Realizing that he was 600 miles from Detroit and succour--that if he did not fire the village it sheltered the enemy--that if he did, he had nothing to expect but the "extremity of revenge--" Hamilton determined to make an effort to secure honorable terms.<sup>17</sup>

Before making an effort to reopen negotiations, Hamilton explained his reasoning first to his officers and then to the men. The British reluctantly admitted that their leader was correct. Hamilton then addressed a letter to Clark.<sup>18</sup> He proposed a three-day truce during which he promised that his men would not strengthen their works, while Clark would hold in abeyance further operations aimed at the reduction of Fort Sackville. He also wished to confer with Clark, and "whatever may pass between them two and any other Person mutually-agreed upon to be present, shall remain a secret

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14. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 187.

15. Bowman's Journal, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 160-161.

16. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 285.

17. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 187.

18. *Ibid.*, 187-188.

till Matters be finally concluded." If Clark did not wish to enter the fort, Hamilton would speak to him "before the Gate."<sup>19</sup>

Clark was perplexed by this message. He was unable to see what Hamilton could gain from a three-day armistice. Several of his officers warned him to beware, as it was a trap to enable the British to capture him. Suspecting that Hamilton wanted to give up gracefully, Clark replied that he would "not agree to any other terms than that of Mr. Hamiltons surrendering himself and Garrison Prisoners at discretion[.] If Hamilton were desirous of a conference, he would meet him at the church."<sup>20</sup>

While Hamilton was preparing to meet Clark, the American pickets posted on the Buffalo Trace sighted a party of from 15 to 20 Ottawas and Delawares, and two Frenchmen sent by Hamilton to reconnoiter toward the Falls of the Ohio. They were returning to Fort Sackville with two Canadians whom they had captured. There was no firing, so the newcomers took no precautions as they debouched from the woods and started across the Commons. Their coming was no surprise for they had been pinpointed some time before by several of Clark's Kickapoo allies. Clark shouted for Captain Williams, telling him to order out a 70-man detachment, and see if he could effect their capture.

The scouts saw the British flag snapping in the breeze, and, not realizing their deadly peril, they let go a whoop and "came on with all the Parade of suckcess for Warriours." Williams' column marched toward them. The Indians now discharged their pieces into the air, as was customary when encountering friends. Williams did likewise. When they were within a few steps of one another, the partisan leader became suspicious and halted. Williams leaped forward and seized him in a grip of steel. The rest, seeing that they had made a terrible mistake, took to their heels. They were too late, as Williams' people opened fire. Two were killed, three wounded, and eight captured.

Williams returned with his prisoners and paraded them in the main street opposite the fort's gate. He then ordered his prisoners, who had had their hands bound, to sit in a circle. Two of the prisoners, it was now learned, were men the scouting party had captured, so they were released.

19. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 285.

20. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779 and Bowman's Journal, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 143, 161.

Clark now determined to teach the Indians a terrible lesson, and at the same time demonstrate to them that Governor Hamilton "could not give them that protection that he had made them to believe he could." He ordered the Indians tomahawked in view of the garrison. One was killed immediately. The other four, seeing the fate of their comrade, sang their death songs. Circling to the left, the Americans bashed in the heads of the others. The chief of the party, Macutté Mong, when struck in the head did not fall, but instead, wrenching his hands free, seized the tomahawk and returned it to "the inhuman monster who struck him first." The American struck him a second and a third blow, after which several of the Virginians seized the Indian, placed a rope around his neck, and dragged him to the Wabash. He was thrown in, and "suffer'd to spend still a few moments of life in fruitless strugglings [sic]." <sup>21</sup>

Lieutenant La Croix of McCarty's company had only one son, Sergeant Jean B. R. Santcrainte, and he had led the patrol. Clark, when asked if the partisan leader should be spared, said, "No." Whereupon Lieutenant La Croix drew his sword and stood by to run the partisan through. As Santcrainte was painted and dressed as an Indian, his father failed to recognize him. The executioner asked La Croix to step aside, as he raised his tomahawk to deliver the fatal blow. Seeing that his life was about to be snuffed out, Santcrainte "raised his eyes as if making his last Address to heaven; Cried out O save me!" The father recognized his son's voice.

Clark had no sympathy for "such Murderers," and, knowing that efforts would be made to get him to spare the condemned, he started to walk away. He, however, permitted himself to be swayed by the pleas of the father and several of his officers. Relenting, he granted Santcrainte and his fellow partisan, Sergeant J. Robert, their lives under certain conditions. <sup>22</sup>

The Ottawas, Delawares, Piankashaws, and Kickapoos, who were interested spectators of all that had occurred, reacted as Clark had anticipated. Instead of rallying to the support of the doomed, they "up-braided the English Parties in not trying to save their friends, and gave them to understand that they believed them to be liars and no Warriors [sic]." <sup>23</sup>

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21. Report of Hamilton, found in *CTHS*, Vol.8, 189.

22. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779, Bowman's Journal, Clark's Journal, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CTHS*, Vol.8, 144-145, 161, 167, 189, 288. The other partisan, Sergeant Robert, was spared by his sister's interceding for his life.

23. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779, found in *CTHS*, Vol.8, 144.

Seeing that the gate of the fort had opened and that Hamilton, dressed in his regimentals, had emerged, Clark--about 2 p.m.--crossed the breastworks erected by Bowman's battalion and strode out onto the esplanade. Hamilton was accompanied by Major Hay and Captain Helm, Clark by Captain Bowman. Clark was sweating. His face and hands were bloody; blood had spurted on his buckskins. He was as Hamilton wrote, "yet reeking with the blood of these unhappy Victims." Lieutenant Schieffelin recalled years later that Clark had dipped his hands in the blood, "rubbed it several times on his cheeks, yelping as a savage." Clark, according to Hamilton, "spoke with rapture of his late achievement," but he forced an air of nonchalance as he washed the gore from his hands, and remarked in an offhand way that he had been killing Indians.<sup>24</sup>

Hamilton, his nerves badly frayed by what he had just witnessed, pulled out a paper he had prepared in which he agreed

to deliver up to Colonel Clarke [sic], Fort Sackville as it is at present with all the Stores, ammunition and provisions, reserving only thirty-six rounds of powder & ball per man, and as many weeks' provisions, as shall be sufficient to subsist those of the garrison who shall go by land or by Water to New destination which is to be agreed upon hereafter.

The garrison are to deliver themselves up prisoners of War, and to march out with their Arms, accoutrements and Knapsacks.

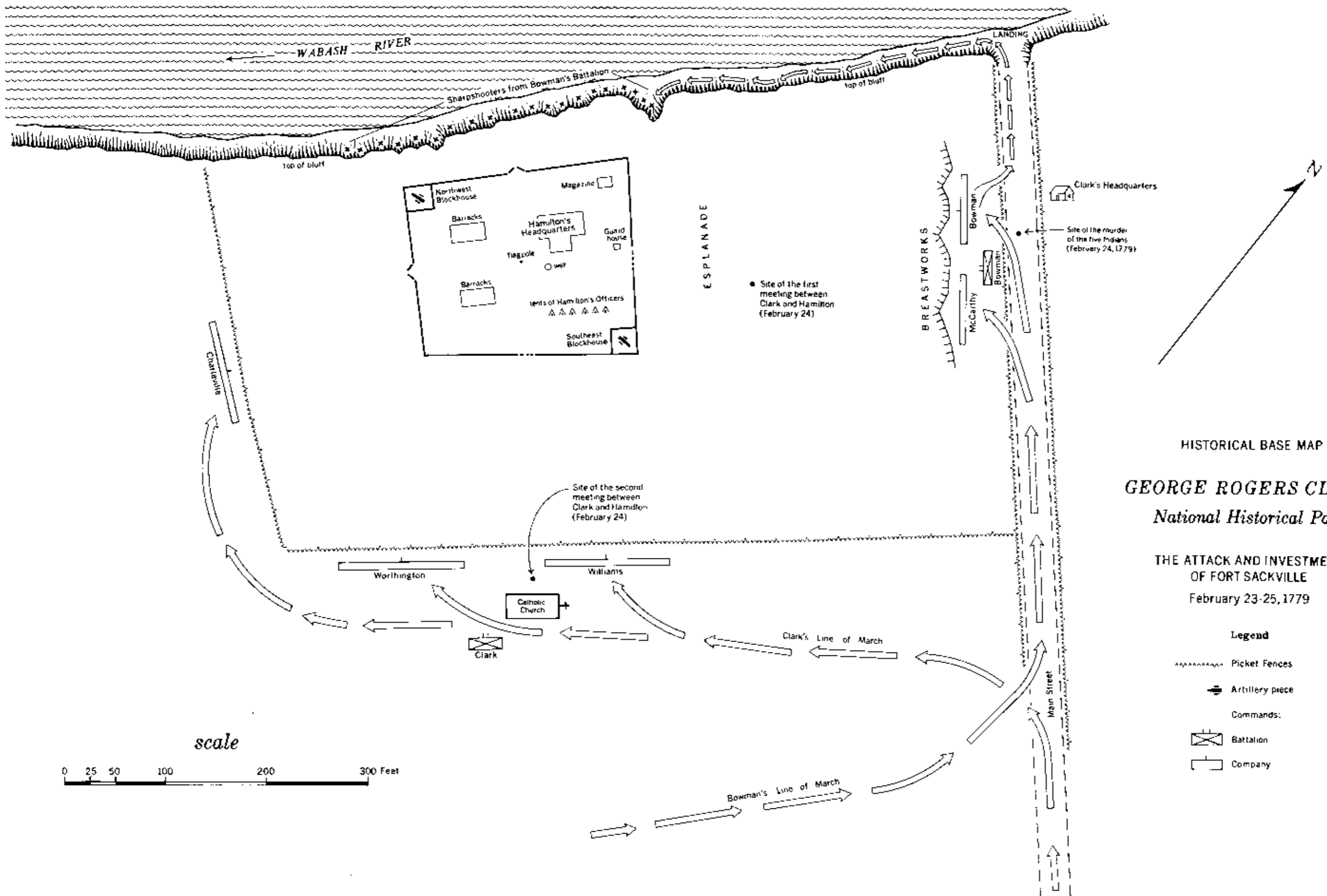
A Guide or Guides to be given, with a safeguard to escort the Garrison to their destination . . . .

The Garrison not to be deliver'd up, till the person employed by Colonel Clarke [sic] shall have receiv'd an account of the stores &c.

Three days time from the signing the Articles, to be allowed the Garrison for providing shoes &c necessary for the journey (if by land) for the baking of bread, and for settling accounts . . . .

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24. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 190. A bateau pulled up onto the esplanade and filled with rainwater was used by Clark to wash off the blood. From the esplanade, the men walked over toward the church.



HISTORICAL BASE MAP  
**GEORGE ROGERS CLARK**  
*National Historical Park*  
 THE ATTACK AND INVESTMENT  
 OF FORT SACKVILLE  
 February 23-25, 1779

- Legend**
- ~~~~~ Picket Fences
  - ☛ Artillery piece
  - Commands:
  - ☒ Battalion
  - ☐ Company

Officers and others of the Garrison who have families,  
to be permitted to return to their homes . . . .

Sick and wounded are recommended to the humanity and  
generosity of Colonel Clarke [sic] . . . .<sup>25</sup>

Clark, after discussing each of the propositions, rejected Hamilton's proposals. He would accord the Englishman "such treatment on this Conference as a man of his known Barbarity deserv'd." The only term he could grant was that of surrendering the garrison at discretion. The sooner Hamilton agreed to this term the better, as it was "vain to make any propositions" to him. Since it was apparent that Fort Sackville was doomed, any further bloodshed would be on Hamilton's hands. Already, Clark warned, his men were calling for permission to storm the fort, and if this occurred a number of the grim Big Knives would be cut down, and he could not be responsible for the conduct of an "Inraged body of Woodmen." It would then be beyond his power and that of his officers to save a single man in the garrison.

Clark cautioned Hamilton it was foolish to think of prolonging his defense of Fort Sackville; that his cannon would be up in several hours; that he knew to a man who might be depended on; that if from a spirit of obstinacy he persisted, when there was no probability of relief and should stand an assault, not a "single Soul should be spared."

Captain Helm tried to mediate. Clark told him to be quiet for he was a British prisoner, and it was questionable if "he could with propriety Speak on the subject."

"Captain Helm you are liberated," Hamilton snapped. Clark refused to accept Helm and told him that he must return to the fort and "remain till I retake you." Governor Hamilton," he continued, "hostilities will be resumed one minute after the drums give the alarm."<sup>26</sup>

Hamilton answered that though his numbers were small, he could depend on his men.

"You have but 35 or 36 staunch men," Clark retorted, and consequently it was "folly to think of a defense with so small numbers so overmatched;" that if Hamilton would surrender at discretion and trust to Clark's generosity, he should have better treatment than if he argued for terms.

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25. Ibid., 188.

26. Clark's Journal and Report of Hamilton, found in CIHS, Vol.8, 167, 286-287.



"I will take my chances," Hamilton replied, "and never surrender at discretion as long as I have ammunition and provisions."

"You will be answerable," Clark interrupted, "for the lives lost by your obstinacy."

"My men have declared they will die with their weapons in their hand rather than surrender at discretion," Hamilton continued, but "I will accept such terms as might [be] consist [ent] with my honor and duty."

Clark responded that he would think about it and return in one-half hour.<sup>27</sup>

While Hamilton discussed the situation with his officers, Clark continued his campaign to break down the garrison's will to resist. The captured partisan, Maisonville, was brought forward and seated in a chair near where the Indians had been murdered. Earlier Clark's people had attempted to force Maisonville to divulge information by putting a rope around his neck and throwing the loose end over a limb. They had then lifted him several feet off the ground, and had let him back down before he lost consciousness.

One of Clark's soldiers had then asked, "What shall we do with him?"

"Oh, scalp him!" Clark replied, half in jest. Whereupon Sergeant John Moore stepped forward with a scalping knife. When the man hesitated, Clark swore and told him to proceed. Having lifted a "piece of the scalp," Moore again stopped, but he was told to go ahead. "As the executor of Col. Clarke's will, was in the act of raising the Skin," a brother of Maisonville, who was serving in one of the Illinois companies, stepped forward and successfully pled with Clark to desist.<sup>28</sup>

The second meeting between Clark and Hamilton took place at the church, about 80 yards south of the stockade. Bowman again accompanied Clark, while Major Hay escorted his Governor. The British regulars in the meantime, suspecting treachery, manned the southeast blockhouse. When the talks resumed, Clark seemed as determined as ever to bluff Hamilton into surrender at discretion. The Englishman accordingly announced

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27. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 190.

28. *Ibid.*, 189; Brickley to Draper, Nov. 1845 and Aug. 1858, Draper Mss., 8 J 1-4. Sergeant Moore took from Maisonville's head a small piece of the scalp, the size of a silver dollar.

that their "further discourse was vain, and he would return to the fort." To prevent any mistakes, no shooting was to take place for the first hour after they parted.

As he started for the post, Major Hay and Captain Bowman called to him. The subject was reviewed, and Clark agreed to study Hamilton's proposals.<sup>29</sup>

Clark, on reading over Hamilton's propositions, made a number of changes, which were forwarded for consideration. They were:

1st That Lieut Governor Hamilton engages to deliver up to Col. Clark, Fort Sackville as it is at present with all the Stores &c &c--

2d The Garrison [sic] are to deliver themselves up Prisoners of War and March out with their Arms and Accutriments &c &c [sic]--

3d The Garrison to {be} Delivered up tomorrow at ten O'clock --

4th Three days time to be allowed the Garrison to settle their Accounts with the Traders and Inhabitants of this Place--

5thly The officers and the Garrison [sic] to be allowed their necessary Baggage &c &c--<sup>30</sup>

After explaining the gravity of the situation to his officers, Hamilton informed them that he was accepting Clark's terms. Next the men were assembled and "convinced that no advantage to His Majesty's service could result from our holding out in the present circumstances."

Within the allotted time, Captain Helm emerged from the fort. When he glanced at the paper handed him by Helm, Clark saw that Hamilton had scrawled, "Agreed to for the following reasons, remoteness from succours the state and quantity of provisions &c[,] the unanimity of officers and men on its expediency, the Honble terms allowd and lastly the confidence of the Enemy."

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29. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779 and Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 149, 190-191.

30. Clark to Mason, Nov.19, 1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8,145.

Having given the necessary orders, Hamilton spent the night sorting his papers and "in preparing for the disagreeable ceremony of the next day."<sup>31</sup>

With the end at hand, Clark on the evening of February 24, 1779, saw that his troops were posted in several strong houses fronting Fort Sackville. As he did not trust the British, he saw to it that the area was heavily patrolled. Men not assigned guard duty were able to get their first full night of sleep since the evening of the 20th.

Shortly before 10 a.m., on February 25, Captains Bowman and McCarty mustered and formed their companies on one side of the gate to the fort. At the designated hour, Hamilton marched his men out onto the esplanade, with fixed bayonet and wearing their knapsacks. To be spared the mortification of having to lower the colors, he had seen that they were not hoisted as customary. As soon as the British had marched out, Colonel Clark--at the head of Captains Williams' and Worthington's companies--marched in, relieved the sentries, and ran up the American colors. The Britishers' arms having been stacked and secured, Hamilton and his people returned to the fort. Orders were given by Clark for a 13-gun salute from the 6-pounder mounted in one of the blockhouses. While the salute was being fired, there was an accident. A spark detonated 26 6-pounder cartridge bags, seriously burning Captains Bowman and Worthington, four of their men, and one of the English regulars.<sup>32</sup>

As remarkable as it may seem, until this accident, Clark's army had suffered only one casualty. In the fighting on the 24th, John Robertson's rifle had fouled, and he had started for the gunsmith. While doing so he had carelessly exposed himself, and his head had been grazed by a ball which made a slight wound and knocked him down.<sup>33</sup>

Clark was delighted to learn that Hamilton had dispatched a party up the Wabash to Ouiatanon for the stores that he had stockpiled there in early December. These supplies were destined for the scheduled Indian council at the mouth of the Tennessee and for the ensuing campaign. Clark determined to send *Willing* up the Wabash to capture them. When the galley failed to arrive on the 26th, Clark

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31. Clark's Journal and Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 168, 191.

32. Bowman's Journal and Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 162, 163.

33. Brickley to Draper, Nov. 185 and Aug. 1858, Draper Mss., 8 J 1-4.

called for Captain Helm. The captain was to outfit and arm three bateaux, and to man them with 50 volunteers of the Vincennes militia led by Majors Busseron and Le Gras. It was raining when Helm's expedition cast off--its mission was the capture of the supplies.

*Willing* finally arrived the next day, the 27th. Lieutenant Rogers and his men were crushed to discover they were too late. Aboard the galley was William Myers with important dispatches from Williamsburg. One of the messages led Clark to believe that reinforcements would be forthcoming in sufficient numbers to insure the success of the campaign he envisioned for the early capture of Detroit. Captain Bowman received a commission signed by Governor Henry making him a major.<sup>34</sup>

One evening, near the mouth of the Vermilion, as Helm's people were rowing up the Wabash, they sighted camp fires. Helm and his men landed and took position close to the unsuspecting encampment. As soon as the foe had quieted for the night, the Americans advanced and the entire group, consisting of two officers and 38 privates, was captured. More important, Helm found himself in possession of seven boats "loaded with Provisions [si ] and good [sic] to a considerable amount." There was also an interesting and valuable mail, containing letters posted from Detroit as late as February 6. Dejean, the courier, although he had learned at Ouiatanon of the fall of Vincennes had failed to destroy the dispatches.

Helm's command returned to Vincennes on March 5. Clark understandably was elated with the success of the expedition. When he read the captured letters, he discovered that the British at Detroit feared an attack in the spring, and they prayed that Hamilton would soon return. The captured provisions were turned over to the Quartermaster and Commissary, while the trade goods, except 800 pounds worth of clothes, were divided among the soldiers. The clothes were used to outfit Clark's army which, as a result of the rugged campaign, was half naked.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 162-163, 292.

35. Bowman's Journal, Report of Hamilton, and Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CIHS*, Vol.8, 163, 194, 293-294; McFails to Draper, Draper Mss. 23 J 12. The leader of the British was a commissary officer named Adhemar.

On March 7 Hamilton, seven of his officers, and 18 enlisted men were ordered aboard *Willing*. To subsist them on their long trip to Williamsburg, the British carried aboard the heavy oak craft, flour and pork and "14 Gallons of Spirits." Captain Williams and Lieutenant Rogers and 25 enlisted men also boarded the craft. Rogers' orders were to transport Hamilton and his party to the Falls of the Ohio, and then escort them overland to Williamsburg. The boat soon got under way, and on the afternoon of the 10th turned into the Ohio, which was at flood stage. The British were compelled to pole the boat upstream. "At night," Hamilton recalled, "we were obliged to lye [sic] in our boat making it fast to a tree, for the flood extended as far in the wood as the Eye could reach." Efforts to keep out the rain by erecting a crude shelter were futile, and we "lay like swine close jammed together having not room to extend ourselves."<sup>36</sup>

Rogers failed to keep a tight rein on his men, and their vigilance was such that the British could easily have seized their arms and have escaped down river to Natchez. Hamilton, after mature thought, urged his men to give up this idea, because "our companions left in the hands of the Rebels at St. Vincennes would be suffers for it."

*Willing* reached the Falls on March 30. Three months were required to cover the 840 miles that lay between the Falls and Williamsburg. On the evening of July 2 the door of the Williamsburg jail clanged shut behind Hamilton and his people.<sup>37</sup>

Clark had devoted some serious thought to pushing on to Detroit, but for the prisoners with whom he was encumbered he might have made the attempt. The Prospects were encouraging. The garrison had been reduced to 80 men in a dilapidated fort. The Indians were overawed. On mature reflection, Clark deemed it best not to risk all in a desperate venture that was not absolutely necessary.

Upon the departure of *Willing*, Clark saw that the rest of his prisoners were either paroled or permitted to voluntarily take the oath of allegiance. Forty men under Lieutenant Richard Brashears were detailed to garrison Fort Sackville, whose name was changed by Clark to Fort Patrick Henry. Captain Helm was named civil commandant of Vincennes. Clark with the rest of his army embarked in a fleet of bateaux and started for Kaskaskia on March 20, 1779.<sup>38</sup>

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36. Bowman's Journal and Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 163, 195-196.

37. Report of Hamilton, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 196-197.

38. Easery, *History of Indiana*, 1, 73-74.

While Historians have pointed out the great advantage which the capture of Fort Sackville gave to the United States peace commissioners at Paris in 1783, they have failed to emphasize its immediate effect on the Revolutionary War by wrecking the British campaign for 1779. Savannah, Georgia, had fallen in December 1778 and a base was being established there. Agents from there and Augusta had gone among the southern Indians and were rallying them against the back country settlements. Munitions and trade goods to the value of \$100,000 had been sent to the Cherokees, who had established a war camp on the Chickamauga. Hamilton had advanced from Detroit, had recaptured Vincennes, and was spending the winter at Fort Sackville. He had regarded Clark as a frontier raider, who, in the presence of an organized force of regulars, would offer scant resistance. This was Hamilton's fatal error. He had dispersed his formidable force--the Detroit militia returning to their homes, the Indians to their winter hunt, and his partisan leaders to rally the redmen of the Middle Mississippi Valley to prepare for the big council to be held in the spring at the mouth of the Tennessee.

With an army of 1,000 Indians and partisans, braced by his regulars, and equipped with brass cannon manned by the Royal Artillery, Hamilton planned to recover the Illinois Country, then sweep up the Ohio, break up the Kentucky settlements, capture Fort Pitt, and carry the war to western Pennsylvania and Virginia. While George Rogers Clark destroyed Hamilton's force, Colonel Evan Shelby rallied a force of "over-mountain men" and in April fell upon the Cherokee camp on the Chickamauga, routing the Indians, and destroying their rendezvous. In the late summer, an American army led by Major General John Sullivan invaded the homeland of the Iroquois in western New York and drove them from their villages and burned their fields. Not only did these three campaigns relieve the frontier from Indian depredations for several years and enable the backwoodsmen to rally to the colors to fight at Kings Mountain and the Cowpens, but it kept open the western life line to New Orleans from where many of the supplies for the Virginia troops in the Northwest and Kentucky were shipped.<sup>39</sup>

The achievement of Clark's little army is one of the finest in military history. Confronted by almost insurmountable difficulties, it won complete success. On an incredibly miserable 240-mile march from Kaskaskia to Vincennes, the soldiers demonstrated a perseverance that won them undying fame. To George Rogers Clark must go the credit for victory

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39. Donald Davidson, *The Tennessee*, 2 vols. (New York, 1946), Vol. 1, 152; *The Revolution*, 306-309.

in the entire campaign, for it was his leadership, daring, and resourcefulness that kept the army moving toward its goal. Although the number of men in the expedition was small, they were commanded in such a manner that we may recognize Clark as a frontier military leader of the first order. There was coupled with his tactical knowledge a sense of strategy, that brought him to the right place for victory. He must also be credited as a diplomat for he won over to his cause the loyalty of French and Indians wherever he went. His ability to understand the mind of savage and *habitant* won him support throughout the Northwest. While many people of our day will brand Clark a ruthless barbarian for the way he dealt with the captured Indians at Vincennes, we must realize that he was a man of his times. Clark, himself, stated in terse terms his policy for coping with hostile Indians. He held that the only way to gain their respect was to show them "the Horrid fate of those that would dare make war on the long Knife and to excell them in barbarity I new was, and is the only way to make war and gain a name among the Indians."<sup>40</sup>

To him and the brave men who followed him must be given credit for performing a vital exploit in the winning from the British of the vast region of our country which now includes the rich and populous states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin--the Old Northwest.

The cost in casualties at the time had been small, but after the departure of *Willougby* with the British prisoners, a number of the Big Knives took sick. Clark recalled:

Their Intrepidity and good success had untill this keep up their spirits but things falling off[f] to that little more than that of common Carison duty they more sensibly felt the Pains and other complaints that they had contracted during the severity of the uncommon march to which many of those Valuable men fell . . . a sacrifice and few others ever perfectly recovered it.<sup>41</sup>

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40. Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779, found in *CHS*, Vol.8, 298. In his campaigns of 1778 and 1779 Clark exhibited qualities of leadership common to the great captains of history. He was fearless, he could make decisions, he could improvise when confronted by the unexpected, he was a master of psychological warfare, he possessed a strategic sense, he was not unmindful of the humdrum administrative details, and he could delegate authority. Consequently it is unfortunate that Clark's leadership capacities were not tried as the commander of an army, because we will never know how he would have measured up in the face of these added responsibilities.

41. *Ibid.*, 295.

## Evaluation and Recommendations Regarding the Service and Clark's 1779 Campaign

By far the most important historical resource in the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park is the Fort Sackville site and the immediately adjacent ground, where the final act in the great drama which assured to the United States possession of the Old Northwest was enacted. All available documentary evidence has been studied and analyzed in determining the site of Fort Sackville. The map prepared by Duverner in December 1778 pinpoints the stockade in relation to the Wabash. Unfortunately, it fails to locate other geographic features or buildings in the village. Hamilton in his journal identifies changes made in the fort during the period December 17, 1778, to February 23, 1779. He locates the two block-houses and shifts in the stockade alignment, but he fails to pinpoint the magazine, well, barracks, flag pole, and guardhouse. By an evaluation of the evidence I have tentatively positioned these structures.

To locate the site of Fort Sackville it has been necessary to rely on three documents--Bowman's journal, Clark's journal, and the sworn statement of Michel Brouillette. These three sources are in agreement that the stockade was west of the village main street. Bowman was intimately associated with area and his journal a detailed, day-by-day account of his activities, while Clark had overall responsibility, and, consequently, his journal being less detailed, I feel that more credence should be given Bowman's estimate of the distance. Bowman reported that he "crossed the Main street about 120 yards from the fort Gate," while Clark wrote that he had "caused a trench to be thrown up across the main street about 200 yds from the Fort Gate."<sup>42</sup>

Documents on file at the Indiana State Library and Indiana Historical Society confirm that the main street of the colonial period and today's Main Street are identical.

In regard to a final determination of the site of Fort Sackville, as well as to pinpoint all the structures within the stockade, it is recommended that a study be made in the near future of the physical development of the area between Highway 50 and the George Rogers Clark Memorial for the years since 1782, when the fort was dismantled.

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42. Bowman's Journal and Clark's Journal, found in *CIHS*, Vol. 8, 160, 165. Bowman reported that he crossed the Main street about 120 yards from the fort Gate. (160) Clark reported that he had caused a trench to be thrown up across the main street about 200 yds from the Fort Gate. British Museum, Mss. 21, 782, f. 188. Journal of George Rogers Clark. (165).



This study should be aimed at determining whether an archeological dig is warranted. If the area has not been greatly disturbed, an Archeological Research Study Proposal should be programmed and assigned a high priority. Archeological evidence, combined with documentary materials, would provide data for an accurate and interpretively valuable reconstruction of Fort Sackville, if such should be the administrative decision.

Consideration should be given by the National Park Service toward securing through cooperative agreements with state and local authorities and civic-minded groups in Illinois and Indiana permission to erect and maintain interpretive historical markers at salient points along Clark's march from Kaskaskia to Vincennes. The Fortnightly Club of Vincennes has marked with small directional arrows and iron historical tablets the route from the Wabash crossing into the city. The Service should cooperate with the Fortnightly Club to see that this interpretive service is expanded.

Discussions with the best informed local historians, including Judge Curtis Shake and Tom Emison, have led me to conclude that no houses from the French period, 1732-1779, survive in the Vincennes area. Judge Shake related that many years ago, when a building was being demolished, the wrecker on removing the outer shell uncovered a structure that possessed the physical characteristics of colonial French architecture. No effort, however, was made to save this relic of the past. Although unlikely, this situation could recur, and if it does, the Service should be ready to move in and seize the initiative to preserve the structure.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Clark's 1786 Expedition to Vincennes Ends Disastrously

Dispatches reporting George Rogers Clark's successes in the Illinois Country reached Williamsburg, Virginia, in October 1778. In accordance with Governor Henry's recommendations the Burgesses enacted legislation organizing all lands north of the Ohio to which Virginia lay claim as the county of Illinois. John Todd, Jr., was selected by the Governor as county lieutenant to establish the authority of Virginia in the area. Todd reached Kaskaskia in May 1779, soon after Clark returned from his victorious Vincennes Campaign. His instructions directed him to show every possible respect to the French and to cultivate the good will of the Indians. He had no authority either to issue patents to the settlers or to purchase land from the redmen. He was to grant the *habitants* all the self-government compatible with the military occupation and their exposed position.

Shortly after Todd's arrival in Kaskaskia, perhaps in June, he ordered elections held in the villages of the vast county. During that month, either by this election or by appointment, a civil and criminal court was established at Vincennes. Colonel Le Gras and Major Bosseron, as was expected, received choice posts--Le Gras became commandant succeeding Captain Helm, while Bosseron, who was the village's wealthiest merchant, headed the court. The principal activity of the commandant as well as the court was to make land grants, especially to the new settlers who arrived in the area following Clark's victory. This authority had not been delegated to commandant or court and its use soon led to trouble between the *habitants* and the newcomers.

Lieutenant Todd soon returned to Virginia on business for the new county, leaving the people of Vincennes to govern themselves as they wished.<sup>1</sup>

Left without the support of the Virginians, the government of Vincennes was openly defied by many of the Americans who moved into the area following Clark's successes. There was no power to regulate

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1. "Record Book and Papers of John Todd," *Fergus Historical Series*, Edwin G. Mason, editor (Chicago, 1890); Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 74-75.

the Indian trade, and the visits of the Indians to the post soon became occasions for drunken debauchery and robbery. The usual results followed, as the outraged Indians extracted vengeance. Trade with Canada had been ruined by Clark's successes and that with New Orleans soon ceased, because the Indians resorted more and more to Detroit, where they received better treatment at the hands of the British traders than they did from the American merchants.

The Virginians flooded the Illinois and Wabash settlements with paper money which was rapidly inflated and became worthless. Many of the *habitants* had sold their produce to Clark for these bills, consequently, several of the Americans' best friends were financially broken by accepting this money in payment for goods and services.<sup>2</sup>

Fort Patrick Henry suffered during these years. With the withdrawal of the garrison, the defense of the village was entrusted to the militia. American, Frenchman, and Indian vied with one another in their efforts to wreak havoc on the fort. When this situation was brought to George Rogers Clark's attention in 1782, he directed Colonel Le Gras to salvage what he could and abandon the fort. Le Gras on December 31 of that year notified Clark, "I have sold the barracks, which the Americans, French and Indians have reduced to ruins."<sup>3</sup> According to local tradition, the stockade and the building used by Hamilton as his quarters survived the barracks and blockhouses by several years--to be used as a jail and debtor's prison. In any event, even they had disappeared by 1786.<sup>4</sup>

Although Clark's victory at Vincennes had secured the Illinois Country for Virginia, the frontier war in the region between Fort Pitt on the east and Quintanon on the west raged on. Raiding parties roamed and ravaged back and forth with varying success. George Rogers Clark and other American leaders, like the romantic Colonel Augustin Mottin de la Balme, were always about to gather sufficient strength to capture Detroit. Indians, sometimes alone, sometimes with British or Tory units, directed their attacks on the Kentucky settlements. Captain Henry Bird and the Girty brothers at the head of a strong force of partisans and Indians carried the war into Kentucky in June 1780. Joseph Brant, deserting his favorite battlegrounds of the Mohawk Valley and adjacent region, smashed a column of Pennsylvanians led by Major Archibald Lochry in August of the following year near the mouth of the Big Miami. He

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2. Le Gras to Todd, "Todd Papers," 198.

3. Le Gras to Clark, Dec. 31, 1782, found in *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1781-1784*, *CHS* (Springfield, 1926), 8, 176.

4. See Burns, "Life in Old Vincennes," *IHSP*, 8, 440.

then pushed on toward the Falls of the Ohio, hoping to buy George Rogers Clark. Such was Clark's prestige that the Indians under Brant gave up, and the Tory Rangers with them demonstrated no desire to cross swords with the big Virginian. So the entire party broke up. Most of the Indians returned to their villages, the partisans to Detroit, while Brant with a large band of Wyandots and Miamis raided into Kentucky.

The Spaniards, after their nation entered the war against Great Britain, sent an expedition into the region. Captain Eugenio Pourré took the field and undertook a march in some ways comparable to Clark's move against Vincennes. Leaving St. Louis on January 2, 1781, Pourré led 100 Spaniards, Indians, and French volunteers against Fort St. Joseph in what is now southwestern Michigan. He encountered no opposition but was afraid to garrison the post after he had plundered the British fur traders and burned their huts. Yet on the basis of this raid, Spanish diplomats at the peace conference were to voice claims for the entire area northwest of the Ohio.

In late 1782 Clark again took the field, pushed up the Scioto, and burned Chillicothe and other Shawnee villages and thus ended the war in the west, so far as hostilities between Great Britain and the United States and Spain were concerned. The end of the fighting found the Americans still in control of Vincennes and the Illinois country, while the British grasp was very shaky on the great expanses that lay between Lake Erie and the Ohio River.<sup>5</sup>

On September 3, 1783, American and British plenipotentiaries meeting in Paris signed a treaty recognizing the independence of the United States. The northern boundary with Canada grew out of a sensible American proposal which followed the 1763 Quebec line, and gave the Canadians an equal share of four of the Great Lakes. It then extended westward to Lake of the Woods, and "from thence on a western course to the Mississippi River." Thanks to the peace commissioners, the work of Clark and his "long Knives" had not been in vain. They had added to the United States a territory nearly as large as that of the original 13 colonies east of the Appalachians. Much has been written of what might have been the results west of the Appalachians but for Clark's victories. The territory north of the Ohio at the beginning of the war had been part of Canada by the Quebec Act of 1774, and, had British forces held it to the close of the conflict, it would doubtlessly have remained a part of that province.

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5. *The Revolution*, 303; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 87-99.

Great Britain, however, did not give up because of the treaty any of the forts she held in the northwest, and she continued to hold onto and garrison a number of strategic posts in the ceded territory--Presqu'Isle, Sandusky, Detroit, and Michillimackinac.

With the ratification of the Peace of Paris there devolved on the Confederation Government the conduct of diplomatic relations with the Indian nations. Until now the Indian problem had been one of local frontier defense. But an enlightened nation could not wantonly destroy the red men. By the laws of war, those who had sided with the British had forfeited all rights to their land, yet Congress had no idea of punishing them. It was necessary to adopt an Indian policy and organize a department of government to implement it. Two of the leading principles incorporated in the Indian policy were the recognition of the tribal governments and of Indian ownership of the land.

Thus as the frontiersmen were congratulating themselves on their success in winning the land, they were shocked and dismayed to learn that the Congress had recognized the Indian title as supreme to all the Northwest Territory. Not a settler could legally take up land in all that vast region. Men sent to negotiate with the Indians were given the same official titles and credentials as a minister sent abroad to a foreign nation. Though ownership of the land was recognized in the tribes, they were not permitted to sell to any other nation, nor were they allowed to dispose of it to settlers. If the Indians so desired, and the government lost no opportunity for creating such a desire, they might sell to the United States.

An ordinance for the regulation of Indian Affairs passed the Congress in 1786.<sup>7</sup> By this act the Indian country was divided into two departments, a northern and a southern, the Ohio River being the dividing line. For each of these a Superintendent of Indian Affairs was named. He was to hold office for two years and was to reside among the Indians. The superintendent licensed all traders and supervised them in their business. It was the intention of Congress to attract able and honest men into the trade. Traders were put under heavy bond, while army officers and Indian agents were forbidden to trade with the redmen on their own account. No white person was to be allowed to travel among the Indians without a passport, signed by an Indian agent.

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6. *The American Heritage Pictorial Atlas*, 76-77, 114-115.

7. *Wheaton's Reports*, 543, Vol. 8, *United States Statutes at Large*.

The most troublesome problem for the Indian commissioners was the definition of the Indian boundary. There were many reasons why an amicable solution of the boundary question was difficult: (a) the national government needed money and the sale of public lands offered a ready source; (b) before any of the public domain could be surveyed and sold the Indian title had to be extinguished; (c) the settlers were as eager to buy as the government was to sell; (d) the British military and traders at the posts they had held onto wanted to push the Indian boundary far to the east and south, thus expanding the region in which they could monopolize the fur trade; and (e) the Indians themselves were becoming increasingly apprehensive as they were crowded steadily westward by the Americans.<sup>6</sup>

The first effort by the Congress to define the Indian boundary was made in the summer of 1784, when Oliver Wolcott, Richard Butler, and Arthur Lee met with representatives of the Six Nations at Fort Stanwix, New York. At this meeting, the commissioners acknowledged the Ohio River as the southern boundary of the Indian country.

The Americans determined to follow up this success and negotiate treaties with the northwestern tribes, who had never ceased harassing the western settlements of Pennsylvania and Virginia. Since the recall by the British government of their partisan leaders, the Indians had not crossed the Ohio in formidable numbers, but small parties continually hovered on the border to steal, rob, and murder. With the great imperialist powers of Great Britain and Spain on its northern, southern, and western boundaries, and increasingly hostile Indians threatening her advancing frontier, the United States was compelled to take steps to show its authority by establishing military posts in the area ceded by the British in the Treaty of Paris.<sup>9</sup> At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, the Continental Army had been rapidly demobilized until by 1784 all that remained were 25 men at Fort Pitt and 55 at West Point.

On June 3, 1784, the Congress requested four states, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to furnish a total of 700 men to protect the western settlements. This regiment to be commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Harmar was to be known as the First American and was to be headquartered at Fort Pitt.<sup>10</sup>

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6. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 14.

9. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 99-102.

10. *Ibid.*, 1, 103; *Outpost on the Wabash, 1787-1791*, edited by Gayle Thornbrough (Indianapolis, 1957), 12.

A great Indian council to be protected by Harmor's regiment was scheduled for Fort Pitt. Runners were dispatched to all Indian nations inviting them to meet there in December 1784. The soldiers and the three commissioners, Arthur Lee, Richard Butler, and George Rogers Clark, did not reach Fort Pitt until December 5, when, because of the lateness of the season, it was determined to hold the council deeper in the Indian country. Harmor accordingly marched his troops to Fort McIntosh, 30 miles down the Ohio. There on January 21, 1785, a treaty was signed with the Wyandot, Chippewa, Delaware, and Ottawa chiefs. By its terms the eastern boundary of the Indian country was fixed as the Cuyahoga River from its mouth at Lake Erie to its source, then west to the Big Miami, and down that stream to the Ohio River and west with the Ohio.

The Fort McIntosh council was not attended by all the nations that were invited, several being detained by British agents. It had been customary during the final years of the Revolutionary War for the Indians to assemble in large numbers about the British trading posts on the Maumee. This practice continued after 1783, and the traders utilized this situation to propagandize many of the Indians to avoid the council at Fort McIntosh. After the treaty had been signed, the English traders denounced it. The Indians were warned that they would have no land to call their own until the Americans had driven them beyond the Mississippi. Becoming apprehensive of the growing influence of the Americans and their councils, the British traders and agents held a council with all the tribes of the Ohio country at the Delaware town of New Coshocton.<sup>11</sup>

The Indians soon realized where such negotiations would lead. A government of great strength and large resources might have been able to impose successfully such terms. Certainly the weak and impoverished Confederation was unable to do so. The principal chiefs, perhaps under British counsel, now began with some success to join the various tribes into a confederation to thwart American intentions and to prevent negotiations being conducted with individual tribes.

A small band of Cherokees living on the Scioto River were the firebrands that sparked the second great Indian War on the northwest frontier. The Cherokees, having killed a number of squatters on the Scioto, were so enraged by the taste of war that they crossed into Kentucky and murdered several settlers. The Kentuckians called on Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia for protection. He immediately

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ii. *Barney, History of Indiana*, 1, 104-105.

alerted Congress. The Congress promptly ordered Colonel Harmar to send two companies of his regiment to the mouth of the Great Miami, and to call on the Kentucky militia for additional troops if needed.

This stepped-up military activity, along with the recent acts of Congress directing the Indian commissioners to push for large cessions of land, was just what the British traders desired. They told the Indians that they had better unite or all would be lost. Under these circumstances the tribes of the Wabash moved to join the Shawnees and Cherokees. A plan for joint-action was perhaps determined upon at a grand council of the tribes held at Ouiatanon in the fall of 1785. A chief, sent by this council, warned the French at Vincennes that the Indians had decided to make war on the Americans, and that if the French remained at Vincennes they would also be killed.<sup>12</sup>

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Twenty-three years before at the time of Pontiac's War, the *habitants* had not been molested. But in the years since 1779 there had been an influx of Americans, and unlike the French they hated and distrusted the Indians. As the years passed, many of the *habitants* began to feel that they had made a serious error in backing George Rogers Clark against the British in 1778 and 1779. John Filson, a Pennsylvania schoolmaster and land speculator who had recently immigrated into Kentucky, visited Vincennes in 1785 and reported:

We arrived safe at Post St Vincent found the inhabitants friendly, was agreeably amused with the prospect of this place which I was informed had been Settled by french . . . and probably may number at present upwards of 300 houses, most of which make a poor appearance but in general are Convenient and Clean within as there is perhaps no people in the world more friendly and Cleanly than the french.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Ibid., 105-106.

13. "Two Westward Journeys of John Filson," edited by Beverley W. Bond, Jr., *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 9, no.4, 336-337.



For the first five months of 1786, Filson observed the situation at Vincennes and found it distressing. The Americans, having no market for their corn, followed good back-country practice by converting it into "the noxious juices" and trading it to the Indians. The French magistrates, fearful of the disturbing effects of this business on the Indians, prohibited this "baneful traffic," and at length, exasperated with the Americans for scalping an Indian, branded them as outlaws and ordered the perpetrators of this foul deed deported from Vincennes "bag and baggage."

Such events "kindled a spirit of jealousy and aspersion" between the French, Indians, and Americans and a condition of "entire disaffection" ensued. By early 1786 Filson saw over the Wabash "a hovering Cloud pregnant with innumerable evil."<sup>14</sup> Father Gibault, who had been observing the scene for years, sketched for his bishop in Quebec at this time an even bleaker picture. The "accursed trade in caudevie" was disintegrating civilized society and a reign of terror and anarchy prevailed--"no commandant, no troops, no prison, no hangman." Father Gibault now regretted his actions of 1778-79 and mourned "the loss of the mildness of British rule . . ." thus reflecting a hope for British intervention.<sup>15</sup>

Since the capture of Fort Sackville from the British--and particularly since 1783--the Americans, drawn by the Indian trade and land hunger, had been arriving in increasing numbers and by 1786 numbered about 70 families. Most of the Americans were squatters occupying land near the post, and Filson's description of cabin, cornfield, meadow, and orchard on the Grand Prairie below Vincennes is a revealing picture of a remote agricultural frontier shortly after the Revolution. The problems of this American oasis were similar to those of other settlements on the western waters, but complicated by the difficulty of adjustment to a French pattern of culture.

The *habitants* had seen governments come and go for over 50 years. For 30 years under the flag of France, transferred then to England, conquered subsequently by the Virginians, and abandoned finally to the Confederation the *habitants* had shifted for themselves under their priests and magistrates. Friendly with the Indians, the Frenchmen had few economic or political needs. They hunted, fished, and loitered in the sun, thinking not of hog and hominy for the long winter. With the

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14. *Ibid.*, 320-330.

15. Gibault to Bishop of Quebec, June 6, 1786, and May 1, 1788, found in "Father Gibault and Vincennes," *American Historical Review*, 14, 544-557.

coming of the Americans, problems arose. It was only natural that the French of Vincennes would resent the hustling Americans who disturbed their ancient ways, debauched the Indians with their rotgut whiskey, and burned with an amazing energy to fell trees, build ugly flatboats, and plow the prairie. These hardy frontiersmen, for their part, scorned the easy-going friend of the Indian as a shiftless loafer, who had few vegetables in his garden and grew only a few sorry rows of corn on the fertile prairies.<sup>16</sup> Fearful and contemptuous of the Indian, disturbed about land titles, hearing rumors of British intrigue at Detroit, excluded from the New Orleans market by the Spanish, and in temperamental conflict with the French majority, the Americans turned for aid and comfort to George Rogers Clark.

General Clark, first citizen of the West and an Indian Commissioner for the Confederation, began to receive disturbing reports from the Northwest and particularly from Vincennes. American traders in the Indian towns were reporting that British agents from Detroit were encouraging attacks on American settlements and advising the redmen to refuse to negotiate any treaty.<sup>17</sup>

At Pittsburgh, David Duncan, recently returned from Detroit and the Indian country, was writing Colonel Harmar that the British had resolved to hold the posts and that the Indians were bitter against the Americans for encroaching on their lands. At Detroit the British commandant was reporting to his superiors that the tribes seemed "much incensed against the Americans" particularly those of Kentucky and Vincennes. Ebenezer Denny of Harmar's regiment, while posted at the Falls of the Ohio, wrote in his diary "alarming accounts" of Indian movements. From Kaskaskia, John Edgar was warning Clark that the Illinois was lost to the British if Governmental control were not soon established.<sup>18</sup>

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16. S. F. Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America* . . . (Philadelphia 1804), 337-340.

17. Report of Indian Commissioners, June 19, 1786, Papers of the Continental Congress (LC), No. 56, folio 283.

18. Duncan to Harmar, March 28, 1786, *Lrapier MSS.*, 1 W 15; Major Ancrum to Hope, May 8, 14, and 29, 1786, *Report to Canadian Archives* (1890), Q Series, 175-176; Alvord, *Kaskaskia Revisited*, 326, 395-396; Denny, "The Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, 7, (1860), 289.

In September 1785 Clark had sent his cousin, William Clark, to Vincennes to invite the Wabash and Illinois tribes to a general council of northwestern Indians to be held at the mouth of the Great Miami. Most of the tribes of the upper nations in the British sphere of influence ignored the invitation. Only a few of the more friendly chiefs, living nearby, appeared at the fort Captain Walter Finney had erected. These sachems, however, showed scant interest in the propositions advanced by Clark and his fellow commissioners (Richard Butler and Judge Samuel H. Parsons), because as they explained it was "so late in the Season & hunting time was coming on."<sup>19</sup>

William Croghan, Clark's brother-in-law, in November 1785 had written that the inhabitants of Vincennes were worried. Early in 1786 Filson joined other leading Americans at the post in reporting their fears. "This place," ran their appeal, "that once trembled at your victorious arms . . . is now entirely anarchial and we shudder at the daily expectations of horrid murders." Their "unhappy situation" was further darkened by the apprehension, as they expressed it, "that the Doeds we received . . . may possibly have a slender foundation."<sup>20</sup> Thus it is apparent that British intrigue, lack of organized government, and land hunger were also involved in the settlers' troubles.

What Filson called an "entirely anarchial" situation had resulted because Virginia had ceased to exercise authority over the territory north of the Ohio, and the Confederation had not yet established a regular government for that region. Conquered by Clark and organized as the County of Illinois, the Northwest had been garrisoned by Virginia troops and governed by John Todd. In 1779 Todd had resigned. Soon thereafter, the Virginia garrisons had been withdrawn, while the County of Illinois expired in 1781. Virginia in 1784 ceded her claims to the area to Congress.<sup>21</sup> Small wonder then that in this hiatus of civil authority, the French should complain that Virginia had abandoned them and that Congress had left them "in a state of nature." They had never been required to take

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19. report of Clark to Indian Commissioners, Oct. 5, 1785, Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 150, 2, folio 42; *Western Envoy*, Oct. 28, 1820.

20. Croghan to Clark, Nov. 3 & 16, 1785, Draper Mss., 53 J 21-22; Filson to Clark, March 16, 1786, Draper Mss., 53 J 23.

21. James A. James, "To What Extent was George Rogers Clark in Military Control of the Northwest at the Close of the Revolution," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* (Washington, 1917), 315.

an oath to the United States, and in the language of a committee of Congress they "were free from any express engagement or allegiance to the Union whatever."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Governor Patrick Henry, General Clark, and Congress were receiving reports from the Illinois and Wabash country that the *habitants* "had nothing to do with the United States, but considered themselves as British subjects and should obey no other power."<sup>23</sup> Rumors that the British proposed to intervene in the lower Northwest were believed by most Americans living west of the Appalachians.

The Indians struck on May 25, 1786, killing two men within seven miles of Vincennes. The body of one was burned, while the other was hung in a tree. A party of Frenchmen coming from the Illinois country spotted the remains and cut them down.<sup>24</sup>

On June 1, Filson, after discussing the situation with the American families at Vincennes, drafted a memorial to Congress setting forth their "calamitous situation." The French authority in the village had collapsed, while the rising Indian menace exposed them "daily to danger and frequently to death." The lands of the Americans were held under patents from John Todd and doubts had been voiced as to the validity of these titles. The *habitants* claimed large tracts by virtue of British, French, and Indian grants, going so far as to claim "a District twelve leagues square, including this town." The Americans asked Congress to establish a garrison at the post, to create a land office with preferential treatment for "first settlers," and to set up a "regular government in this place and territory" which was "now without order, law or government by any executive."<sup>25</sup>

John Filson started for the Falls of the Ohio in a pirogue with three companions on June 2. His party was attacked by 20 Indians near the mouth of White River, and two of his friends were killed. The survivors returned to Vincennes, and on the 12th Filson departed the post never to return. After "seven painful days" he arrived at the Falls with letters for General Clark and the memorial to Congress.<sup>26</sup>

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22. *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington, 1933), 28, 311, May 3, 1785.

23. Sullivan to Clark, June 23, 1786, Draper Mss., 53 J 35.

24. Henry to Clark, June 12, 1786, Draper Mss., 53 J 32.

25. "Documents, Danger on the Wabash," edited by Leonard C. Helderman, *IMH*, 34, No. 4, 457-458.

26. Helderman, "The Narrative of John Filson's Defeat on the Wabash," *Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (Louisville, 1938), 187-199; Small & Henry to Clark, June 12, 1786, Draper Mss., 53 J 32.

The Clark letters conveyed information that Ouiatanon was being evacuated; that settlers at Bellefontaine, the oldest American settlement in the Northwest, was "forted," and that the tribes of the upper Northwest were concentrating for an attack on Kentucky and Vincennes.<sup>27</sup>

The Americans at Vincennes were soon compelled to take refuge in the village, and construct a blockhouse. Under the leadership of Daniel Sullivan they worked their cornfields under arms. On June 21 a group of them were attacked while working in their cornfields. They rallied and drove back the Indians, but two of their number were wounded. One of them fell temporarily into the hands of the Indians and was scalped. His companions expected him to die but he recovered. The Americans then marched into the town and finding an Indian at the house of a Frenchman, they seized and dragged him to their blockhouse, where the wife of the scalped man, whose name was Donelly, shot and scalped him. This action exasperated the French, who guarded the rest of the Indians currently in Vincennes, and the next day sent them into the woods.<sup>28</sup>

The Americans now charged that the *habitants* were pro-British and were protecting the Indians from retaliation. And because of this summary justice, the French magistrates ordered the Americans out of the village. Colonel Le Gras, chief French magistrate, "gave us a piece of writing," complained John Small (one of the principal Americans), "ordering Every American" who could not "produce a passport to leave this place Bagg and Baggage Immediately."<sup>29</sup>

The situation in Vincennes reached a crisis in July. About the 15th a formidable war party of 450 Indians from the upper nations descended the Wabash determined, Colonel Le Gras reported to Clark, "to exterminate all the Americans who might be in these lands." The *habitants*, especially Colonel Le Gras and Major Bosseron, exerted themselves in behalf of the Americans. They even prepared to defend them, and at length by a combination of "speeches," threats, and presents persuaded the Indians to depart. After firing a few rounds at Daniel Sullivan's house and destroying crops, they left, promising to return again "in roasting ear time" when they "would know how to make gates for entering without asking."

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27. Small and Henry to Clark, June 12, 1786, Draper MSS., 53 J 32.

28. Sullivan to Clark, June 23, 1786, Draper MSS., 53 J 35.

29. Bellierman, "The Narrative of John Wilson's Defeat on the Wabash," *Wilson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 12, 187-199.

Colonel Le Gras, the savior of the Americans in this crisis, registered his complaints. The root of the trouble, he wrote Clark, is "the number of outlaws who have withdrawn here"; that is, certain Americans who have "slipped into this place without permission." Particularly obnoxious was Daniel Sullivan, "a very dangerous man and pernicious to the public peace." The Americans, he complained, appeared to make no distinction between Indians, attacking friend and foe alike. They even went so far as to pillage and kill those under French protection. This raised a cry for vengeance among the younger warriors who retaliated by attacking white settlements. With the upper nations threatening to return in the fall, the outlook was "very dark and altogether barbarous." Le Gras joined in the appeal to General Clark for assistance.<sup>30</sup>

Whatever the causes, it was clear that affairs at Vincennes were in what Sullivan called "Narrow Scope," and the situation was likewise full of peril for the exposed Kentucky settlements, even if it did not presage British intervention. "Much Kentucky blood will be spilt" was the fear expressed by one of the leading officers of Kentucky. Indians had been heard to boast that "Kentucky people dare not march to the Wabash."<sup>31</sup>

When news of this situation reached Richmond, Governor Henry asked the Virginia delegation in New York a loaded question, "Will Congress protect and defend the frontiers?" He was advised that there was little hope from that quarter as the eastern states without frontiers were not concerned.<sup>32</sup>

While Governor Henry groped for a solution, John Hardin in early July led an expedition of Kentucky militia against a party of Indians near old Shawmeetown. The Kentuckians met three at the Salt Licks, two of whom they killed. Soon thereafter, they were attacked by a party of Indians, whom they dispersed, killing three. Hardin reported

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30. Small to Clark, July 22, 1786, Draper Mss., 11 J 81; Le Gras to Clark, July 22, 1786, Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 150, 2, folio 42.

31. Todd to Henry, July 12, 1786, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 4, 155.

32. Henry to Virginia Delegates, July 5, 1786, Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 71, 2, folio 441. Richmond became the capital of Virginia in 1780.

the loss of one killed and three wounded in this engagement. This raid accomplished little beyond increasing tensions.<sup>33</sup>

Congress, however, had made certain moves to meet its responsibilities in the West. Colonel Harnar with several companies of his regiment had advanced to the mouth of the Muskingum to protect surveyors in what is now eastern Ohio, while Captain Finney with two companies was still posted at the mouth of the Great Miami. Emphasizing the value of regulars to brace undisciplined militia, General Clark requested that the Continental troops unite with the Kentucky militia in a campaign against the Indians of the Northwest. Communications between the capital city and the frontier were slow. It was mid-summer before Captain Finney was directed to evacuate his post on the Great Miami and take a position at the Falls of the Ohio. When at length he arrived, on August 16, he proceeded to build Fort Finney opposite Louisville. He was under strict orders not to begin an active campaign against the Indians. Finney favored taking the offensive in conjunction with Clark, but Harnar hesitated to give the order without the approval of the Secretary of War, Henry Knox.

After Clark's expedition moved out, Harnar, without explicit orders from Knox, directed Finney to join in the campaign. This authority arrived too late, and was in fact countermanded by Knox four months later.

All it accomplished was to illustrate the utter failure of the military arm of the Confederation. It appears that the only contribution of the Confederation to Clark's campaign was the return of a small brass cannon borrowed from the Kentucky militia in 1785.<sup>34</sup> The failure of Congress to act spread the conviction throughout the West that the men of that region must look to themselves for protection.

If the appeal to Congress failed to rouse that body from its inertia, there was action at least from the Virginia frontier. A standing grievance of the District of Kentucky was the lack of authority to mobilize the militia "to repel the Hostile Invasions of the Indians."<sup>35</sup>

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33. *Pennsylvania Packet*, Aug. 10, 1786.

34. Harnar-Finney Correspondence for the period, June 27, 1786, to Jan. 2, 1787, *Drapier MSS.*, 1 W 33-374.

35. "Fleeing Indians," edited by Thomas B. Abernethy, *Journal of Southern History*, 1, 1912, 2.

In this emergency, however, Governor Henry had laid the subject of frontier defense before the Virginia Council, and he was advised to request the Virginia delegation at New York to press for action in Congress. But he was further directed to call on the field officers of the district to convene and "concert some system for their own defense," subject to the militia laws of Virginia and the Sixth Article of Confederation.<sup>36</sup> At length, when it became clear that no action was to be expected from Congress, this authorization was transmitted to the Kentucky authorities.

The field officers of the district met at Harrodsburg, August 2, 1786, and voted for an expedition against the Northwest Indians. One-half of the militia west of the Licking was directed to muster, and the troops expected to turn out 2,000 strong were to assemble at Clarksville, September 10. George Rogers Clark was named commander-in-chief.<sup>37</sup>

Half of September had passed before General Clark was ready to march, and then his force was divided in numbers and counsel. Word had reached the Clarksville rendezvous that the Shawnees had advanced up the valley of the Kanawha, and had carried fire and tomahawk into settlements deep in southwestern Virginia. Clark's second in command, Benjamin Logan, was detached with about 900 militia and crossed the Ohio at Limestone. Logan pushed his mounted riflemen hard, as he drove toward the Shawnee villages on the headwaters of Mad River. A deserter from his column alerted the Indians, enabling most of them to escape. Logan's people burned seven villages, destroyed the corn which was ready for harvest, took a few scalps, and captured 70 or 80 women and children.<sup>38</sup>

As the main column prepared to take the field, there developed a critical division of opinion among the officers. General Clark argued that they should strike directly for the Wea villages, but his principal subordinates objected. They wished to march overland to Vincennes, while the supplies would be carried around by water on barges borrowed from the army at Fort Finney. They were skeptical of the possibility of transporting sufficient provision on packhorses to subsist the expedition for a fortnight. General Clark yielded. A party was detailed to load the barges and run them around to Vincennes.

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36. Mss. Journal of the Council of the State of Virginia, May 15, 1786, (Virginia State Library).

37. Proceedings of the Field Officers Convened at Harrodsburg, Aug. 2, 1786, Draper Mss. 53 J 42.

38. Clark to Logan, Sept. 14, 1786, Draper Mss., 33 J 76 J, 34-37; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 107.



Before leaving the Falls, Clark dispatched an express rider up the Buffalo Trace with dispatches for Colonel Le Gras. The colonel was informed of the forth coming expedition and asked to secure guides. At the time of the courier's arrival in Vincennes there were about 200 Indians in the village. The Indians, learning the contents of the message, decamped during the night and carried the news to their villages. 39

Clark's column, 1,200 strong, moved out in mid-September, taking the Buffalo Trace. This was the most formidable force yet assembled in the West under American arms. Captain Carberry with 100 soldiers and two brass field pieces started down the Ohio with the provisions on the 20th. The main column pushed ahead, its pace slowed by the large drove of cattle driven along to subsist the troops. At French Lick there was a mutiny in Colonel James Barnett's Lincoln County Regiment, triggered by a high-handed adjutant who had appropriated one of the men's horses. In defiance of a General Order against the promiscuous discharge of their small-arms, the soldiers began shooting their rifles into the air. General Clark had Barnett placed in arrest and reprimanded. This delayed the march several hours.

Clark's column neared Vincennes on September 22, having made the march up from the Falls in seven days. Major Daniel Sullivan had been sent ahead with 20 scouts. Entering the village after dark, the rangers captured 12 to 15 Piankashaws loitering about the village. Most of the American settlers at this time had taken refuge in a small blockhouse. Clark had his people on the road at an early hour the next morning, and as they crossed the prairie, the French came out to meet them. The captured Indians were questioned by Clark and then released to spread the news of the Americans' advance.

At Vincennes, Clark's troubles were compounded when it was discovered that the barges had not arrived, having been delayed by low water in the passage up the Wabash. Fifteen days were wasted awaiting the boats, while the troops exhausted the "full rations of beef & flour, waiting to receive 5 days provisions of flour alone, as the beef was so rotten that it was thrown overboard." The water was so low at this season that the barges had to be dragged over the rapids. It was apparent that the hard years of campaigning had sapped Clark's vigor, because he was far from the man he had been in 1779.

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39. *Pennsylvania Packet*, Oct. 3, 1786.

While awaiting the arrival of the barges, Clark crossed his troops to the west bank of the Wabash and camped. With his soldiers on short rations and the Indians far up the river, Clark impressed supplies from the Vincennes merchants.

Clark left a small garrison at Vincennes, when he finally put his column in motion--his object was to crush the Indian power on the upper Wabash. Besides his Kentuckians, Clark was accompanied by Le Gras' battalion consisting of 53 Americans and 150 French militiamen. About one-half day's march out, the army crossed back to the east side of the Wabash and proceeded up the Ouiatanon Trace.

The army pressed ahead about 80 miles and halted just below the mouth of the Vermilion, well within the British sphere of influence. The country was daily becoming more forbidding, while the Indians were said to be massing in formidable numbers to Clark's front.

The next morning the cry "Whose for home! Whose for home!" was raised by Barnett's troops. Clark confronted the mutinous soldiers, who claimed that their provisions were about to give out. Taking off his hat, Clark, with tears in his eyes, begged the militia to go on. He pled with them "to go with me two day's march & if I can't furnish you with as much provisions as you want from the Indian towns, I will return with you." The mutineers, however, refused to listen, and those standing back were heard to make derogatory remarks about their General. Led by an ensign, they marched off and left Clark standing by himself.

Colonel Levi Todd and his people were willing to go on with Clark. But, after discussing the situation with his officers, Clark determined that as "the strength of the army was so much reduced that it was best to return."<sup>40</sup>

General Clark with the remnants of his expedition fell back on Vincennes and attempted to "cover the disgrace of his people." The main body of the vaunted Kentucky militia, stopping long enough to carve out "tomahawk rights" to rich lands of the Wabash Valley, fled back to the Falls, where they arrived by "sixes, tens, or dozens." Captain Finney, who in mid-October saw them straggle by his new fort, called it "vile disorder."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>. Gaines to Butler, Dec. 17, 1833, John Craig to Draper, Oct. 6, 1846, Draper Mss., 9 J 239-244; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Nov. 9 and 20, 1786.

<sup>41</sup>. Finney to Harmar, Oct. 31, 1786, Draper Mss., 1 W 241-243.

After returning to Vincennes, General Clark called a meeting of the field officers of his army on October 8, 1786, at which it was voted to establish a permanent garrison there. It was hoped that this force would be able to intercept Indian war parties moving down the Wabash to invade Kentucky. For this garrison it was thought one field officer and 250 men would be adequate. To this force was to be added an artillery company under Captain Valentine Dalton. General Clark began to enlist men and appoint officers in the companies, which were to form the Regiment of the Ouabache.

This hastily constituted board of field officers also decided to make a treaty with the Indians for the pacification of the Northwest.<sup>42</sup> But it was too late in the season for smoking pipes of peace. Hunting time was at hand, and white British traders out of Detroit whispered that a treaty with the Americans meant not peace but loss of land and game. Joseph Brant, the Iroquois leader who had sided with the British during the Revolutionary War, told the Indians of the Wabash that this was not conquered country, and the Americans must not suppose they could take what lands they pleased. Failing to make a treaty, Clark determined to hold Vincennes during the winter and resume negotiations in the spring of 1787. Still acting under presumed authority of Virginia, he enlisted men and impressed supplies under the militia laws of that state. Hearing that John Dodge, in league with British traders, was in control at Kaskaskia, Clark dispatched a detachment to the Illinois country and "thrust him down from his fort on a hill with its two great guns and he fled thence to the Spanish shore."<sup>43</sup>

At Vincennes Clark now took action which involved him in complications with Spain and eventually led to his ruin. Clark, in common with the men of the Western Waters, had small respect for the arrogant Spaniard who claimed land all the way up to the mouth of the Ohio, who occupied American territory to the mouth of the Yazoo, and who stopped and searched American flatboats at Natchez. If Americans could not trade down the Mississippi, subjects of Spain would not be tolerated on American waters. Clark therefore convened a military court at Vincennes to determine whether certain property at the post "be really Spanish property." The court duly tried the

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42. Resolution of Field Officers at Vincennes, Oct. 8, 1786, Draper Mss., 53 J 51; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 109.

43. Alvord, *Kaskaskia Records*, 426, 430.

"Seignrs" Bazadone, Trousseron, and Thoulon and found them to be Spanish subjects trading in American territory without permission, and ordered their stores confiscated.<sup>44</sup> Property estimated to be worth \$20,000 in the currency of the United States was seized from Laurent Bazadone.

As a result Clark soon found himself the center of a storm of criticism and political intrigue in Kentucky. Letters were received on the Atlantic Seaboard complaining that Clark was playing "hell." One man reported to a friend in Pennsylvania, "He [Clark] is raising a regiment of his own, and has 140 men stationed at Vincennes, already under the command of Dalton. He has seized 3 stores at the Post, and a boat worth \$20,000."<sup>45</sup> A man in North Carolina was writing his congressman at this time that Clark was retaliating on the Spanish for "some of the seizures and confiscations of the property of our citizens at Natchez." According to persons returning from Vincennes, Clark was drunk all the time.<sup>46</sup> One of Clark's soldiers, R. Gaines, hotly disputed that Clark was drinking too much. He recalled in 1833 that the General was "cool and collected during the whole time up to our return."<sup>47</sup>

Influenced by these stories, a group of prominent men in Kentucky, under the leadership of James Wilkinson and Thomas Marshall, united in a report to Governor Edmund Randolph of Virginia condemning Clark's actions. (Randolph had succeeded Clark's friend, Patrick Henry, as governor in 1786.) They insinuated that property had been plundered and "appropriated to private purposes," and lamented that his excessive drinking rendered him "unqualified for business of any kind." They recommended that Wilkinson replace him as Indian commissioner, and charged that the garrison at Vincennes was a corps of bandits which Clark was assembling for an attack on Spain at Natchez.<sup>48</sup>

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44. Proceedings of a Court of Field Officers at Vincennes, Oct. 18, 1786, Draper Mss., 53 J 53.

45. Ltrs. from Kentucky to Pennsylvania, Dec. 12, 1786, Draper Mss., 9 J 244-246.

46. Ltr. from gentlemen in North Carolina to a member of Congress, Nov. 1786, Draper Mss., 9 J 244-246.

47. Gaines to Butler, Dec. 17, 1833, Draper Mss., 9 J 239-241.

48. Report of a Committee of the Danville Convention, Dec. 22, 1786, Draper Mss., 14 S 80 82; *Pennsylvania Packet*, March 29, 1787.

Governor Randolph had notified the President of Congress that Clark was acting under the authority of Virginia. But now, upon receipt of the report of Wilkinson and his friends in Kentucky, the Virginia Council resolved to disavow any further connection with the expedition and directed the attorney-general to bring criminal charges against Clark.<sup>49</sup> The criminal charges were not pressed. Clark, however, harassed by civil suits which eventually reached the Supreme Court, and the State of Virginia, was importuned for claims for half a century. The seizure of Spanish property at Vincennes alarmed the eastern authorities and steps were taken to appease the Spanish representative at New York, where James Madison feared war.<sup>50</sup> Clark was called to Richmond to answer his critics, and Vincennes was left in a more chaotic condition than heretofore.

Clark soon returned to his father's new estate, Mulberry Hill, near Louisville. Before long, demands for his personal payment of the state drafts he had endorsed, to supply his troops during the 1786 campaign and others going back to 1778, began to pour in. Despairing merchants, themselves facing ruin, sold them for what they would bring. Speculators picked up this commercial paper at huge discounts, hoping to get the money from Clark, if Virginia and the new Federal government refused to pay.

Then for Clark, lawsuit followed lawsuit, claim followed claim, year after year. Some of these legal struggles dragged on till after his death to plague his heirs. One especially irritating suit was brought by Bazadone. He held Clark personally responsible for seizure of "goods, wares, and merchandize, furs, peltries, books of account and papers" to the value of \$20,000. This case dragged on for years, before William Clark managed to have the case against his elder brother dropped.<sup>51</sup>

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49. Resolution of the Council of Virginia, Feb. 26, 1787, Draper Mss., 10 S 108-109.

50. Madison to Randolph, April 12, 1787; Edmund C. Burnett, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, 8, (1936), 570.

51. 1796 court order directing the seizure of Clark's property in Knox County, Bruté Library, St. Francis Xavier Church, Vincennes, Indiana; Draper Mss., 1 c 11; 2 J 61-62; 33 J 39, 134-138; 53 J 53-64; 55 J 60.

## Site Study and Evaluation of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park for the Period, 1780-1786

Most of the historic sites intimately identified with this period of the Vincennes story are located in the section of today's city now bounded by Main, 4th, and Prairie Streets, and the Wabash River. Much of this area is included within the boundary of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. Sites illustrative of this phase of the area's history are: the site of Fort Patrick Henry, the French village, the church, the blockhouses erected in 1786 as defenses against the Indians, and the site of Bazadone's trading post. The fort site and village have been previously identified and evaluated. It has been impossible, although readily available sources have been consulted, to pinpoint the blockhouse or blockhouses. Bazadone's trading post was located at what is today the corner of Broadway and 2d Street. The site of the church will be evaluated in Chapter XV, Vincennes in the Years 1800-1820.

### Recommendations

When funds become available, a study should be made of documents on file in Canada and Great Britain to ascertain if it were British policy to incite the Indians of the Northwest to resist the encroachments of the Americans during this period. Most American sources hold that this is so.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Army Moves West

By the summer of 1786 resentment was running high in the West against the Congress for accepting Spain's decree closing the Mississippi to United States shipping. Many settlers in the area beyond the Appalachians were weighing the advantages of severing their connections with the seaboard states and negotiating commercial agreements with Spain, or crossing the Mississippi and taking up land in Spanish territory. The failure of Congress to deal effectively with the Indians and to establish a civil government in the Northwest had contributed to their discontent. Concern was also voiced over George Rogers Clark's plan to hold a council at Vincennes with the Indians. If his negotiations were unsuccessful, the Indians thus assembled might carry the knife and tomahawk to the settlements.

At last, the cumbersome machinery of the Confederation began to move. After studying the reports from Virginia, from Secretary of War Henry Knox, and Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay, the Congress on April 24, 1787, passed a resolution:

That the Secretary of War direct the commanding officer of the troops of the United States on the Ohio to take immediate and efficient measures for dispossessing a body of men who have in a lawless and unauthorized manner taken possession of Post St. Vincent in defiance of the proclamation and authority of the United States and that he employ the whole or such of the force under his command as he shall judge necessary to effect the object.<sup>1</sup>

Secretary Knox to implement this resolution would have to rely on the soldiers of the First American Regiment that had been organized in 1784 to protect the frontier. The commander of this regiment was Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Harmar of Pennsylvania. Harmar had been born in Philadelphia in 1753 and educated at Quaker schools in that city. He

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1. Journal of Continental Congress, April 24, 1787.

had joined the Continental Army on October 1, 1776, as a major in the 3d Pennsylvania Regiment; by the end of the Revolutionary War he held the rank of lieutenant colonel. Harmar had been selected to carry the ratification of the peace treaty to France, where he had enjoyed the sights and entertainment afforded by Paris. As Pennsylvania furnished the largest number of soldiers to the First Regiment, that state was permitted to name the commanding officer who would have the rank of lieutenant colonel. Harmar was selected. He was young, educated, had friends in high posts, had some independent means, and was experienced both in civil and military affairs. By the end of 1785 Harmar and his men had erected a number of fortifications on the upper Ohio, and he had established his headquarters at Fort Harmar at the mouth of the Muskingum,<sup>2</sup> in what is now the state of Ohio.

On May 7, 1787, Secretary Knox forwarded to Colonel Harmar the April 24 Resolution of the Congress. In a covering letter, Knox recommended that Harmar personally visit Vincennes so he could "decide with precision whether a permanent military post ought to be established at that place." His guidelines in reaching this decision would be: (a) if such action would be satisfactory to the Indians; (b) if it met with approval of the citizens; (c) would a garrison at that point control the intrusions of lawless people; and (d) could the post be supplied at a reasonable cost to the government. If these conditions were satisfied, he was "to establish a post and garrison."<sup>3</sup>

Lieutenant Eskuries Beatty, the officer entrusted with carrying the Resolution and Knox's covering letter from New York City to Colonel Harmar, reached Fort Harmar on June 7. Meanwhile, Harmar on April 15 had left the mouth of the Muskingum in a barge, and in 92 hours he had reached the Falls of the Ohio. He had spent the following week with Major John P. Wyllys, who had replaced Captain Finney as commander there. While at the Falls, Harmar had closely questioned the inhabitants as to the international situation. He found that the men of the West were "unanimously opposed" to the closing of the Mississippi to navigation. If such a measure should occur, they would "look upon it as the greatest of grievances, as the prosperity of the Western world depends entirely upon this outlet." During the period, October 10, 1786-May 12, 1787, 177 boats had passed Fort Harmar, bound for Limestone and the Falls.

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2. *Outpost on the Wabash*, 12-13, 17-18.

3. Knox to Harmar, May 7, 1787 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).



Consequently, if Congress should determine that it should accede to Spanish demands and close the Mississippi to navigation, "a respectable post at the mouth of the Ohio or the Wabash will be necessary, otherwise . . . the people will become so strong in the course of a little time as to force a trade at all events."

Harmar had learned of Clark's plan to hold a peace conference at Vincennes on May 1. It had been decided, however, in view of his repudiation by the Virginia government, to postpone this meeting, so Clark would not be traveling to Vincennes "to amuse the Indians, so that they might peaceably disperse and commit no hostilities." Captain Dalton with about 100 men, raised for three years' service, was still at the post, but his remnant had been compelled to disband for want of provisions. Before doing so, Dalton and his people had caused much suffering among the French through their impressment of cattle.

So far as Harmar knew there was no authority for Clark to invite the Indians to a peace treaty, or for Captain Dalton and his men to post themselves at Vincennes. Since the village was of considerable consequence, it would be valuable for a party of regular troops to be posted there for it would "countenance and encourage the inhabitants."

When he returned to the mouth of the Muskingum, Harmar traveled overland by way of Danville and Lexington.<sup>4</sup>

Harmar, upon reading the orders and dispatches carried by Lieutenant Beatty, learned that in addition to affording protection to the French inhabitants at Vincennes and Kaskaskia, he was to have his troops protect the surveyors and enable them to push their work to an early completion. This action was to insure that the land recently acquired from the Indians in the Northwest Territory could be put up for sale, promptly, as the financial resources of the Congress had been pared to the bone.

To carry out these instructions, Colonel Harmar pulled his troops out of Fort Steuben and transmitted instructions to Captain William Ferguson to withdraw his command from Fort Pitt, leaving only Captain Joseph Ashton and his waiter there. One officer and 16 men of Ferguson's company were to be left at Fort McIntosh, while the captain and the remainder of his people were to report to Harmar at the Falls of the Ohio. To guard the surveyors, escorts (one officer and 16 men) were detailed to watch over them as they worked the fifth, sixth, and seventh ranges.

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4. Harmar to Knox, May 12, 1787.

Harmar trusted that the dispositions he had made would meet with the Secretary's approbation. Five infantry companies (Finney's, Zeigler's, Strong's, Mercer's, and Smith's), along with Ferguson's artillerymen and their brass 3-pounder, were currently either at, or en route to, the Falls of the Ohio. Harmar wrote on June 7 that he and Major John F. Hamtramck planned to leave Fort Harmar either "to-day or to-morrow" for the designated rendezvous.<sup>5</sup>

Captain David Strong's company to which Orderly Sergeant Joseph Buell was assigned had left Fort Harmar in two keelboats on May 26. The run down the Ohio to the Falls, 533 miles, took six days. Disembarking at Fort Finney on the 31st, the troops marched up to the fort and pitched camp nearby. Buell noted in his journal that the "garrison is pleasantly situated on the Indian shore, opposite a beautiful town called Louisville."<sup>6</sup>

Harmar reached the Falls on June 11. Within the week, he had determined that his plan to march his 330-man battalion over the Buffalo Trace to Vincennes was impractical, because of the great cost and the uncertainty of securing pack-animals. The expedition would proceed to Vincennes by water. Pending the arrival of Captain William Ferguson and his artillerymen, Harmar purchased provisions and made arrangements for transporting his cattle in Kentucky boats to the mouth of the Wabash. The cattle would then be put ashore and be driven the remainder of the way. While this operation would be difficult, it would "be infinitely less expensive than marching by land from hence directly to the post."<sup>7</sup>

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5. Harmar to Knox, June 7, 1787 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).

6. Journal of Joseph Buell, found in S. P. Hildreth, *Pioneer History: Being an Account of the First Examinations of the Ohio Valley, and the Early Settlement of the Northwest Territory . . .* (Cincinnati, 1838), 152-153. Buell was a native of Killingsworth, Connecticut.

7. Harmar to Secretary of War, June 15, 1787, from *Outpost on the Wabash*, 21-22. Captain Ferguson of Pennsylvania had served in the Continental Army and had been captured by the British at Bound Brook on April 13, 1777. He had been commissioned a captain in the U. S. Artillery, October 20, 1785. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, September 29 1789, to March 2, 1903* (Washington, 1903) 1, 417.

While awaiting Captain Ferguson, Harmar kept his eyes and ears open. He learned that there were a number of British traders on the Wabash above Vincennes. Upon reaching that post, steps would be taken "to expel the usurpers of the public lands, and likewise reconnoiter these British traders who are the cause . . . of all the Indian disturbances." Eight Chickasaws had spent the past week with Harmar, and, learning that their nation wished to trade with the Americans, he presented them with "watchcoats and a few trifles."

Four men were enlisted for one year's service as scouts. One was a Canadian who spoke and understood the various "dialects of the Wabash Indians." All were accomplished woodsmen, while two of them were well acquainted with the rivers of the area.

Harmar forwarded a message to Colonel Le Gras and Major Bosscron, informing them that he desired them to advise

the Indians, that the United States wish to live in peace with them, and that they may not be alarmed at this movement; likewise to apprise them of troops being on their way to the Post, not a set of villains, but regulars, sent by the Grand Council of the Empire, in order to preserve good faith with them, and to protect the legal inhabitants.

Le Gras answered Harmar's message on June 26. The people of Vincennes, he observed, were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the regulars and the sooner they came, "the sooner we will forget the discomforts that we have suffered, ignorant of what authority we lived under." As he was familiar with the region, Le Gras suggested that Harmar utilize the waterways to bring his men to Vincennes. To assist in the movement, Le Gras and several others planned to meet the regulars at the mouth of the Wabash.<sup>8</sup>

By the time Ferguson disembarked, Harmar had all his keelboats repaired. Having learned much about the region during the past three weeks, the Colonel on July 6 started Captain David Zeigler--with 66 men in eight Kentucky hoats, three keelboats, and two canoes--down the Ohio. Aboard these vessels were sufficient provisions (flour, cattle, whiskey, etc.) to subsist 300 men for three months. Zeigler was to tie up at Delaware Old Town, a few miles above the mouth of Green River.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Le Gras to Harmar, June 26, 1787, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 24-25.

9. Harmar to Secretary of War, July 7, 1787, (Harmar Papers, WLCL). David Zeigler had served as a captain in the 1st Pennsylvania Infantry during the Revolutionary War.

Harmar, accompanied by the remainder of his battalion, left the Falls of the Ohio at dawn on July 8, and rendezvoused with Zeigler's detachment 48 hours later. Meanwhile, Zeigler's people had landed the cattle and the expedition's 18 horses at the mouth of Little Pigeon Creek. Harmar would take the livestock and 200 men and march to Vincennes, while Major Hamtramck and 100 men would continue on down the Ohio in boats to the mouth of the Wabash, and then ascend that river to their goal.<sup>10</sup>

The officer to whom Harmar delegated this responsibility was an experienced soldier. Jean Francois Hamtramck had been born on August 16, 1756, in Quebec. His name was subsequently anglicised, becoming John Francis. As his mother, Marie Anne Bertin, was never reconciled to the British conquest of Canada, she is reputed to have instilled in her boy a prejudice against the conquerors. John Francis probably traveled to New York almost as soon as the colonies revolted, because he was commissioned a captain in the 5th New York on November 21, 1776.

Being a Canadian by birth and a man of diminutive stature--he is said to have been but 5 feet 5 inches tall--he must have shown unusual ability to attract attention and to win promotion to the rank of brevet major in the New York line. In 1786 he was named major in the 1st United States Infantry. Here he proved himself to be an efficient officer and won the respect of his men. He commanded companies ordered to drive out squatters at Mingo Bottom near today's Steubenville, Ohio, and to afford protection to Captain Thomas Hutchins, Geographer of the United States, who was surveying the Townships along the western boundary of Pennsylvania. Hamtramck oversaw the erection of the first Fort Steuben at the site of Steubenville. In May, 1787, he had reported to Harmar at Fort Harmar.<sup>11</sup>

Preparatory to taking up the march through the wilderness each soldier drew 16 pounds of flour to be carried on his back, in addition to his arms and accoutrements. Harmar put his column in motion up the Red Banks Trace early on the 11th. The weather was hot and

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10. Harmar to Secretary of War, Aug. 7, 1787, from *Outpost on the Wabash*, 34.

11. George B. Catlin, "Colonel John Francis Hamtramck," *IMH*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 238-239.

humid, and many of the soldiers threw away their flour. Sergeant Buell carried his on the first day, but thereafter he secreted it on a pack-horse. "The troops marched in four columns, in the most perfect order, with a drummer at the head of each; to give and answer signals for halting and forward movements of the division." In plotting the route on a map, Harmar had calculated the distance from the landing to Vincennes as 50 miles. Not far from the Ohio, the soldiers entered a region grown up in thickets. Water ran short, and the column had to bear to the east, adding about 20 miles to the distance. On the 18th the soldiers waded White River, about 15 miles below the forks, and entered Vincennes at noon on the 19th with the colors snapping in the breeze. The troops marched through the village and camped near the remains of Fort Patrick Henry.<sup>12</sup>

Sergeant Buell jotted down in his journal his impressions of the town. "Post Vincent," he wrote,

is a beautiful place, was it settled with respectable people; but they are a mixture of all nations. The principal inhabitants are French, intermarried with Indians, and pay little regard to religion and law. They are under the guidance of an old Roman Catholic friar [Father Gibault], who keeps them in ignorance as much as he can and fills them full of superstition. The people give themselves up to all kinds of vice, and are as indolent and idle a community as ever composed one town. They might live in affluence if they were industrious. The town has been settled longer than Philadelphia, and one-half of their dwelling houses are yet covered with bark like Indian wigwams.<sup>13</sup>

Fort Patrick Henry now consisted of little more than a stockade, and Colonel Harmar decided, in view of its run-down condition, not to throw his troops into it. In addition, he probably wished to get his men away from the village. The battalion was therefore formed on the 20th and marched up the Wabash about one-half mile and encamped "at a very pleasant spot."<sup>14</sup>

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12. Harmar to Secretary of War, Aug. 7, 1787, from *Outpost on the Wabash*, 34-35; Buell's Journal, found in *Pioneer History*, 154.

13. Buell's Journal, found in *Pioneer History*, 155-156. Buell was mistaken; Vincennes had been founded in 1731 or 1732, 49 years after Philadelphia.

14. *Ibid.*, 155; Diary of Joseph Harmar (Harmar Papers, WLCL); "Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny," 304-305. Ebenezer Denny had

Colonel Le Gras and the chief men of the village called on Har-  
mar on July 20 and welcomed him. He found their behavior "most re-  
spectfully submissive." Post Vincennes, he reported to Secretary Knox,  
"is a very considerable village. It contains near four hundred houses  
(log & bark) outhouses, barns, &c. The number of inhabitants, about  
nine hundred (souls) French, and about four hundred (souls) American."

Taking cognizance of the extremely low stage of the Wabash, Har-  
mar that afternoon detached a sergeant and 20 men in three barges and  
five pottiaugers to meet Major Hamtramck and assist him in bringing up  
the supplies and baggage. It was the 25th before Hamtramck reached  
Vincennes. Eleven fatiguing days had been required to ascend the  
Wabash; one man had been drowned on the passage up the river, and a  
package of 200 shirts lost. Even then, Hamtramck had been compelled  
to leave Ensign Cornelius Ryker Sedam with a detail and the clothing,  
all the whiskey, and most of the flour at the mouth of the Wabash,  
because the water was so shoal that the deeply-laden keelboats could  
not be brought upstream. The next morning, July 26, Harmar sent Lieu-  
tenant John Armstrong with 45 fresh men in several pottiaugers to  
reinforce Ensign Sedam, and to assist him in bringing up the provi-  
sions and clothing.<sup>15</sup>

Colonel Harmar, six days before, had asked Colonel Le Gras to  
let him examine the French grants and any other papers he might have  
respecting the original settlers. These documents were produced, but  
Harmar refused to have them translated until the arrival of Barthélemi  
Tardiveau, who was coming upstream with Hamtramck's fleet.<sup>16</sup>

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served in the Revolutionary War as an ensign in the Pennsylvania Line.  
He had been commissioned an ensign in Harmar's regiment on August 12,  
1784, and had been promoted to regimental adjutant in September 1785.  
Heitman, *Historical Register*, 1, 3 67.

15. Harmar to Secretary of War, August 7, 1787, in *Outpost on the  
Wabash*, 35-36. Buell's Journal, found in *Pioneer History*, 155. Ensign  
Sedam of New Jersey, who had served in the Revolutionary War, joined  
the regiment on March 17, 1786. Heitman, *Historical Register*, Vol.1,  
872. John Armstrong, a veteran of the Pennsylvania Line, had been com-  
missioned ensign in the 1st U. S. on August 12, 1784. *Ibid.*, 170.

16. Tardiveau, born in 1750 in Nantes, started for America in 1777,  
arriving in Philadelphia the following year. As a merchant-trader in  
Kentucky, he supplied George Rogers Clark's troops in 1781. Remaining  
in Kentucky after the Revolution, he served as an interpreter for repre-  
sentatives of the French inhabitants of the Illinois villages and Vin-  
cennes in their protests to Virginia over the conduct of the Virginia  
troops in 1786. *Outpost on the Wabash*, 23.

On the 27th Harmar had the "resolve of Congress respecting intruders on the public lands, together with his orders," published in English and French.<sup>17</sup> The next day, eight Piankashaws from Terre Haute came down river in two canoes with "their flags flying, landed on the opposite shore, fired their guns, whooped and yelled a few times, and went into the village." Harmar on the 29th met with the Indians. He presented them with 13 strings of wampum, assured them of the friendly disposition of the United States, and "advised them not to listen to what any bad people might say to the contrary." Messengers were sent by these Indians to the chiefs of the various tribes on the Wabash, inviting them to a council to be held at Vincennes. They seemed pleased and presented Harmar with a calumet.

Lieutenant Armstrong and Ensign Sedam finally reached the post with the supplies on August 5. On July 25, they reported, a war party had waylaid a canoe which had lagged in passing the long rapids. Two men, one a soldier in Zeigler's Company, had been killed and one captured. Harmar accordingly warned the Indians to tell their chiefs that "if they did not desist, they would certainly draw upon them the vengeance of the United States."

As it would be a number of weeks before the Indian Chiefs would assemble, Harmar left Vincennes on August 9 for Kaskaskia. He was accompanied by Ensign Nathan McDowell and a 30-man detachment. Harmar believed this show of force would have a good effect, because it would "deter several people from Kentucky and other parts from taking up the public lands." It was known that Clark's militia on their 1786 march toward the Vermilion towns had cast covetous eyes on these choice lands.<sup>18</sup>

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17. On September 22, 1783, Congress had issued a proclamation prohibiting and forbidding "all persons from making settlements on lands inhabited or claimed by Indians, without the limits of jurisdiction of any particular State, and from purchasing or receiving any gift or cessation of such lands or claims without the express authority and direction of the United States in Congress assembled." *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 25, 602.

18. Harmar to Secretary of War, Aug. 7, 1787, and Armstrong to Harmar, Aug. 8, 1787, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 38-39. One of the dead men had 21 arrows driven into his body, while his nose had been cut off.

Harmar and his party reached Kaskaskia on August 16. During the next 11 days, they visited the other French villages on the Mississippi and also St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve on the Spanish shore. In those two towns Harmar was handsomely entertained by the commandants, Francisco Cruzat and Henri Peyroux de la Coudrienne. Harmar was back in Vincennes on September 3.

During his absence, the troops had fortified the encampment by throwing up two flanking batteries. On August 19 there had been a violent wind and rain storm, which knocked down most of the tents. The "sickly season" now set in, and by the 27th half the soldiers were on sick call. Several men died, while others, including Captain Strong, were hospitalized in the village.<sup>19</sup>

Two days after Harmar's return, on September 5, 120 Piankashaws and Weas came down in canoes, with their white flags hoisted. Every precaution had been taken to guard against attack; the camp had been fortified, and two redoubts had been thrown up and the guard in front entrenched. The troops had been issued new uniforms to make a good appearance. The Indians saluted the battalion by firing several volleys on the Wabash opposite the camp. Their salute was returned, as Harmar was "determined to impress upon them as much as possible the majesty of the United States." The Indians landed and came up to the camp, when the field music was ordered to play them a salute. One of the soldiers recorded, "They were painted in fine style; some black with streaks of white, others red and eyes white. To us they seemed hideous, but in their own estimation no doubt very fine." Before they left the camp to visit Vincennes, Harmar told their leaders that it was the wish of Congress "to live in peace and friendship with them," but if they persisted in being hostile, "a body of troops would march to their towns and sweep them off the face of the earth."

Harmar on the 7th invited the Indians to visit his camp, and after their arrival he addressed them. The Indians seemed impressed with the soldiers. The next day they replied to the Colonel's speech, and "in strong figurative language, expressed their determination to preserve perfect peace and friendship with the United States, as long as the waters flowed, &c." They disavowed any knowledge of the attack on the army's canoe, and presented Harmar with a number of calumets and belts of wampum, which the Colonel forwarded to the Congress.

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19. Buell's Journal, found in *Pioneer History*, 156.



On the 9th the Indians returned to the camp. "A band of warriors," Sergeant Buell wrote:

marched in front painted for battle, and perfectly naked, except their breech clouts, and commenced a dance round our flag staff. Their music consisted of a drum made of a small keg, covered at one end with a skin, and beat upon with a stick. After performing their antics for some time round the flag staff, they went to the Colonel's marque, and danced in the hot sun, drinking whiskey at the same time, until all were as drunk as they could be and stand on their feet. They then staggered into town, where I saw them fighting and dragging each other through the mud and dirt of the streets.<sup>20</sup>

On the following day, the 10th, Harmar made them several presents from the commissioner's goods, and most of the Indians left for their villages on the 12th. Before doing so, they expressed themselves as highly satisfied with the treatment they had received. The Indians, Harmar reported, are "amazingly fond of whiskey, and destroyed a considerable quantity of it."

After the termination of the conference with the Indians, and having secured petitions from the inhabitants of Vincennes to Congress--relinquishing their charter--Harmar prepared to return to his base. He determined, however, that it would be "impolitic, after the parade we had made, to entirely abandon the country." Orders were issued for Major Hamtramck to remain at Vincennes with 95 officers and men from Captain John Smith's and William Ferguson's companies. Hamtramck was "to fortify himself, and to regulate the militia, who are to join him in case of hostilities."<sup>21</sup>

Harmar, accompanied by the physically fit men of Zeigler's and Strong's companies (71 in all) marched for the Falls on October 1. Major Wyllys, commanding the flotilla, cast off for the same destination on the 2d. Aboard the craft were Captains Walter Finney's and John Mercer's companies and the brass 3-pounder, along with all men currently on sick call.

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20. Buell's Journal, found in *Pioneer History*, 156-157.

21. Harmar to Secretary of War, Nov. 24, 1787, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 47-54. Captain Smith of New York had served as a lieutenant in the Continental Artillery from June 29, 1781, to June 1783. He was commissioned a captain in the 1st Infantry on October 21, 1786. Heitman, *Historical Register*, 1, 900.

Marching by way of the Buffalo Trace, Harmar's column reached the Falls on the 7th. No Indians were seen along the way, and Harmar reported that the "Country is in general hilly, and good wheat land." An engagement with five buffalo bulls enlivened the march. The bulls charged the column, but were turned aside by a crashing volley, which killed three of them. Wyllys and the fleet tied up at Fort Finney on the 21st. Two days, the 23d and 24th, were required to drag the boats over the Falls, as the Ohio was very low. The battalion was back at its duty station, Fort Harmar, on November 13, 1787.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Harmar to Secretary of War, Nov. 24, 1787, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 54-52. At Vincennes, Harmar had taken possession of two brass 3-pounders that had belonged to Colonel Dalton's Regiment of the Ouabache.

## CHAPTER X

### The Army's First Years At Fort Knox

Major Hamtramck was to spend most of the next six years at Vincennes. The route from the Falls of the Ohio, which was 100 miles overland and three times as far by water, by which supplies and reinforcements had to be forwarded was exposed to attack, and he and his understrength battalion were in constant danger of being overwhelmed by hostile Indians. His first concern was to select a site and erect a fort. The location finally chosen was on the left bank of the Wabash near Harmar's camp, and 4,500 feet above the ruins of Fort Patrick Henry. Hamtramck placed Captain Ferguson in charge of the fatigue details. Progress was slow because of the "great scarcity and difficulties of obtaining" timber, as the *habitants* in the years since 1732 had stripped the immediate area of trees.<sup>1</sup> Timber had to be hauled a great distance. It was April 1788 before the stockade was positioned, and the four blockhouses had been raised to the second story. Not until then was Hamtramck able to write of his confidence in his ability to defend the post against attack, provided sufficient provisions were forwarded.<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Harmar on October 13 notified Hamtramck that he was to call the post Fort Knox, in honor of the Secretary of War.<sup>3</sup>

Duty at a remote frontier post was not popular with either officers or men. The officers complained that prices were so inflated that they could not live on their subsistence allowances. Recognizing the injustice of their situation, Hamtramck arranged for the issuance to them of a soldier's ration.

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1. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 3, 1787, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 44.

2. Hamtramck to Harmar, April 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 68. A copy of "A Ground Plan of the Garrison of Post Vincennes," which was drawn in 1788, accompanies this report.

3. Harmar to Hamtramck, Oct. 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 138. Harmar on November 3 notified the Secretary that the post had been named in his honor. On December 22 Knox replied thanking Harmar for the compliment. Knox to Harmar, Dec. 22, 1788 (Harmar Papers WLCL).

The men disliked serving in this out-of-the-way post, where the rations were scanty and of inferior quality, and their pay usually far in arrears. When their enlistments were up, it was almost impossible to induce them to re-enlist, with the result that at times the garrison was dangerously understrength. Malaria felled and sent to the hospital a large number each summer. Hamtramck, himself, did not escape the annual visitation, and the surgeon seldom had quinine or other medicines.

The fort was stockaded. Its rectangular palisade of logs, sharpened at the top and loopholed for flintlocks, had two-story blockhouses in each angle. The officers' quarters were two-story log-shacks consisting of two rooms, each one occupied by an officer. The enlisted men huddled together in single-storied barracks for warmth in the winter. With only open fireplaces to heat the buildings, with supplies brought in infrequently by keelboats, and with the chill of winter and monotony, it is small wonder that rum was popular.

Yet these men with their smart cocked hats, their tight gaiters, their polished cartridge-boxes, their clean white belts, their shaven faces, and their powdered hair turned out daily for drill, guard mounting, and parade as if the eyes of the world were upon them. Every few nights each soldier, muffled in bear- and coonskins, watched--as a sentry--in the unheated blockhouses or at a desolate post outside. The lurking Indian was ubiquitous. A wink of sleep, a tomahawked sentinel, and one pine torch well applied meant death to the garrison.

These soldiers had built the fort with their own hands. It was really theirs more than the government's. But not for a moment did they forget their duty to their nation and to each other. Each day there were cords of wood to cut, sinks to fill, and the policing of the quarters and grounds. There were drills and parades. But what of recreation? Because of the constant threat of Indian attack, hunting was so dangerous that it was frequently forbidden. There were no USO shows. A book was a rarity. Although few of the men could read or write, a Bible or a letter was soon frayed from excessive use.<sup>4</sup>

Colonel Harmar had not been gone long before a man who had visited Detroit reached Vincennes and told Hamtramck that the occupation of the post on the Wabash had alarmed the British. Working parties had been turned out by Major Robert Mathews, the commandant at Detroit, to

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4. William A. Ganoe, *The History of the United States Army* (New York, 1924), 93-94.

strengthen the fortifications. Joseph Brant, the Mohawk chief who had espoused the cause of the northwestern Indians in their struggle against the United States, was said to have moved to Miamitown at the confluence of the St. Joseph and St. Marys rivers with 400 lodges. Besides preventing trade between the Miamis and the Americans, Brant had reportedly told the Miamis that he had been sent by their British brothers to protect them. As the Miamis did not have sufficient food for themselves and their visitors, Brant and his people soon returned to Canada.<sup>5</sup>

By January 1, 1788, Hamtramck had concluded that the Indians of the Wabash were "disposed to be our friends," but they were being menaced by the Miamis, Potawotomis, and Shawnees who had warned them to have nothing to do with the Americans. A number of councils had been held during the autumn at which Hamtramck had stated that "every one who would prefer the protection of the United States to that of the English would be wise and should be protected and permitted to trade with us." This had served to reconcile many of the redmen to the presence of the garrison.<sup>6</sup>

Thirteen Cherokees reached Vincennes on February 21, and told Hamtramck that they wished "to see how affairs went on the Wabash, and whether they could get some traders to go to their nation." From them, he learned that one of Brant's emissaries had recently visited the Southern Indians "with a large quantity of wampum to present to the nations, and invite them to take up the tomhock in the spring and to strike on the American settlements." The Cherokees explained that they had refused to go to war, as they had signed in 1785, a treaty of "peace and perpetual" friendship with the Americans.<sup>7</sup>

If the Indians went to war, Hamtramck believed fighting would be on a small scale. At most, some boats would be attacked and a

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5. Hamtramck to Harmer, Jan.1, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 58-59. Brant's biographer, William Stone, makes no mention of a stay in the Miami villages. William Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant* . . . (New York, 1838), Vol.2, Chapter 9.

6. Hamtramck to Harmer, Jan.1, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 60-61.

7. Hamtramck to Harmer, April 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 68-69. Brant's messenger, a Mohawk warrior, had stopped at Vincennes on his return from the South.

few scalps taken. He therefore recommended that the boats used by the contractor to provision the garrison be provided an escort on the run from the Falls to Vincennes.<sup>8</sup>

The problem of supplying the garrison had plagued Hamtramck from the first. When Major Wyllys had started down the Wabash, he had taken all the beef with him. Since then Hamtramck complained on November 3, "I have supply the garrison with meat; one cow excepted that the contractor has furnished." If a herd of cattle was not soon forthcoming, he warned Colonel Harmar, the troops would be without meat, "for my credit will fail and the people of the town will begin to think that we are a second Wabash Regiment."<sup>9</sup>

As the months passed, the situation deteriorated. On January 1, 1788, Hamtramck on taking inventory found that the garrison storehouse contained ten barrels of beef and sufficient flour to last three months. Much of the flour, however, would have to be used to replace that borrowed from the Vincennes merchants. Immediate steps should be taken by Harmar to see that commissary and quartermaster stores to last at least three months were stockpiled at Vincennes, because in event of an Indian war the supply lines linking the post with the Falls of the Ohio would be severed. Great care in salting the beef would have to be taken, as the ten barrels recently received from the Falls were nearly spoiled, and if the weather had been warm the battalion would be without meat.<sup>10</sup>

This situation did not improve with the arrival of spring. With threats of war daily becoming more ominous, Hamtramck continued to fret about how he was to feed his command. The period for which Captain Smith's company had enlisted was about to expire, and the Major feared that none would re-enlist because of conditions. Hard work, poor food, and no pay had sapped their enthusiasm for a military career. Knowledge that Captain Joseph Asheton had lingered four months at the Falls with the soldiers' pay had aroused the garrison's ire.<sup>11</sup>

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8. Ibid., 70.

9. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 3, 1787, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 45.

10. Hamtramck to Harmar, Ibid., Jan. 1, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 63. Surgeon's Mate John Elliot had notified Hamtramck that by Spring the command would need vinegar to combat scurvy.

11. Hamtramck to Harmar, April 13, 1786, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 69. Captain Asheton had assumed command of Captain Finney's company upon that officer's resignation from the army.

Conditions, as the weeks passed, became more critical. Not a man had re-enlisted by May 21, for as Hamtramck reported, "the soldiers dont like this place. It is too dear for them." Unless something drastic happened to change the men's minds, his command would be all but disbanded by August.<sup>12</sup>

Colonel Harmar was sympathetic, and he urged Secretary of War Knox to see that the recruiting officers exerted themselves to secure "good men" and forward them to the frontier. While Captain Asheton at the Falls had re-enlisted almost his entire company--57 hearty rugged fellows-- Major Hamtramck had made no progress. He hoped that it would be possible to provide the men re-enlisting with the clothing to which they were entitled. At present, the soldiers had no linen overalls and were compelled to wear blue woolen overalls.<sup>13</sup>

Contractor's Agent John Finley had promised to supply the post with provisions for six months from the Falls of the Ohio, but Hamtramck doubted his ability to do so, unless he received assistance from the army. Hamtramck at this time was in debt to Col. Francis Vigo for from 16,000 to 17,000 rations consumed by the troops during the past winter. Vigo in the years since 1778 had kept in close contact with the Americans. Until June 1779 he continued to lend George Rogers Clark money to finance his operations. During the winter of 1779-1780, Vigo and other traders traveled to Williamsburg to see about supplies and to plan to organize the Indians to assure better relations with the Americans.<sup>14</sup>

In the spring of 1780 Vigo, as a member of the Spanish militia, had helped defend St. Louis against the British.<sup>15</sup> Sometime between 1780 and 1783, he moved to Vincennes, where he lived the remainder of his life.

Although Congress had not reimbursed him for the funds he had expended to assist George Rogers Clark during the Revolution, Vigo had cheerfully come to Hamtramck's assistance. Hamtramck trusted that Vigo would either be reimbursed by the government or by the

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12. Hamtramck to Harmar, May 21, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 77.

13. Harmar to Secretary of War, June 15, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 87.

14. George A. Brennan, "De Linctot, Guardian of the Frontier," *JISHS*, 10, 377.

15. Louis Houck, *The Spanish Regime in Missouri* (Chicago, 1909), 184.

contractor. The merchant extended help on another occasion. Before the stockade had been completed, Hamtramck had been compelled to send a keelboat to the Ohio to pick up supplies. Only 30 soldiers were fit for duty, so Hamtramck had hired ten villagers to undertake this task. Vigo, learning that Hamtramck had no money to pay the Frenchmen, agreed to reimburse them for their services.<sup>16</sup>

A courier, Lt. Edward Spear, with dispatches for Hamtramck from Colonel Harmar reached Vincennes by water on April 9. While en route back to the Falls of the Ohio, Spear's party on the 21st was attacked by Indians. Two soldiers were killed. The fire of the Indians was returned. As he was uncertain of the strength of the foe, Spear retired downstream and landed. In commenting on this affair, Harmar informed Secretary of War Knox, "They [the Indians] have an immense advantage in attacking boats ascending the river, indeed there can be no possible security unless our parties are strong enough to afford a flank guard on the shore."<sup>17</sup>

During the weeks following Lieutenant Spear's disaster, reports were received from traders who had been at the Wea villages that raiding parties were returning from Kentucky with scalps. Hamtramck, in hopes of curbing these raids, notified the Weas that if within the month they did not cease these depredations, he would issue orders prohibiting them visiting Vincennes. He, however, felt stronger action would be required, and he argued that there would be trouble until their villages were laid waste. If Harmar were prepared to reinforce him with 400 to 500 men, he would surprise their villages.<sup>18</sup>

Harmar approved the policy of excluding the Weas from Vincennes, as long as they continued to raid the Kentucky settlements. He hoped that the organization of a strong central government under the Constitution would result in early orders to reinforce the frontier posts and permission "to chastize these villains properly."<sup>19</sup>

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16. Hamtramck to Harmar, April 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 70; Vigo Papers, No.247, *Report No.216*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess. Vigo, in Harmar's opinion, might encounter difficulty in collecting the money due him for supplies. As Major Pinley was the contractor, the Colonel felt that Vigo should collect from him rather than the government. Harmar to Hamtramck, July 26, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 95-96.

17. Harmar to Secretary of War, June 15, 1788, and Spear to Harmar, June 2, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 82-83, 86-87.

18. Hamtramck to Harmar, May 21, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 77.

19. Harmar to Hamtramck, Aug.7, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 100.



Another problem that developed with the advent of spring was what should be done about the influx of trade goods from Detroit. Almost daily, Hamtramck received applications from the Vincennes merchants to import some. If this were against the law, he trusted that steps would be taken to encourage American merchants to move to Vincennes, for if the Indians could not get necessities they would be compelled to trade with the British at the Miami towns.<sup>20</sup>

By mid-June Hamtramck learned that the number of war parties that had moved south from the Vermilion and Wea villages had been exaggerated. On July 8 a Piankashaw raiding party led by The Grosse Tête murdered a white man and his son on Daniel Sullivan's Little River Plantation.<sup>21</sup>

Hamtramck, with the Indians assuming a more belligerent attitude, became increasingly disturbed about the small size of the military reservation. West of the post one of the citizens had raised a house and outbuildings, and in case of war his buildings and fences would provide cover to the attacker. To correct this situation, Hamtramck recommended that he be allowed to purchase ground to a depth of 200 yards on the land approaches to the garrison. As it had been impossible to secure a flag at Vincennes for the fort, it was hoped that Harmar would procure and forward one as it "is a piece of furniture that the Indians much esteem."<sup>22</sup>

Harmar was compelled to reject Hamtramck's plea for more land. But as soon as a treaty had been signed with the Piankashaw, Hamtramck should contact the territorial governor, who would advise him in regard to his plea to increase the acreage of the military reservation.<sup>23</sup>

Confronted by the failure of Captain Smith's people to re-enlist, Colonel Harmar in August ordered the remainder of Captain Ferguson's Artillery Company to the Wabash. If the situation at Vincennes continued to deteriorate, Hamtramck was to call on Major Wyllys at the Falls for assistance.<sup>24</sup>

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20. Hamtramck to Harmar, May 21, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 77.

21. Hamtramck to Harmar, June 18 and July 14, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 88-89, 89-90, 93-94.

22. Hamtramck to Harmar, April 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 72-73.

23. Harmar to Hamtramck, July 26, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 98.

24. Harmar to Hamtramck, Aug. 7, 1778, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 101.

The manpower situation got tighter. On August 11 Captain Ferguson complained that by early spring, if his people continued to remain at Vincennes, he would "stand a bad chance of getting many of them" to re-enlist, as all were "disgusted with this place." Since their arrival on the Wabash, their diet had been principally "bread & beef & that sometimes very bad particularly the bread since last Christmas." Whiskey, soap, candles, and vinegar were scarce. His men had accordingly been compelled to live "on two thirds of that which is barely sufficient to subsist him." In addition, the doctor was out of supplies, having not a grain of tartar-emetic or bark. In view of this situation, Ferguson requested that his company, if consistent with the good of the service, be transferred early in 1789 to the Falls of the Ohio.<sup>25</sup>

The officers in charge of the small detachments which traveled between the posts, whether they went by land or water, had to be on guard against ambush. Bands of fierce and crafty warriors lounged about the fort and kept close watch on troop movements. They took advantage of Hamtramck's unwillingness to harass any Indians who might be friendly, and plotted the destruction of the soldiers detailed to keep intruders off the land.

On the evening of July 22, 1788, Lt. William Peters with 36 soldiers started down the Wabash to bring up provisions forwarded to the mouth by the contractors. He reached the mouth of the Wabash on the 24th, and he and his men landed and camped. Two days later, the 26th, the contractors' boat arrived from the Falls. The remainder of the day was spent loading the barge and three pirogues, and early the next morning the ascent was started.

About two miles upstream, the boats pulled in close to shore to pass an island to their right. Suddenly, there was a crash of small-arms, as a large party of Indians blazed away. At first, the warriors concentrated on the pirogues which trailed the barge. They then shifted their fire to the barge, and Lieutenant Peters saw seven of his men cut down, dead and wounded. Peters now caught sight of the attackers, and called for some of the bargemen to return their fire, while the rest who continued to man the oars struggled to turn the craft about. The bow of the barge touched shore briefly, and three men who had escaped from the pirogues were taken aboard. Meanwhile, the Indians had seized two of the pirogues. Observing that the attackers had possession of

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25. Ferguson to Harmer, Aug. 11, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 104.

both banks, and that they could not number less than 100, Peters had his men pulled for the Ohio. Peters, on reaching the Ohio, checked his rolls and found that he had lost ten dead and eight wounded. With only 14 soldiers fit for duty, Peters felt it would be foolhardy to make another attempt to ascend the Wabash, so he proceeded down the Ohio and up the Mississippi to Kaskaskia, where he arrived on August 7.<sup>26</sup>

The assault on Peters' party made Hamtramck boil. He had feared an attack of this nature for some time, and consequently he had protested repeatedly to Major Wyllys against this mode of provisioning his battalion. He had urged that the post be supplied twice a year, for if he were obliged to send each month to the mouth of the Wabash to get provisions it could only end in disaster. Whenever the express rider arrived with news that the contractors were forwarding provisions to the depot at the river's mouth, the word quickly spread and became known to the Indians. On the day that Peters' detachment had cast off, 30 redmen had left the village on horseback. In the future, Hamtramck complained to Harmar, Major Wyllys should provide an escort of not less than 60 men for the convoy.

This setback left the post without an ounce of flour and only two month's supply of pork. To make matters more embarrassing, many of the villagers and most of the remaining soldiers were ill. To combat this situation the doctor needed a large supply of emetic and bark. Along with this request and the report of the attack on Lieutenant Peters' detail, Hamtramck forwarded to Harmar a plan of the fort, and a request that it be given a name.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug.12, 1788, and Peters to Hamtramck, Aug.23, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 105, 109-110. The Indians in their attack captured 11,395 pounds of flour, 1,733 pounds of pork, 5 1/2 bushels of salt, 180 gallons of whiskey, and 354 pounds of bacon.

27. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug.12, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 106-110. Major Wyllys, on learning of the attack on Lieutenant Peters' detachment, ordered the contractors to bring up additional provisions which would be forwarded to Vincennes. The supply vessels would be escorted by 45 men led by Lt. Mahlon Ford. Wyllys to Harmar, Aug. 23, 1788 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).

John Baptiste Constan, who had just returned from the Wea villages, reached Vincennes in mid-August with additional evil-tiding for the little Major. While traveling across the Miami nation, he had learned that the Indians were still bringing in scalps and that they had burned several whites. Captain Alexander McKee, the British Commissioner for Indian affairs, had sent word that his people would hold a meeting with the chiefs at La Roche Dubout, near Detroit.<sup>28</sup>

When Colonel Harmar relayed to Secretary Knox news of the attack on Peters' party, he commented, "This transaction shows the Wabash Indians are for war--and it is high time that they were severely chastized."<sup>29</sup> Earlier the Secretary had written Harmar:

should the depredations of the Wabash Indians become general, the post at St. Vincennes will require your constant attention. If it can be supported effectually, the works ought to be strengthened . . . , an ample quantity of provisions placed in the magazine for a blockade of some length--the inhabitants of the post arranged for the support of the garrison--in fine, every arrangement made as if a blockade were about to take place . . . .<sup>30</sup>

Patrick Brown and 60 hard-riding Kentuckians reached the Wabash opposite the fort, on August 18. He informed Hamtramck that he had been ordered out by the Kentucky Assembly to punish the Indians. After marching up Salt River and crossing to the headwaters of the Embarrass, they had clashed with a party of Indians, having killed nine that morning. Hamtramck asked to see Brown's commission, but he received an evasive reply. Whereupon, Hamtramck remarked that he could not believe that Brown had orders to come into the territory of the United States to wage war. As only Congress had the power to declare war, the Major told Brown to get out of the area. Brown asked to cross his command, and Hamtramck curtly refused. Brown did not press the subject. At the same time he promised to return the horses his men had stolen from a settler and three captured Indians who were under the army's protection.

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28. Ibid., 108.

29. Harmar to Secretary of War, Sept. 7, 1788 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).

30. Knox to Harmar, July 21, 1788 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).

As soon as Hamtramck had returned to his quarters, Brown and his people broke the padlocks which secured the canoes' moorings and crossed the river, going ashore at the village. Hamtramck, when he saw what was going on, debated employing his cannon to stop the crossing. But he decided it would be unwise to spill any blood. Brown, ignoring the requests of the civil magistrates and the army, refused to return the six horses stolen from Pacan's band. Subsequently, Hamtramck confessed:

Never was my feelings so much wonded before. But what could I do? I had but nine men fit for duty, the American militia would not have fought them if I had been able to have marched 50 men, what French there was in town at that time would have joined me cheerfully and would have perhaps persuaded Mr. Brown to accept my propositions.<sup>31</sup>

The next day Hamtramck assembled the Indians, and he explained to them the situation and who Brown and his people were. He sought to show them that the attack on La Damoisel's and Pacan's people had been unwarranted. Some of the Indians, after listening to the Major's explanation, concluded to remain in the area, while others returned to the Wea villages and Terre Haute. Just what the final results would be, only time would tell. As the garrison was very "sickly," Hamtramck hoped the Indians would not take revenge on the army.<sup>32</sup>

Colonel Harmar was understandably dismayed by the insolent conduct of Brown and his people, as it set "the sovereign authority of the United States at defiance." If Hamtramck had been stronger, it would have been his duty to recover the horses and to "severely chastize" Brown's motley command. In his opinion, Brown deserved to be hanged.<sup>33</sup>

Hamtramck soon began to suspect that some of the French might have participated in the attack on Peters' convoy. Several villagers who had been hunting near the mouth of the Wabash at that time came across some of the provisions, which they said the Indians had secreted. Three

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31. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug. 31, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 115-116. Pacan was a Miami chieftan.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Harmar to Hamtramck, Feb. 15, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 150.

of them loaded the provisions in their canoe and paddled up river to Vincennes. There they told Hamtramck of their discovery and offered to turn in the provisions. Their uncommon generosity and the character of one of the men, John Melbeck, aroused the Major's suspicions that "it was only a tryal to find out what measure would be necessary for them to take in order to secure their grab which I suspected them to have made." So he told them they could keep the provisions.

Several days later, Melbeck called on Hamtramck and asked for a pass to visit the mouth of the Wabash to hunt buffalo. He was told to go ahead. Melbeck and his confederates, within a few days, returned to the post with two pirogues loaded with 4,010 pounds of flour. They arrived in town after dark on the evening of September 13 and were promptly arrested by the Major's order. Hamtramck convened a Board to inquire into how the suspects came into possession of the provisions. The Board was unable to secure sufficient evidence to warrant charges, but Melbeck was ordered banished from the territory.<sup>34</sup>

Troubles with the Indians continued. On September 11 two women and a baby were killed at Vigo's farm on the opposite side of the river by two Indians, who had had relatives slain by Brown and his Kentuckians.<sup>35</sup> Several days later, a large number of Shawnee warriors passed through the village with three white prisoners. Hamtramck, to secure their release, ransomed them with provisions.<sup>36</sup>

It seemed to Colonel Harmar at this time that the Indians were getting ready to strike. To be prepared for any eventuality he began pressing the contractors to provision the post on the Wabash. Earlier in the year, the Secretary had awarded the contract for supplying the posts in the Northwest to Robert Elliott and Eli Williams. Elliott had assured Harmar that Fort Knox "shall be plentifully supplied."

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34. Hamtramck to Harmar, Oct. 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 121-122. The Frenchmen tried by the Board were: John Melbeck, Nicholas Tearer, John Baptiste Seton, Joseph Campo, Amable Lardoy, and Lewis Alar.

35. *Ibid.*, 124; Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 28, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 139.

36. Hamtramck to Harmar, Oct. 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 123-124. One of the prisoners was the son of Major Hay of Kentucky, while the others were a woman and a girl captured several years before.

Wyllys and Hamtramck would have to reach an agreement, however, on providing escorts. It seemed to Harmar that Wyllys should furnish them, and, after the provisions had been delivered by water, the escort could return to Fort Steuben--as Fort Finney had been redesignated--overland.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of November war did not seem as imminent on the Wabash. Writing to Colonel Harmar of this situation, Hamtramck reported:

I do not flater my self that they [the Indians] will be at perfect peace with us, for vengeance is their darling passion, and they forever will have some old or new grudge to satisfy. They have no doubt during the last war and perhaps since, lost some of their relation in some of their excursion. Those lives must be paid for; as no length of time ever closes their wounds.<sup>38</sup>

The Piankashaws, who had been living near the village for years, had removed and had established themselves near Kaskaskia as a result of Brown's expedition. There they had been joined by a number of Kickapoos from the Vermilion towns.<sup>39</sup>

As yet, Hamtramck had seen little to indicate that Elliott and Williams would be any more reliable contractors than their predecessor, Major Finley. Nothing worth mentioning had been received. For flour the battalion was dependent on what the commissary could purchase from the villagers. Stores on hand at the moment consisted of 31 beeves and a good supply of candles.<sup>40</sup>

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37. Harmar to Hamtramck, July 26 and Oct. 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 95-96, 137-138. Fort Finney had been redesignated Fort Steuben, in late 1787, soon after Captain Finney's resignation from the service.

38. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 28, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 139.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, 139, 142.

On December 11 a detachment with a drove of cattle started from Clarksville for Fort Knox. The march was poorly conducted, and it was the 22d before the column reached its goal. Lt. John Armstrong, who had been in charge of the beeves, returned to the Falls via a different and shorter route. Taking into account the experience gained, he wrote Colonel Harmar suggesting that it would be a "great advantage to the public if a road could be blazed." If this were done, an effort should be made to avoid the Silver Creek Knobs by crossing that creek six miles west of Fort Steuben, the Blue above the barrens, and striking White River below the forks.<sup>41</sup>

It was December 16 before a Kentucky boat with provisions for Fort Knox cast off from the Falls. Ice floes were encountered, and the boat, along with several pirogues, was driven ashore. The provisions were salvaged and landed. Notified of this trouble, the boats Hamtramck had sent to the mouth of the Wabash headed up the Ohio and picked up the supplies. By the time they had returned to the Wabash, a cold wave had closed in, and the boats were frozen in 72 miles below Vincennes. Several weeks passed before the weather warmed up. As soon as the ice melted, the boats ascended the river.<sup>42</sup>

This experience reinforced Hamtramck in his suspicions of the contractors. As there was no whiskey aboard the boats, it looked as if Elliott and Williams did not plan to forward any. In addition, only two rations of soap and candles had been received in over 13 months. He became so apprehensive that the contractors would leave the post in the "lurch" that he called on Harmar to compel that provisions to last for 18 months be thrown into the post during the spring. Since he had taken command at Vincennes, in October 1787, he had been compelled to draw at least one-third of his flour from the villagers.<sup>43</sup>

To replace Ferguson's company, which was to be mustered out, Harmar ordered Capt. James Bradford's company of artillerists, 66 strong, to Fort Knox. He felt certain that Hamtramck would be pleased with Bradford's people, as the attention that the Company commander gave to them "entitles him to commendation." Departing from Fort Harmar, Bradford's artillerists, traveling by way of the Ohio and Wabash,

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41. Armstrong to Harmar, Dec. 29, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 143-144.

42. Hamtramck to Harmar, Jan. 19, and March 28, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 145, 157.

43. Hamtramck to Harmar, Jan. 19; in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 145.



reached Fort Knox on March 26. The Wabash was in flood, and according to the *habitants* it was the highest that many of them could recall. As soon as the newcomers were assigned their billets, Lt. Mahlon Ford, who was in charge of the company during Ferguson's absence, ordered his people to board the boat.<sup>44</sup> With him Bradford brought a box of clothing for the 20 soldiers of Smith's Company who had re-enlisted. Men signing up for another three years were to be mustered as of the date of the expiration of their old enlistment.<sup>45</sup>

Hamtramck learned on March 26 that on January 11 treaties had been concluded by the United States with the Six Nations, the Wyandots, Delawares, Ottawas, Chippewas, Potawatomis, and Sauks at Fort Harmar confirming the boundary between the Indians' territory and the United States as previously set down by the Treaties of Fort Stanwix and Fort McIntosh. No "western tribes" had attended the Great Treaty. It was Harmar's opinion that these treaties might "divide the savages in their councils, and . . . prevent the General Confederacy taking place, which Brandt was so anxious to establish."<sup>46</sup> Hamtramck was delighted, because his spies had stated that British agents were urging the Indians "not to agree to any thing unless the north side of the Ohio was made their boundaries, and that if it was refused, to compel us by immediately attacking our garrisons and settlements."<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, The Grosse Tête had been arrested and confined at the fort charged with the Sullivan Station murders. Although he was a chief of the Piankashaws, Hamtramck was not worried because: (a) the tribe's first chief was a reasonable man; (b) the Piankashaws were a small tribe; and (c) he felt that the "whole nation will be with me in a few days, crying for mercy, but after all I wish I could hang the raskall."<sup>48</sup> The post guardhouse might have been strong enough to hold a drunken soldier, but it was insufficient to hold The Grosse Tête. On a dark night in May he escaped.

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45. Harmar to Hamtramck, Feb. 15, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 154.

46. *Ibid.*, 152.

47. Hamtramck to Harmar, March 28, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 157.

48. *Ibid.*, 161-162; Hamtramck to Harmar, June 15, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 176.

Several French trappers reached Vincennes from the Wea villages on March 27, and warned Hamtramck that the Indians had gone on the warpath. In view of this situation, he cautioned Harmar that the contractors' boat would need a strong escort when it ascended the Wabash.<sup>49</sup>

The Indians in early April started running off cattle. What troubled Hamtramck in this respect was a speech attributed to a Wea chief--"We have killed white men, we have stold their horses, we are now going to steal their cows, and after that we will go and get their women to milk them." These were strong words. Hamtramck sent a mounted patrol to recover the cattle, but the soldiers were easily outdistanced by the Indians. Relaying this news to Harmar, he pointed out that the Indians would war on Kentucky as "long as we have not Detroit, for they get all their supplys from that place."<sup>50</sup>

War parties of Kickapoos and Weas struck the Vincennes area in mid-May. Heretofore, the Indians had not harmed the French, but this time it was different. The only ones who now escaped death were Negroes, whom the Indians carried off to be sold. On the 16th a Frenchman living west of the Wabash was slain and his wife and child scalped and left for dead. Four French pirogues were attacked on the 24th seven leagues below Fort Knox, with the loss of seven dead and one captured.

On May 26 a *habitant*, whom Hamtramck trusted, told him that he had spoken with Indians who warned that an all-out attack would be made on Vincennes at the "latter end of this moon." While this report might be false, Hamtramck knew that as a soldier he should be prepared for the worst. If the fort were properly provisioned, he would have no fears. Consequently, an express rider, Daniel Sullivan, was sent thundering for the Falls with a plea that supplies be rushed. Should they not arrive within 20 days, the escort might find the fort under siege and the provisions "fall into the hands of the Indians."<sup>51</sup>

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49. Hamtramck to Harmar, March 28, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 161-162.

50. Hamtramck to Harmar, April 11, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 166.

51. Hamtramck to Wyllys, May 27, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 169-170.

Hamtramck, while certain of holding Fort Knox, felt that something would have to be done to protect the village. Three blockhouses, mounting cannon, might secure Vincennes, but unless he was reinforced he could not build and man these defenses.<sup>52</sup>

Major Wyllys was at Fort Harmar and Captain Asheton was in charge at the Falls when Sullivan arrived on the 31st. Asheton responded speedily to the emergency. By 3 p.m. the contractors' boats with seven months' store of provisions for 140 men, cast off from the lower landing. Lieutenant Armstrong was in charge of the 45-men escort. As the keelboat with most of the supplies was 70 feet long, Asheton feared she might not be able to ascend the Wabash.

The convoy dropped down the Ohio and entered the Wabash on June 3. Scouts were put ashore by Armstrong to guard against ambush, as the vessels worked their way slowly up the Wabash. Although numerous signs of Indians were seen, none were encountered until the 9th. Meanwhile, Armstrong had been reinforced by Lt. Dirck Schuyler and a 30-man detachment hurried down from Fort Knox. Between Coffee Island and White River, the soldiers found and destroyed several pirogues and bark canoes, in one of which they found Indian weapons. Two parties of Indians were sighted in a clearing, but they quickly disappeared into the woods. After camping for the evening and posting sentries, Armstrong ordered out a patrol. The soldiers soon discovered the body of a soldier "shot in two places with balls, had two arrows sticking in his body, was scalped, his heart taken out and his privates cut off." After burying the soldier, the expedition continued upstream on the 10th. Security measures were tightened. About 10 a.m. the scouts found a soldier who had been wounded the previous day, in the attack which had claimed his comrade's life. On the morning of the 11th, when within 12 miles of Vincennes, Armstrong's convoy encountered Hamtramck.

Major Hamtramck on June 8 had heard from the French that a large party of Indians had gone toward White River. Satisfied that the warriors planned to ambush the convoy at the head of Grand Rapids or at Coffee Island, he had sent two soldiers and an Indian downstream in a canoe to alert Armstrong. On the 9th the messengers had been ambushed. The Indian escaped, returned to Fort Knox, and told Hamtramck what had happened. Hamtramck then ordered out 100 men of the militia and started down to meet Armstrong.<sup>53</sup>

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52. Ibid., 171.

53. Armstrong to Hamtramck, June 11, 1789, and Hamtramck to Harmar, June 15, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 173-177. The soldier who had been killed was Private Litch of Bradford's company.

In arriving at his decision to take the field, Hamtramck took into consideration: (a) that all his provisions had been exhausted; (b) that he had received information that an attack could be expected within a few days; (c) that the Indians were in sufficient force to stop Armstrong; and (d) finding the "post I occupied was not the key . . . , I concluded that it was not 70 yards of ground which was in question but it was my duty to be where ever the greatest interest of the United States happened to be."<sup>54</sup> Harmar subsequently sanctioned Hamtramck's action, but, he warned, "instances of commanding officers leaving their garrison should be rare."<sup>55</sup>

In mid-June, Hamtramck sent the Wabash Indians an invitation "to cease their carnages." He was surprised at the response. A number of Indians came down from the Wea villages, told him that they were sorry, and assured him that they were recalling their war parties. If the young men refused to live in peace, the elders would "leave them and come under the protection of the United States." The *habitants* told Hamtramck, when they learned of this, that they had never heard "Indians speak in so humiliating maner."

With the coming of summer, the "sickly season" returned. By July 29, 49 men were on sick report, with what Surgeon's Mate John Elliot diagnosed as "intermitting fever." What especially plagued Hamtramck was that there was not an ounce of bark at the post, and the sick had to be fed salt provisions. He was satisfied that each soldier should be allotted a pound of bark during the "sickly season."<sup>56</sup> As an emergency measure, Hamtramck took it upon himself to purchase wine for the sick soldiers from the Vincennes merchants. He trusted the Secretary would approve of his conduct, because he had but two choices, "to be guilty of murder, or to put the United States to some expence."<sup>57</sup>

Hamtramck now made an interesting discovery. He found that the troops became accustomed to the hot, humid summers. During this "sickly season" only one man in Captain Smith's Company had been hospitalized, while most of Bradford's people were on sick call. Consequently, he suggested to Harmar that "if you shou'd continue a garrison next summer at this post the old troops are the best calculated, for they are in some measure use to the climate."<sup>58</sup>

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55. Harmar to Hamtramck, Oct.25, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*,196.

56. Hamtramck to Harmar, July 29, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 178-179.

57. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov.2, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*,205.

58. Hamtramck to Harmar, May 16, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*,233.

Hamtramck's hope for peace was soon shattered. On August 3 Major John Hardin with several hundred Kentucky rangers rode out of Clarksville and up the Buffalo Trace, en route to attack the Wea villages. On the 9th at 1 o'clock, and within one day's march of their goal, the volunteers fell in with a party of 22 Shawnees--men, women, and children. The Indians had camped and turned loose their horses. Instead of relaying this information to Major Hardin, the advance guard attacked immediately and killed three warriors, a boy, three squaws, and a child. Two other children were captured. Hardin now cancelled his strike against the Weas and started back to Kentucky. His column camped at Vincennes on the 14th. Several Americans from the village had accompanied the expedition, and Michael Duff of Kaskaskia was seen walking around the town with two scalps fastened to a stick.

The conduct of these people sickened Hamtramck, as it was "mortifying to . . . see the authority of the United States so much sneered at and not having sufficient power to chastise the aggressors."<sup>59</sup>

Contractors Elliott and Williams in August started a large keelboat with 100 barrels of flour, a plentiful supply of whiskey, and small stores down the Ohio from Pittsburgh for Vincennes. At Fort Harmar, on the 21st, Capt. William McCurdy, in compliance with orders from Colonel Harmar, embarked his company aboard the *Governor's Barge* and a Kentucky boat. McCurdy was to escort the provisions, and on his arrival at Fort Knox he was to place himself under Hamtramck's command. If the Wabash were too low for the large keelboat the provisions were to be transshipped in pirogues.<sup>60</sup>

The convoy stopped overnight at Limestone. There the soldiers went ashore, and a number got roaring drunk, "stealing baked goods, plundering gardens, &c., and carried off considerable loot."<sup>61</sup> About daylight a sergeant and six men entered the house of John Young, and seized Lewis Wetzel, whom they charged with wounding a friendly Indian. Wetzel fought back; one of the soldiers was wounded in the hand. They finally overpowered Wetzel, however, and dragged him by his hair down

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59. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug.14, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 183; and Asheton to Harmar, Aug.26, 1789 (Harmar Papers, WLCL). Two of the Kentuckians were wounded in the engagement with the Shawnee.

60. Williams to Harmar, Aug.14, 1789, and Harmar to McCurdy, Aug.21, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 185, 187-188.

61. Harmar to Hamtramck, Oct.25, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 194-195.

the bank and aboard one of their boats. McCurdy subsequently turned his prisoner over to Judge John Cleves Symmes for trial, who released him.<sup>62</sup>

A complaint against the conduct of McCurdy's people was filed with the authorities by Henry Lee, county lieutenant of Mason County. McCurdy and the supplies reached Fort Knox on September 19 without further adventure.<sup>63</sup> When Hamtramck questioned McCurdy and his troops regarding their conduct at Limestone, they flatly denied that they had plundered the citizens.<sup>64</sup> As the testimony heard by the court of inquiry convened at Fort Knox was one sided, Colonel Harmar on February 20, 1790, directed Hamtramck to place McCurdy under arrest and to order him to Fort Washington for trial.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, Father Gibault on October 11, 1789, left Vincennes for Cahokia. A layman, Pierre Mallet, was designated by Father Gibault as guardian of the church, a post he held until the arrival of Father Flaget in 1792.<sup>66</sup>

Commenting on the padre's departure, Hamtramck noted, he "has made his exit from this place for Kiokia, where he expects to make more money!"<sup>67</sup>

When he checked the commissary storehouse at the end of October, Hamtramck found that there was only enough flour to last the garrison until December 1, while there was not an ounce of meat. The Commissary informed the Major that he was expecting a drove of cattle from the Falls, but he had heard nothing about the flour. This worried Hamtramck.

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62. *Kentucky Gazette*, Oct. 24, 1789.

63. Hamtramck to Harmar, Sept. 23, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 191-192.

64. Proceedings of Court of Inquiry, Nov. 29, 1789 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).

65. Harmar to Hamtramck, Feb. 20, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 219. Major John Doughty with 140 men had commenced building Fort Washington, within the present limits of Cincinnati on June, 1789.

66. Alerding, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes*, 63-64.

67. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 2, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 205.

When the battalion had run out of flour the previous spring, the troops had subsisted on cornbread. . . This would now be impossible, because there was insufficient grain in the village to see the citizens through March 1.<sup>68</sup>

Elliott and Williams had bound themselves to deliver rations to the garrisons at Forts Pitt, McIntosh, and Harmar for "7/90 of a dollar" and to Fort Knox for "16/90 of a dollar," with payments to be made in warrants drawn on the State of Maryland. To expedite the delivery of provisions to the western posts, Contractor Elliott in December headed for the frontier. He stopped off at Fort Washington to assure Colonel Harmar "that he would make such arrangements that all the posts should be abundantly supplied."<sup>69</sup>

It was too late for the contractors to make good on their promises, although the winter of 1789-90 was unseasonably mild on the Wabash. By January the rations on hand in the Fort Knox commissary storehouse would last the garrison for only ten days. As the river was in excellent boating condition, Hamtramck trusted the contractors would soon put in an appearance.<sup>70</sup> The contractors blamed the shortages on the Pittsburgh and Kentucky merchants, who had bought heavily in anticipation of large profits to be made in the New Orleans trade.

Harmar in February called for the return of the *Governor's Barge*. Hamtramck hated to release this vessel, because it would deprive his command of a keelboat just when it was needed to bring in wood and to send escorts down the Wabash to meet the pirogues and barges employed by the contractors to forward supplies. To cope with this emergency, he would be compelled to rent pirogues at 10 livres per day. Hamtramck trusted that in the near future Harmar would assign him a keelboat as "it is imposible for this garrison to do without one."<sup>71</sup>

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68. Ibid., 204.

69. Harmar to Hamtramck, Jan.13, 1790, in *Outposts on the Wabash*, 214. Harmar in the late autumn of 1789 had transferred his headquarters from Fort Harmar to Fort Washington.

70. Hamtramck to Harmar, Jan.23, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*,217.

71. Hamtramck, to Harmar, March 17, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 222.

The isolation and rotgut whiskey had a brutalizing effect upon the battalion. On November 23, Sergt. Albion Guest, with a detail from McCurdy's Company was sent downstream in a boat. Pvt. Michael Graff got drunk and passed out on the forecastle. Regaining consciousness, he shot and killed his Sergeant who was at the helm. He was arrested and confined in the fort's guardhouse. Colonel Harmar, on learning of the murder, directed Hamtramck to convene a General Court Martial to try Graff.<sup>72</sup> He was convicted by the Court and sentenced to death. On the night of July 20, 1790, Graff and another prisoner escaped from the guardhouse.<sup>73</sup> Unknown to Graff, President Washington on reviewing his sentence had ordered it commuted.<sup>74</sup>

The first two years at Fort Knox were trying ones for Major Hamtramck and his soldiers. Isolated as they were, rations and supplies were usually short, and Hamtramck, whenever the contractors failed him--which was too often--had to employ his own resources or rely on the good will of Vincennes merchants to insure that his battalion would be fed. Without the backing of a strong central government, Hamtramck had been unable to take action against the Indians who had taken up the tomahawk. Worse, he was defied by men such as Major Brown. Hamtramck and his officers hoped that with the inauguration of a new government under the Constitution that their position would be strengthened.

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72. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov.26, 1789, and Harmar to Hamtramck, Jan.13, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 207, 215.

73. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug.2, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 243.

74. Knox to Harmar, Aug.27, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 249.



## CHAPTER XI

### Winthrop Sargent Organizes the County of Knox

Developments on the national scene had heretofore had scant effect on the Wabash country. The Confederation Congress, as to be expected, was eager to secure revenue from the sale of western lands. The protracted court battles over land titles, which occupied much of the energy of the Kentuckians, warned the national government that some systematic plan must be adopted for the survey and delineation of boundaries. A committee was appointed by the Congress to study the subject, and the Ordinance of 1785 resulted by which provisions were made for surveying and marking off the northwestern lands into townships (six miles square) and sections (one mile square). Thus was established a policy which was followed in mapping and marketing public lands all the way to the Pacific coast. Sections, half sections, and quarter sections became the basis of farms and ranches. By the Ordinance the national domain could not be sold or given to settlers until it was surveyed in the prescribed manner, with boundaries that followed "meridians and parallels of latitude." Lands not reserved as bounty lands for officers and men of the Continental Army were to be sold to the public, in lots no smaller than one section, at \$1.00 per acre. Within each township itself there were restrictions. Congress reserved for future national use all sections numbered 8, 11, 26, and 29, and set aside each section 16 to provide funds for the township's schools.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, another committee of Congress had recommended dividing the area north of the Ohio ceded by Virginia into states and admitting them into the Union--a suggestion that was embodied in the Virginia cession. A more pretentious report was made on March 1, 1784, by Thomas Jefferson, then a Virginia congressman. He proposed to divide the northwest, as well as the Federal area south of the Ohio, into 14 new states with names like Sylvania, Metropotamia, Saratoga, etc. Congress rejected the names and his artificial boundaries which

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1. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 143; *American Heritage Pictorial Atlas*, 126.

followed lines of latitude and longitude. These new states were to have republican governments and slavery was to be prohibited after 1800.<sup>2</sup>

While these debates were going on in Congress, a company was being organized in Massachusetts to make a settlement north of the Ohio. This company, to be known as the Ohio Company of Associates, included many officers who had served in the Continental Army. Many of them held certificates of indebtedness against the Confederation which they hoped to use in payment for western lands. The Reverend Manasseh Cutler, a director of the company, was sent to New York to effect the transaction. He found Congress hard-pressed for money, and he succeeded in eventually purchasing 1,500,000 acres of land on the Muskingum River.

In connection with the purchase by the Ohio Company, Congress formulated a plan of territorial government which became the Ordinance of 1787. As enacted by Congress on July 13, 1787, it provided for a temporary government of the Northwest Territory to consist of a governor, secretary, and three judges to be appointed by Congress. The governor and judges, subject to some limitations, were to adopt--from the old states--laws suitable to the government of the new settlements. Freedom of worship and the personal and property rights common to Englishmen were guaranteed. Schools were to be encouraged. The Indians were to be treated fairly and their title to the land respected. There were to be constituted out of the territory not less than three nor more than five states, which were, as soon as they had at least 60,000 free inhabitants each, to be admitted into the Union with all the privileges of the original 13 states. Primogeniture and slavery were prohibited, and a high property qualification was required for both the electorate and public officials. As soon as there were 5,000 freemen in the territory, a representative government was to be established in which the people might select their own assembly. Over this legislature the governor retained an absolute veto, and the power to convene, prorogue, and dissolve. The assembly was empowered to nominate ten men, from whom Congress should select five to act as a legislative council.<sup>3</sup>

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2. *American Heritage Pictorial Atlas*, 120.

3. Hening, *Statutes of Virginia*, 9, 552; Ben P. Poore, *Constitutions*, 1, 428-429; McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States*, 1, 505.

On March 4, 1789, George Washington was inaugurated as President of the United States, and the strong Federal government envisioned by the sponsors of the Constitution was launched. Long before the inauguration, the Congress of the Confederation had expired of mere inanition; its attendance eroded until October 21, 1788, when its record ceased and the United States functioned without any national government for nearly six months. With the Constitution in effect it was necessary to make some new arrangements concerning the Northwest Territory. This was done by an act of Congress on August 7, 1789, whereby it delegated to President Washington the appointive powers and duties formerly exercised by the Confederation Congress.<sup>4</sup>

The Constitution, which named the President as commander-in-chief, made Congress responsible for the nation's defense. Harmar's regiment at this time numbered 595 officers and men, of which one-sixth were posted at Fort Knox. Under the new government, a Department of War was established, and Secretary of War Knox and Colonel Harmar continued in office. In accordance with an act passed by Congress on September 29, 1789, reorganizing the army as established under the Confederation, a new oath was prescribed for officers and enlisted men. Paymaster Beatty would deliver the new commissions to the officers on his next visit to Fort Knox, and at that time the troops would be mustered and take the oath. Hereafter, the commissioned officers would be appointed by the President, while all persons in the army were to be referred to as "in the service of the United States."<sup>5</sup>

Congress soon passed and President Washington signed legislation increasing the strength of the army to 1,216 enlisted men. The term of service for officers, as well as rank and file, was established at three years. Each enlisted man was to be entitled annually to the following clothing: one hat, or helmet, one coat, one vest, two pair of woolen and linen overalls, four pair of shoes, four shirts, two pair of socks, one blanket, one stock and clasp, and one pair of britches. Daily rations would be: one pound of beef or three-quarters of a pound of bread or flour, and half a gill of rum, brandy, or whiskey. Two quarts of vinegar, two pounds of soap, and one pound of candles were to be allowed per man for each one hundred days.

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4. *United States Statutes at Large*, Sess.1, Ch.8.

5. Harmar to Hamtramck, Jan.13, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 214; Gano, *The United States Army*, 97; *United States Statutes at Large*, Sess. 1, 95-96.

The pay of the privates at this time was reduced to three dollars per month, with one dollar held out for hospital stores and clothing. Officers wounded or disabled in line of duty would hereafter be entitled to a pension of nine dollars per month, and enlisted men to five dollars a month.

To comply with the new legislation, the military establishment was to be reorganized into an infantry regiment of three battalions, and one artillery battalion. Each battalion was to have four companies, one major, one adjutant, one quartermaster, and one surgeon or surgeon's mate. The infantry companies were to include one captain, one lieutenant, one ensign, four sergeants, four corporals, two musicians, and 61 privates. Each artillery company was to have two lieutenants, instead of a lieutenant and an ensign.<sup>6</sup>

On October 5, 1787, 17 months before Washington's inauguration, Arthur St. Clair, president of the Confederation Congress at the time of the land sale to the Ohio Company, and Revolutionary War hero, was named governor of the newly created Northwest Territory. It was the following July before he arrived at Marietta, the new settlement which had been established at the mouth of the Muskingum, across the river from Fort Harmar. St. Clair's chief concern was the Indians, as he had been directed to notice their disposition, remove all causes of friction, regulate their commerce with the settlers, keep up a friendly intercourse with their chiefs, prevent confederacies among them, and lose no opportunity of acquiring their lands by purchase.

The first territorial legislature for the Northwest Territory convened at Marietta in July 1788. Even in the exercise of its limited powers it was subject to the veto of Congress. The three judges were not regarded as lawmakers primarily. Besides having a general common law jurisdiction, they had the power, when sitting with the governor, to borrow or adopt a statute from one of the 13 original states.<sup>7</sup>

Congress instructed Governor St. Clair to proceed as soon as possible to Kaskaskia and Vincennes to organize regular county governments and to adjust the troublesome land claims. In pursuance of these orders, St. Clair, Territorial Secretary Winthrop Sargent, and

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6. Ganoë, *The United States Army*, 95-96.

7. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 146-147.

the three judges left Marietta for the west on December 30, 1789. After stopping off at Fort Washington, where they organized Hamilton County, Governor St. Clair and his party on January 5, 1790, continued on downstream for the Illinois Country. To provide for the security of the officials, Colonel Harmar detailed a 50-man escort commanded by Lieutenant Thomas Doyle.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, word had reached Fort Steuben that the 1789 corn harvest on the Wabash had been destroyed by an early frost. Corn was reportedly in such short supply that unless it was imported, the people would starve. As corn was plentiful at the Falls of the Ohio, Governor St. Clair, on his arrival there, wrote Hamtramck that he would have a supply forwarded, provided the villagers had money. But if they lacked the means they would not be "suffered to perish."<sup>9</sup>

To relieve the hunger, Hamtramck on March 16 sent a keelboat to the Falls for 800 bushels of corn to be issued to the starving villagers. Conditions were so bad that three persons (a woman, a boy of 13, and a girl of 7) had gone to the woods, and "poisoned themselves by eating some wild roots." Efforts to revive the victims had failed.<sup>10</sup>

Besides having to cope with problems incident to maintaining a frontier post, Hamtramck was burdened with governing French civilians. Conditioned to being ruled by the military and clergy, they appealed to him for redress of all sorts of grievances.

Upon the arrival of Colonel Harmar in July 1787, the citizens of Vincennes had surrendered their charter, remarking "accustomed to mediocrity, we do not wish for wealth but for mere competency!"<sup>11</sup> The villagers apparent "submissiveness" and their light heartedness did not prevent their being fickle; and their "docility" was varied by fits of violent quarrellings with their American neighbors and themselves. But the quarrels of the *habitants* were those of children, compared with the blood feuds of the Americans.<sup>11</sup>

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8. Harmar to Hamtramck, Jan.13, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 213; *St. Clair Papers*, 2, 121.

9. St. Clair to Hamtramck, Jan.23, 1790, *St. Clair Papers*, 2, 131-132.

10. Hamtramck to Harmar, March 17, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 223.

11. Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 3, 238.

Hamtramck's first official act following Harmar's departure was to issue a proclamation prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors to the Indians by the settlers.<sup>12</sup>

The villagers greatest complaint was against their magistrates whose principal occupation seemed to be collecting exorbitant fees. In answer to a petition of the inhabitants, Hamtramck drafted a set of regulations for a new judicial system and dissolved the old court. Five justices were elected by the people. Petty cases were tried by one justice, two heard suits of more importance, and a bench of three sat as a district court in which trial by jury was compulsory. The commandant established a scale of reasonable fees and required the magistrates to take an oath before him to administer justice impartially.<sup>13</sup>

Transmitting a copy of the regulations to Colonel Harmar, Hamtramck wrote, "My Code of laws will no doubt make you laugh but I hope you will Consider that I am nither a lawyer or a legislator. I have done it for the Best. One good thing is that there is not one among them that can find fault with it."<sup>14</sup>

The people in the western country felt that they had been forgotten by the United States Government. On several occasions reports reached the villages that Governor St. Clair was about to pay them a visit, but these proved to be ill-founded rumors. In August 1789 Hamtramck complained to Colonel Harmar, "If his Excellency does not come this year . . . most people will go away to the Spaniards for they begin to think that there is no such a man as a Governor."<sup>15</sup>

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12. Dunn, *Indiana*, 1, 198-199, 202.

13. "Regulations for the Court of Post Vincennes," April 5, 1788 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).

14. Hamtramck to Harmar, April 13, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 71. For years local government had been controlled by the Le Gras and Gamelin families to the great dissatisfaction of the majority. When the election was held, the magistrates elected were: Jean Baptiste Milliet, Moses Henry, Nicholas Buillardjon, James Johnson, and Valentine T. Dalton. Hamtramck to Harmar, May 21, 1788, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 79.

15. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug. 14, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 184.

Helpless to prevent the flight of settlers across the Mississippi, Hamtramck wrote Harmar:

I believe that all our Americans of Post Vincennes will go to [George] Morgan. A number of them have already gone to see him.

I am told that Mr. Morgan has taken unwarrantable measure to invite the people of the Illinois to come to him saying that the Governor would never come in that country and that their negroes were all free the moment the government should be established, for which all the remaining good inhabitants disposes to go to him.<sup>16</sup>

With September came a plea from the citizens of Kaskaskia for at least 20 soldiers and an officer to support the civil authority and decrease the depredations of the Indians. Declaring that it would be impossible to continue living in a community plagued by anarchy and confusion, they forecast that the few who still remained would soon join those who had crossed into Spanish territory. Hamtramck's force, always too small, was now rendered ineffective by illness, so that he had insufficient men to guard Vincennes and of course none were available for duty at Kaskaskia. He could only refer their request to Harmar.<sup>17</sup>

On November 11, 1789, he sent a letter to Harmar that was more than a request. "It is high time," he wrote,

that government should take place in this country, and if it should happen that the Governor was not to come, nor any of the judges, I would beg (for the sake of the people) that His Excellency would give me certain powers to create magistrates, a sheriff, and other officers for the purpose of establishing courts of justice . . . . Those that

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16. Hamtramck to Harmar, March 28, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 158-161. Morgan, the founder of New Madrid, in the fall of 1788 had secured a grant from the Spanish of a tract of land on the Mississippi opposite the mouth of the Ohio where he would found a colony of American emigrants.

17. Petition, Hamtramck to Le Dru & Edgar, Oct. 14, 1789; Hamtramck to Harmar, Oct. 13, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 190-191, 193.

have been appointed by the people last year, their authority has been refused in the Courts of Kentucky, they declaring that by the resolve of Congress, neither the people of Post Vincennes, or the commanding officer had a right to appoint magistrates.<sup>18</sup>

Another phase of Hamtramck's difficulties due to lack of authority was set forth in his proclamation of March 24, 1790. This proclamation, his most arbitrary to date, read:

Many persons having sold their goods and lands, to the prejudice of their creditors, the inhabitants and others of the district of Post Vincennes, are expressly prohibited, henceforth, from selling, or exchanging, or mortgaging, any part of their goods, lands, or slaves, under any pretext, without express permission from the officer commanding at this place. This ordinance to remain in force until the arrival of his Excellency, the Governor.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, in March 1790, Governor St. Clair reached Kaskaskia and found the people of the Illinois country greatly distressed. The coming of the Virginians had been a plague to these western communities. They had disposed of most of their products for Virginia money which quickly depreciated and later was repudiated. Many of Clark's soldiers had remained behind to continue a rump government under which they harassed the *habitants*. In three successive years the Mississippi had spilled over its banks and cut their harvests, while that of the preceding year had been ruined by an early and severe frost.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 11, 1789, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 206.

19. Dunn, *Indiana*, 1, 198-199.

20. *St. Clair Papers*, 1, 165.



St. Clair could do little beyond listen to their tales of woe. While thus engaged he learned that the Indians on the upper Wabash were girding for war, and that the Shawnees had captured two boats at the mouth of the Scioto. A few days later, two more vessels were taken containing property worth \$7,000. Some men boiling salt at Bullitt's Lick, 14 miles below Louisville, were attacked and killed. A man coming down the Ohio was ambushed and slain near the Falls. Confronted by these developments, St. Clair started for Fort Washington to confer with Colonel Harmar. Secretary Sargent was left in charge at Kaskaskia. As soon as he saw that the county government for St. Clair County, which the Governor had organized on April 27, was functioning he traveled to Vincennes.<sup>21</sup>

Sargent, on reaching Vincennes, proceeded on June 20, 1790, to organize the county of Knox, thus relieving Major Hamtramck of the necessity of improvising a civil government. The new county, which was named in honor of the Secretary of War, was bounded on the east by the Great Miami, on the south by the Ohio to Fort Massac, on the west by St. Clair County and the Illinois River to the confluence of the Chicago and Kankakee, and on the north by Canada. John Small was appointed sheriff and became executive head of the new county. The militia was organized and placed on an active footing under command of Colonel Vigo. Courts were organized, common pleas, quarter session, and probate. Andrew Heath was named a justice, John Mills a notary, and Samuel Baird was appointed public surveyor. This was the first organized, civil government within the boundary of what is now the state of Indiana. There was nothing striking or novel in its organization. All the usual elements of English county government were present. Its chief functions were the preservation of order and the protection of the people.

Sargent also proceeded to carry out St. Clair's instructions relative to the lands. Here the situation was more complicated than at Kaskaskia and Cahokia. It was found that both the French and British had made grants, while to complicate matters, courts set up by representatives of Virginia had done likewise. Sargent was distressed to discover that St. Ange in 1764 had carried all the public papers in his possession to Kaskaskia, while Le Grand, who had been in office from 1777 to 1778, was guilty of so many forgeries that it was impossible to use his papers in adjusting claims. Between 1779 and 1783, 26,000 acres of land had been

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21. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 84-95; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 147.

granted, and from 1783 to 1787, when Colonel Harmar checked this abuse, another 22,000 acres had been granted, generally in parcels of 400 acres. Persons who had bought and paid for land since 1789 were victims of fraud, but the Secretary asked that they be given a special act of relief. A tract of 150 acres embraced in the village and granted by St. Ange to the Piankashaws had been sold by the Indians to whites, and some of the lots improved. The problem of who owned the land was referred to Congress.<sup>22</sup>

The *habitants* were not unmindful of Major Hamtramck's labors in their behalf. They handed Sargent a letter in which they praised the "just and humane attention" which he had paid "to the rights and feelings of every individual craving his interposition."<sup>23</sup>

One of the judges, John Cleves Symmes, was with Sargent. Symmes wrote his friend, Robert Morris, on June 22:

This town consisting of 330 families . . . is built on the east bank of the Wabash and Occupies an Area of about half a mile Square or perhaps a little more; the Streets are nearly all Right angles but very narrow; the buildings are low, Old, and ugly, mostly log-houses (tho hewed) but the logs do not lay horizontal as the Americans build, but stand erect with one end set well in the ground, & the upper end Spiked to or framed into a plate which runs horizontally round the house; few houses are more than one story--Many in decay'd & even ruinous condition; there are a few new houses building, but generally the town wears the aspect of distress--Monsieur Vigo's is the only french family that appears to live in any degree of affluence and independence.

These people have undoubtedly seen better days under the government of their grand Monarch, and have unquestionably been declining ever since this country was ceded to Britain in 1763--they received a second severe blow by the British and the Americans in the late war, as it was three times taken and lost in one year, the Conquerors every time preying upon and plundering the inhabitants, until they were exceedingly distressed--and to

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22. Sargent's Journal, March 7-December 2, 1790.

23. Clarence E. Carter, compiler, *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington, 1934), *The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1781-1803*, 2, 292.

finish their sorrow the Kentuckians have several times assembled their New Militia in order to go against the Indians, taking Post Vincennes on their rout going & returning, and while here making very free with the property of the Inhabitants under pretext that the Service of the United States required it, for which the poor wretches have never received compensation.

The town is surrounded with a large plain partly natural & partly owing to the waste of timber for the consumption of the french eighty years, & of the Indians god knows how long, as the french found a large Indian town here when they first penetrated the country--which led to the establishment of a garrison for the protection of their traders, and in time produced the town & population found here.<sup>24</sup>

In late July, Sargent and his official party left Vincennes en route back to Marietta. Before doing so, Sargent had borrowed trade goods from the contractors and Vigo to make presents to the Weas. Robert Buntin had promised to reimburse these individuals.<sup>25</sup>

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24. *The Correspondence of John Cleves Symmes, Founder of the Miami Purchase*, Edited by Beverley W. Bond (New York, 1926), 287-289.

25. *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 2,300.

## CHAPTER XII

### Hamtramck's Final Years at Fort Knox

Although the day-to-day details of military administration and the troubles of the civilians occupied much of Major Hamtramck's time, the Indians were his most serious problem. In March 1790 Hamtramck had received from Governor St. Clair a speech to be sent by a trusty messenger to the Indians of the Wabash, urging them to make peace with the United States. Should this emissary fail, St. Clair expected an attempt would be made "to chastise them."<sup>1</sup>

The man selected by Hamtramck for this mission was Antoine Gamelin, "an intelligent French trader of Vincennes." He left Fort Knox by boat on April 5 en route to Miamitown, intending to visit all the villages on or near the Wabash. The first place he stopped was the Kickapoo village of Chief Crooked Leg. This band was well-disposed toward the Americans. His next stop was among the Vermilion Piankashaws. While the head chief and his warriors listened to Gamelin, they refused to give any answer until they had word from their elder brothers, the Miamis. After promising to stop on his return, Gamelin continued up the Wabash.

On April 10 he met a war party of 13 Kickapoos, but they explained they were going against the Chickasaws. He asked them to stop by at Vincennes, and "shake hands" with Major Hamtramck. Next day he reached a large Kickapoo village, and at once called a council, where he presented, along with St. Clair's letter, two belts of white wampum. The sachem told Gamelin that the threat of war in the Governor's letter was displeasing. It read, "I do now make you the offer of peace; accept it or reject it, as you please." Gamelin took it upon himself to delete this sentence. Still they refused a formal answer until they could learn what the Weas' plans were.

On April 14 the Weas and Kickapoos were assembled and the letter read. Again the answer was "We can do nothing without the consent of the Miamis." He was told that heretofore when the Indians

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1. Hamtramck to Harmar, March 17, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 223.

met the Americans in council, they always came away naked. They asked if St. Clair's legs were broken so that he could not visit them himself. The English had sent word that they were women if they did not take up the ax.

Gamelin reached the Eel River villages on the 20th. Neither the sachem nor the war chief was present, and pushing on he reached Miami-town on the 23d. The next day he called the Miamis, Shawnees, and Delawares into council and read his letter. To each nation he delivered two belts of wampum. When Gamelin called their attention to the Treaty of Fort Finney, they disavowed it, remarking that it had been made by irresponsible young men without the tribe's knowledge or consent. On the 24th Gamelin called on Blue Jacket, the leader of the Shawnees. Blue Jacket explained that he had understood the speech and was pleased with it, but that he and his chiefs could give no answer until they heard from their father at Detroit. Consequently, they had decided to return the wampum and send the messenger on to Detroit to speak to the English. "From all quarters," he continued, "we receive speeches from the Americans and no two are alike. We suppose that they intend to deceive us--then take back your branches of wampum."

On the 27th, Gamelin spoke with Le Gris, the chief of the Miamis. The chief told him not to pay any attention to what the Shawnees had said, but to wait and his letter would be answered. The next day Gamelin was informed that he might return to Vincennes when he wished, as they could give no positive reply until they had consulted with the Lake Indians and the commandant at Detroit. That night at supper, Blue Jacket again insisted that Gamelin travel to Detroit and meet the British.

Next morning at a grand council, Gamelin told the Indians that his mission was at an end; that his orders were not to go to Detroit unless compelled. Blue Jacket then assured him that what he had said about going to Detroit was merely a suggestion. All the assembled chiefs declined any formal answer, though they promised within 30 days to send messengers to Vincennes with written replies.

Gamelin on May 2 started down the Wabash, visiting all the villages on his return and finding evidence on every hand of a hostile attitude by the Indians. The entire trouble, he concluded, resulted because of British influence at Detroit and their desire for the Ohio River as their boundary. Arms, ammunition, and other supplies came from Detroit, while the constant irritations that kept the Indians aroused came from the American squatters north of the Ohio. Gamelin was back in Vincennes on the 17th, and his report was forwarded to

Governor St. Clair at Kaskaskia. As soon as the Governor learned of the threatening situation he prepared to return to Fort Washington to meet the gathering storm.<sup>2</sup>

Commenting on Gamelin's experiences for his superior, Hamtramck noted that these "excuses are unfavorable omens . . . and I think that a war seems inevitable."<sup>3</sup>

After studying Gamelin's report and discussing the situation with Colonel Harmar, Governor St. Clair determined that the Indians must be chastised. First, he moved to implement an act recently passed by Congress authorizing him to call out the Virginia and Pennsylvania militia. A circular letter on July 18, 1790, was addressed to the county lieutenants in the western counties of these two states. Three hundred Kentucky militia were to rendezvous at Fort Steuben, and with the garrison of that post march to Fort Knox, where they would report to Major Hamtramck. Meanwhile, Hamtramck would turn out the Vincennes militia. Twelve hundred militia (500 from Pennsylvania and 700 from Virginia) were to assemble at Fort Washington and await orders from Colonel Harmar. Harmar's column of 1,200 militia and 300 regulars was "to march directly across the country to the Miami villages, while Hamtramck with his regulars and militia was to create a diversion by advancing up the Wabash."<sup>4</sup>

Hamtramck was delighted to learn that the army was about to take the offensive. The number of men allotted to his column would be sufficient, if he returned immediately after striking the Indian villages. If, however, he were to remain in the field until he heard from Harmar, he might be in trouble, because the Indians against whom he marched could rally about 750 fighting men.<sup>5</sup>

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2. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 93-94; "Gamelin's Journal" in *St. Clair's Papers*, 2, 155-160; Hamtramck to Harmar, May 16, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 233-234.

3. Hamtramck to Harmar, May 16, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 233.

4. St. Clair to Secretary of War, Aug. 23, 1790 (Harmar Papers, WLCL).

5. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug. 7, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 246.

Hamtramck used the period from August 7, when advised of Harmar's plans, until late September, when the columns were to move, to make preparations for the campaign. The contractors had assured Harmar that they would throw sufficient provisions into Fort Knox to enable Hamtramck to discharge his mission. As the Fort Knox column was to move first, Hamtramck undertook to have his troops organized and ready to take to the field by September 25.<sup>6</sup>

On July 23 the Indians struck, attacking two boats ascending the Wabash, one manned by the military under Ens. Jacob Melcher and the other belonging to Francis Vigo. One soldier was killed and two were wounded in Melcher's boat before it turned back and retired down the Wabash and into the Ohio. Vigo's boat surrendered. After plundering the men's personal gear and taking their arms, the Indians, seeing that they were Frenchmen, permitted them to continue onto Vincennes with their cargo of furs.<sup>7</sup>

Information reaching Fort Knox from the upper Wabash was that the Miamis had sent out belts to a number of tribes in an effort to assemble a large number of warriors by the time the corn was ripe. Secretary Sargent was of the opinion that the Indians' goal was defense rather than offense, because "some of their old men have been long preaching to them of the Vengeance that would eventually overtake them for their depredations upon the United States."<sup>8</sup>

By August 2 the provision situation was again desperate. The cattle that were scheduled to be there by June 15 had not arrived, and the flour in the commissary storehouse was nearly exhausted. To make the situation more embarrassing for the projected campaign, none could be procured in the village until after the fall's harvest.<sup>9</sup>

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6. Harmar to Hamtramck, July 15, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 237.

7. Melcher to Hamtramck, July 28, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 238-239. Melcher and his people were proceeding to Vincennes after delivering powder, lead, and blankets to the Chickasaws and Choctaws at the mouth of the Tennessee River.

8. Sargent to Hamtramck, July 16, 1790, *Territorial Papers*, 3, 320-321.

9. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug. 2, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 243.

In August the "sickly season" was at its height. Major Hamtramck and 35 of his officers and men were on sick report on the 20th. As he was beginning to feel better, Hamtramck assured Harmar, "You need not be uneasy at my being sick the 25th of next month. I am sure I shall do very well at that time for I mean to be very careful of myself and take plenty bark."<sup>10</sup>

Hamtramck, about this time, married Marie Josephc Edeline Perrot, a resident of Vincennes and the widow of Nicholas Perrot, a trader. For some reason, he did not notify Harmar of his marriage; but when the latter learned of it, he sent his and Mrs. Harmar's congratulations to the groom and asked him to present their "kind compliments" to Mrs. Hamtramck.<sup>11</sup>

Captain McCurdy, who had been acquitted by the Court Martial of the charges brought by Wetzel, returned to Fort Knox on September 19 with the *Governor's Barge*, which was to remain at Vincennes. Aboard the vessel were sufficient uniforms to issue one to each man in Bradford's and McCurdy's companies. With him McCurdy also brought the latest eastern newspapers with stories of the confrontation of the British and Spanish at Nootka Sound. According to travelers reaching Fort Washington from Kentucky, the militia was rallying to the colors and was eager to get started on the expedition.<sup>12</sup>

On September 3 Harmar entrusted Ens. Abner Prior with a message for Hamtramck. If Hamtramck should surprise either the Wea, Vermilion or Eel River villages, the Colonel cautioned, circumstances might make it necessary for him to return immediately to his base, without establishing contact with the main column. No matter what the conditions Hamtramck was to communicate by a trusty Frenchman or some other person with his superior.

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10. Hamtramck to Harmar, Aug.20, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 247-248.

11. Harmar to Hamtramck, Sept.3, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 256-257.

12. Harmar to Hamtramck, Aug.27, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 249-253.



While he was sorry to learn that rations were short at Fort Knox, he felt certain that by the time Hamtramck received this message Elliott will have forwarded sufficient provisions to last 500 men two months.<sup>13</sup>

Prospects for putting the Fort Knox column in motion on September 25th were grim. By the 21st Hamtramck had heard nothing from the Kentuckian militia, but he hoped that they were on White River. Most of the village militia was sick, so not much help could be expected from that quarter. Only about 50 regulars were well enough to take the field. Not a man in McCurdy's company, including the Captain, was fit for duty.<sup>14</sup>

It was September 29 when Maj. William Whitley and the Kentucky militia arrived, and on the next day, five days late, Hamtramck put his column, 320 strong, in motion. About 90 "sick and lame" of the would-be campaigners were left to garrison Fort Knox. With them the Americans carried 1,600 pounds of flour and a drove of 26 cattle.

Pushing northward toward the Vermilion towns, the column followed the Quiatanon Trace. A seven-day march brought the little army to a village occupied by friendly Indians. Here the soldiers rested until the evening of October 7, while supplies and additional provisions were brought up from boats tied up at Pointe Coupée. The next morning, the 8th, the advance was resumed, and on the 10th Hamtramck arrived on the Vermilion. No resistance was encountered. The Kickapoos, who had learned of the expedition, had disappeared from their villages. Discovering that his supplies were getting short and failing to prevail on the militia to accept half rations for an advance on the Wea villages, Hamtramck turned back on Fort Knox, chagrined that he had marched so far for nothing. In his report to Colonel Harmar he declared, "Had I to deal only with regular troops I should order them to live on the barks of the trees if I thought it necessary."

The couriers sent to communicate with Harmar were fired on and pursued by Indians near the place they had concentrated to meet General Clark in 1786. Unable to accomplish their mission, they rejoined Hamtramck.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Harmar to Hamtramck, Sept. 3, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 255-256.

14. Hamtramck to Harmar, Sept. 21, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 258-259.

15. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 2, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 259-260. A board, on checking, had reported that at the time the de-

Meanwhile, Harmar's little army had marched against the Miami villages which were also deserted. The troops burned five villages and a vast quantity of corn and other garden crops. There was a fight on Eel River in which a column led by Colonel Hardin of Kentucky was mauled. Hardin on the evening of October 20 prevailed on Harmar to let him have another go at the Indians. The next day Hardin moved out with 400 men, and while the soldiers were fording the Maumee they were assailed by the Miamis led by their great war chief, Little Turtle. Major Wyllys and most of his battalion were killed, many of them falling in the stream--then very low--and their blood reddened its waters for a considerable distance. At the first shot, most of the militia fled. When the frightened militia reached the main camp there was almost a panic. Hardin urged Harmar to lead his entire command against the Indians. Harmar, in view of the jealousy among his officers and the ill-feeling between the regulars and militia, decided to retire on Fort Washington.

Colonel Harmar's experiences with the militia on his expedition gave him an understanding of Hamtramck's predicament. Consequently in acknowledging his subordinate's report he assured him, "Your conduct during your tour has met my approbation."<sup>16</sup>

On his return to Fort Knox, Hamtramck was angered to discover that ordnance and commissary stores were short. At the moment there was not a pound of musket powder or more than 400 flints in the magazine. The reason was that the militia had been issued 172 pounds of powder and 965 flints for the expedition; none of which had been returned. The regulars were without flour and beef, and the contractors had little credit in the village.

Two Indians of Crooked Leg's band reached Vincennes on the evening of November 1, with a request that their people be allowed to winter in the area. As Crooked Leg's people were under the protection of the United States, Hamtramck granted permission. On the 2d he wrote

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cision to turn back was made "there was only remaining on hand fourteen days' flour, and ten days' beef." On the march up from the Falls, the Kentuckians had lost 76 of the 96 oxen with which they had started up the Buffalo Trace.

16. Harmar to Hamtramck, Jan. 15, 1791, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 269-270; Otho Wineger, *The Last of the Miamis-Little Turtle* (North Manchester, 1935) 3-4.

Harmar for guidance as to how he was to treat the Indians. History told him that during the winter many would come into Vincennes to trade, while others would be hunting about the post.<sup>17</sup> Harmar was of the opinion that Hamtramck should have "no intercourse" with the Indians, "as they are all treacherous in the greatest degree." If, however, he were satisfied the Indians were "seriously inclined to take protection of the United States," he was to exercise his own discretion in the matter.<sup>18</sup>

The supply situation got worse. On November 28 Hamtramck reported, "The garrison is in a very disagreeable situation. We have been ever since the expedition without meat or flour." He had continued to advance funds to the commissary to purchase provisions, but now his purse was exhausted. At present, the garrison was subsisting on recently harvested corn and whatever game the hunters could kill on White River. This want of provisions had caused the soldiers to kill and butcher some of the villagers' cattle.<sup>19</sup>

A herd of 29 cattle sent up from the Falls in early December helped alleviate the situation.<sup>20</sup> The boats sent out by the new contractor, William Duer, reached Vincennes on January 28, 1791, having been frozen in at Grand Rapids.<sup>21</sup> Commenting on his experiences with Elliott and Williams, Hamtramck reported that it was "no exaggeration" to say that "two thirds of the time of the last contract the troops were obliged to take corn." In 1790 the troops had had whiskey for only six months, while during the first six weeks of the new year they had received none. From what he had seen of Duer he did not expect any improvement in the situation.<sup>22</sup>

Unexpected success was encountered in re-enlisting the troops whose time had expired. By March 4, 69 had rejoined. At that time only five soldiers of the "old establishment" were posted at Fort Knox, while the rest were on detached duty at Fort Washington.<sup>23</sup>

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17. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 2, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash* 263-264.

18. Harmar to Hamtramck, Jan. 25, 1791, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 272.

19. Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 28, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 266.

20. Hamtramck to Harmar, Dec. 2, 1790, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 267.

21. Hamtramck to Harmar, Jan. 28, 1791, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 276. Duer had resigned as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in 1790 to become contractor for the army.

22. Hamtramck to Harmar, Feb. 18, 1791, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 279.

23. Hamtramck to Harmar, March 4, 1791, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 280.

The campaign of 1790 had ended with all the prestige of victory with the Indians. While they had been despoiled of their lodges, their corn and beans, fruits of the toil of their squaws and children, they quickly rallied and built huts to face the cold and hunger of the long northern winter. The exposed settlers meanwhile awaited in dread the vengeance of the warriors, which they knew the unsuccessful expeditions would draw upon them.

In this they were not mistaken. A long list of murders and robberies followed beginning on the evening of January 2, 1791, with the massacre of 11 men, one woman, and two children at Big Bottom on the Muskingum. The outlying squatters, the women and children, the man in the field, the lone traveler on road or river, the immigrants on the upper Ohio, all felt the hardships of this merciless war. It was reported that 300 white people were lost on the Ohio River alone. The Indians in bands of 12 or 15 lay concealed about the blockhouses and settlements until an opportunity was afforded to kill or capture without danger to themselves, after which they retreated back to their villages at a rapid pace with scalps or captives. Pursuit or punishment was impossible except by skilled Indian fighters who rivaled the warriors themselves in this mode of warfare.<sup>24</sup>

The Kentuckians loved war as the Indians loved vengeance. Each party had suffered great cruelty and hardships at the hands of the other, and neither was disposed to listen to reason. To gratify the Kentuckians and at the same time keep the war in the Indian country, while Harmar recruited his army, President Washington authorized Brig. Gen. Charles Scott with the Kentucky militia to carry the war to the Weas.<sup>25</sup> The expedition was to consist of 500 men equipped and paid by the Federal government, to start about May 1, and to be out 20 days. Scott's object was to secure captives, especially women and children, to hold as hostages. Governor St. Clair on visiting Lexington on May 5 to see how preparations were going found 750 men ready to take the field. These volunteers rendezvoused at Frankfort on the 15th, for organization into battalions and companies.

Scott's column crossed the Ohio on May 23. Rain fell in torrents, slowing the advance as the Kentuckians rode through the unbroken forests. On the morning of June 1 Scott's little army entered the prairies south

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<sup>24</sup> *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 121-122.

<sup>25</sup> Dillon, *History of Indiana*, 262; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 129.

of the Wea villages. Scott now divided his force, the ubiquitous Colonel Hardin with two companies moved against two small villages, while the main column headed for Ouiatanon. Scouts sighted the American horsemen as they pushed across the prairie, and they sounded the alarm. A few warriors took position in a hut on the south side of Ouiatanon, while the rest of the Indians fled across the river in canoes. The Kentuckians brushed aside the rear guard and reached the Wabash just as the last of the Weas were embarking. Scott's people opened fire, wrecking five of the canoes. Meanwhile, Hardin's column had surprised the other villages and captured 52 prisoners.

By sundown the militia had assembled in Ouiatanon--a town of 70 substantial houses, some of which were well furnished. Several French families resided among the Weas and had introduced more advanced cultivation than was to be found in neighboring villages. Books, papers, and documents made it evident that the Weas were in close contact with the British at Detroit. A large quantity of corn, a variety of household goods, and peltries was burned.

The next day, the 2d, General Scott sent Colonel Wilkinson with 360 men to destroy Kethtipecanoe at the mouth of Eel River. Leaving their jaded horses behind, Wilkinson's soldiers made a 17-mile forced march. The Indians, however, learned of their peril and slipped across the Eel just as Wilkinson advanced to the assault. The Kentuckians, after burning the village, returned to Ouiatanon.

On June 4, with the army rested, General Scott sent several captives with a letter to the Weas telling them that if they would return and surrender he would spare their village. He received no reply. Next day, after destroying the "growing corn and pulse," the troops set out for the Falls of the Ohio, where they arrived on the 19th, without the loss of a man, and with 58 prisoners. The expedition was creditable to its leader, both from a military and humane standpoint.<sup>26</sup>

On June 4, three days after the attack on their villages, a Wea chief and 20 of his warriors reached Fort Knox. They begged for peace, and promised that in the autumn they would return to Vincennes and "a perfect peace could be established." Hamtramck, after taking the Indians to task for their past transgressions, remarked that he would forward their plea to his "great chief."<sup>27</sup>

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26. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 131-133; St. Clair to Knox, May 26, 1791, *St. Clair Papers*, 2, 212-214; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 131-133.

27. Hamtramck to Harmar, June 15, 1791, in *Outpost on the Wabash*, 283-284.

Four days later, Hamtramck entrusted to Ens. Jacob Melcher a packet of dispatches addressed to Colonel Harmar. Accompanied by two soldiers, Melcher started for the falls. While camping that night near White River, the couriers were attacked and the two enlisted men slain. Melcher escaped but he lost everything.<sup>28</sup>

Governor St. Clair was so encouraged by Scott's success against the Weas that he determined to order out another column. The Kentucky Military Board was alerted to call out 500 men to rendezvous at Fort Washington. Colonel Wilkinson headed this force which rode out of Fort Washington on August 1--its objective was the Miami villages. At first, the Kentuckians made rapid progress, but on the 4th they entered a great swamp. Wilkinson now turned his column toward the northwest. On the 7th they reached the Wabash, five miles above the mouth of Eel River. The river was forded, and the militia located a trail leading to Little Turtle's village. Wilkinson now divided his force, preparatory to effecting a converging attack on the town. The Miamis, just as Wilkinson's battalion was moving into position, sighted the Americans and took to the woods. The Kentuckians stormed across the Eel and killed nine and captured 34 Indians.

On August 8 Wilkinson, after destroying the corn patches, gardens, and cabins, led his troops westward toward the Kickapoo villages.<sup>30</sup> miles away. Again, the march was slowed by swamps, and by the time the Americans reached the first village, their horses had given out. Wilkinson determined not to press any farther into the land of the Kickapoos, and, after destroying the corn at Ouiatanon, he led his militia back to Kentucky, taking the route pioneered two months earlier by Scott.

These two expeditions proved a detriment to the Americans in the final analysis because it united the Indians against them. The Indians of the upper Wabash were confirmed in the belief, as expounded to them by the British, that the United States would be satisfied with nothing less than their destruction. They rallied to a man for the coming struggle to the death. The Indians living on the Great Lakes now came to the support of the Miamis, Weas, and Kickapoos. On the other hand, the Americans were filled with a false sense of security, for they now believed the conquest of the Indians of the Northwest would be an easy task.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Ibid., 283.

29. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 133-134; St. Clair to Wilkinson, *St. Clair Papers*, 2, 227-229.

Governor St. Clair had asked Major Hamtramck for his recommendations on coping with the Indians. In his reply which was drafted at Fort Knox on December 2, 1790, he had declared:

The Indians never can be subdued by just going into their towns and burning their houses and corn, and returning the next day, for it is no hardship to an Indian to live without; they make themselves perfectly comfortable on meat alone; and as for houses, they can build them with as much facility as a bird does his nest.

Surprise attacks upon the villages by mounted riflemen were the only tactics that could succeed. There would be no peace, he continued, so long as the British held the western posts and continued to encourage the Indians in their hostility toward the Americans. On the other hand, if a treaty were negotiated, the Kentuckians would break it and no jury in Kentucky would dare punish the offenders. Hamtramck concluded:

These combined circumstances, sir, make me think that, until we are securely intrenched in the Indian country, we never can be sure that peace is fully established; for as the thirst of war is the dearest inheritance an Indian receives from his parents, and vengeance that of the Kentuckians, hostility must then be the result of both sides.<sup>30</sup>

Five years' experience in the Indian country was condensed into these conclusions. Hamtramck's reasoning was sound, but the people clamored for revenge; and so General St. Clair prepared to take the field.

As soon as the news of Colonel Harmar's defeat by the Miamis in the fall of 1790 reached President Washington, preparations were started for a new campaign. Secretary of War Knox advised the President on January 15, 1791, that it was necessary to assail the Indians at once with overwhelming force and to establish a fort at the head of the Maumee. Besides overthrowing the Miamis, he hoped to curb the Ottawas and Chippewas. As the number of soldiers on the frontier

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30. Hamtramck to St. Clair, Dec. 2, 1791, in *St. Clair Papers* 2, 197-198.

was inadequate for these tasks, he recommended the organization of a new regiment--the 2d Regular Regiment of Infantry. Colonel John Proctor was to be sent on a peace mission, though nothing was hoped for it--or from it. The expeditions of Scott and Wilkinson were intended as diversions for the larger operation.

The necessary authority having been granted by Congress, Secretary Knox had the 2d Regiment organized and rushed to Fort Washington. This regiment, along with the 1st Regiment, would form the backbone for the army, which was bolstered by two regiments of the United States levies enlisted for six months and all the militia that could be profitably employed. At the head of this force was Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair. Second in command was Richard Butler, who seemed to give only half-hearted support to the undertaking. Col. Charles Scott would lead the militia. Colonel Harmar having resigned, Major Hamtramck, who had reported to General St. Clair at Fort Washington, commanded the 1st Infantry Regiment. Hamtramck and his regiment were not present at the debacle of November 4. Ordered back from Fort Jefferson on October 31 by St. Clair to apprehend 60 deserting militiamen who had gone off swearing to plunder an expected commissary train, or at least to guard the supplies and bring them up safely, Hamtramck with his regiment marched south, while the rest of the army advanced.<sup>31</sup>

Finding neither deserters nor the supply train, Hamtramck turned back and prepared to rejoin St. Clair. Having passed Fort Jefferson and hearing the roar of distant artillery, he ordered the pace quickened. He advanced until fleeing militiamen gasped out the terrifying news that the army had been routed. Still more than 20 miles from the battle and fearing for the safety of Fort Jefferson, which was garrisoned by the invalid corps, he rushed Lt. William Kersey forward with a detachment and returned with the remainder of the regiment to the fort.<sup>32</sup>

Little Turtle and his 1,000 warriors smashed St. Clair's proud army. Officers numbering 37 and 593 enlisted men were killed or missing; 31 officers and 253 men were wounded. St. Clair was not in uniform nor on a horse and that alone saved his life. Winthrop Sargent

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31. St. Clair to Knox, Nov. 1, 1791, in *St. Clair Papers*, 2, 251; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 149-165, 171-174; Canoe, *The United States Army*, 97.

32. St. Clair to Knox, Nov. 24, 1791, in *St. Clair's Papers*, 2, 270.



was among the wounded. This defeat left the frontier unprotected, but fortunately for the Americans the 1st Regiment under Hamtramck had survived. Governor St. Clair and the remnants of his shattered army reached Fort Washington on November 8.

Although General St. Clair was satisfied with Hamtramck's conduct, Lt. Col. William Darke, wild with chagrin, pained by his wounds, and worried about the condition of his son who was lying critically wounded in Fort Jefferson, ordered Hamtramck arrested. Darke charged him with cowardice and shamefully retreating for fear of the foe. St. Clair, knowing that Hamtramck was urgently needed at Vincennes, immediately convened a court martial which exonerated him of these charges.<sup>33</sup>

Lieutenant Prior had commanded at Fort Knox during Hamtramck's absence, and on his return Hamtramck opened negotiations for peace with the Weas and the Eel River Miamis. Although he had no authority to conclude a pact, he drew up a preliminary agreement which was signed by nine chiefs on March 14, 1792. One article provided that a treaty council would be held as soon as possible at Vincennes.<sup>34</sup>

President Washington was pleased with Hamtramck's initiative, but, believing that effecting a lasting settlement with the Indians of the Wabash was a vital matter, he expressed the opinion that "a person of more dignified character than Major Hamtramck should be employed in the negotiation."<sup>35</sup> Apparently, the President, when he penned that statement, had in mind the Major's small stature, because he subsequently wrote that "the business might have been transacted with zeal and ability by that officer."<sup>36</sup>

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33. Ibid.; Winegar, "Little Turtle: The Great Chief of Eel River," found in *The Last of the Miamis*, 5-6. The battle was fought on the headwaters of the Wabash, near today's Fort Recovery, Ohio.

34. *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 2, 374.

35. Washington to Knox, Aug. 13, 1792, found in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, John C. Fitzpatrick, editor, 36 vols. (Washington, 1939) 32, 113.

36. Washington to Knox, Sept. 3, 1792, found in *Writings of Washington*, 32, 139.

Meanwhile, Secretary Knox had placed before the President a plan to end the war against the Indian Confederation. It called for a well-equipped and seasoned army of 5,188 men, who were to be thoroughly drilled before they advanced into the Indian country. The preparations of the previous year had been masked by militia expeditions, but now, in deference to the wishes of President Washington, efforts were to be pushed to settle by negotiations the Indian trouble. Pending these negotiations the army was to be organized on the frontier. Rufus Putnam, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northwest, was entrusted with the work of securing peace.

Hamtramck was directed to notify the Indians that the council would take place at Vincennes in the autumn. The Weas, having been hard hit by the Scott and Wilkinson raids, sent a delegation to visit the Scott prisoners then held at Fort Washington. The leader of this group, Jean Krouch, who had been intrusted by his people with large powers for making a treaty, died in Cincinnati. Putnam was so impressed with the sincerity of the broken-hearted visitors who had hoped that their chief would succeed in rescuing the prisoners, that he placed prisoners, visitors, and a number of presents on boats and started for Vincennes.

Putnam's party, escorted by a detachment of Hamtramck's troops, started up the Wabash in six large pirogues on September 4. The run up to Fort Knox took eight days. The Reverend John Heckewelder, a member of Putnam's party, recalled that

the Indians, who had been invited hither for the treaty of peace, had in part arrived and when they saw their friends who had been prisoners, they fired off their guns in joy and sang various songs to their friends. These prisoners, after a speech by Gen. Putnam, were turned over to their friends, at which they all rejoiced.<sup>37</sup>

More Indians continued to arrive until the 22d. Because of their heavy drinking, General Putnam found it necessary to issue a proclamation forbidding the citizens from giving or vending liquor to the redmen until the end of the council. The council began at 10 o'clock on Monday, September 24. General Putnam opened the conference with a

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37. "Narrative of John Heckewelder's Journey to the Wabash in 1792," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII (1888), 167.

speech, in which he assured the assembled nations (the Weas, Piankashaws, Kaskaskias, Potowatomis, and Mascoutens) that the United States "desired to live at peace with all the Indians and to that end an opportunity was given them to discuss with the United States all that had happened to clear away difficulties and to begin a new treaty."

The next day, the 25th, a large calumet was handed to Putnam along with a broad belt of wampum, and one of the chiefs expressed the desire that he would accept this as a sign of peace and present both to President Washington, so that he too might smoke this pipe. The other chiefs then rose and each spoke in turn after offering belts of wampum. While they expressed it differently, the Indians held that the whites should "not take away their land, but should remain on the other side of the Ohio and accept this river as the frontier line." When asked to explain what they meant, the Indians "expressed the wish that they and the whites might never live in too close proximity, because among both whites and Indians very bad people were to be found." They wished to trade with the Americans, and they begged that Congress not "take away the land from the French who lived here, as their fathers had given it to them in former times."

On the 27th the articles of peace were signed by 31 chiefs, and General Putnam announced that peace had been restored. According to the provisions of this treaty, the tribes of the Wabash and Illinois country acknowledged themselves to be under the protection of the United States. The United States at the same time guaranteed to the Indians "all the lands to which they have a just claim. And no part shall ever be taken from them but by a fair purchase and to their satisfaction." The Indian chiefs promised that they would commit no further depredations. Seven belts of wampum were then handed over by the Americans to the most important chiefs. While a cannon in the fort boomed eight times, the chiefs were given four oxen, bread, and brandy with which to hold a feast. At the ensuing "festival," which turned into a brawl, two of the Indians lost their lives.

The Indians, on the 29th, held a dance at the city hall. Reverend Heckewelder watched and recalled:

Each nation was differently painted and all vied with each other to appear as hideous as possible. They first passed through all the streets of the city with drums and singing and then marched into the City Hall where they sang and related all their warlike achievements. The figures and motions made at this dance, the disfigured and dreadful faces, the war implements in their hands which

they brandished, the dry bear claws that rattled around their legs, the green garlands around their necks, their bodies without clothes, except a few miserable rags, presented an aspect, which I am unable to describe.

On October 5 Heckewelder started for Philadelphia with 16 chiefs and one squaw. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Prior, two guides, and two soldiers. As they passed Fort Knox, they were given a seven-gun salute.<sup>38</sup>

President Washington on February 13, 1793, submitted to the Senate for consideration Putnam's treaty of peace with the Illinois and Wabash Indians. Article Four read:

The United States solemnly guaranty to the Wabash, and the Illinois nations, or tribes of Indians, all the lands to which they have a just claim; and no part shall ever be taken from them, but by fair purchase, and to their satisfaction. That the lands originally belonged to the Indians; it is theirs, and theirs only. That they have a right to sell, and a right to refuse to sell. And that the United States will protect them in their said just rights.<sup>39</sup>

Apparently, the Senate did not share General Putnam's generous views of Indian rights, for the treaty was not ratified.

Hamtramck was now assigned to the 2d Sub-Legion of the force then being organized by Major General Anthony Wayne for another expedition against the Indians. Promoted lieutenant colonel and named commander of the 1st Sub-Legion in February 1793 he remained at Fort Knox until he was relieved by Capt. Thomas<sup>40</sup> Pasteur, who arrived in June with a detachment to occupy the fort.

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38. Ibid., 168-173; *The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam . . .*, Rowena Buell, ed. (Boston, 1903) 363-364.

39. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 338.

40. Wayne to Hamtramck, May 25, 1793, *Anthony Wayne Papers*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.

# GEORGE ROGERS CLARK

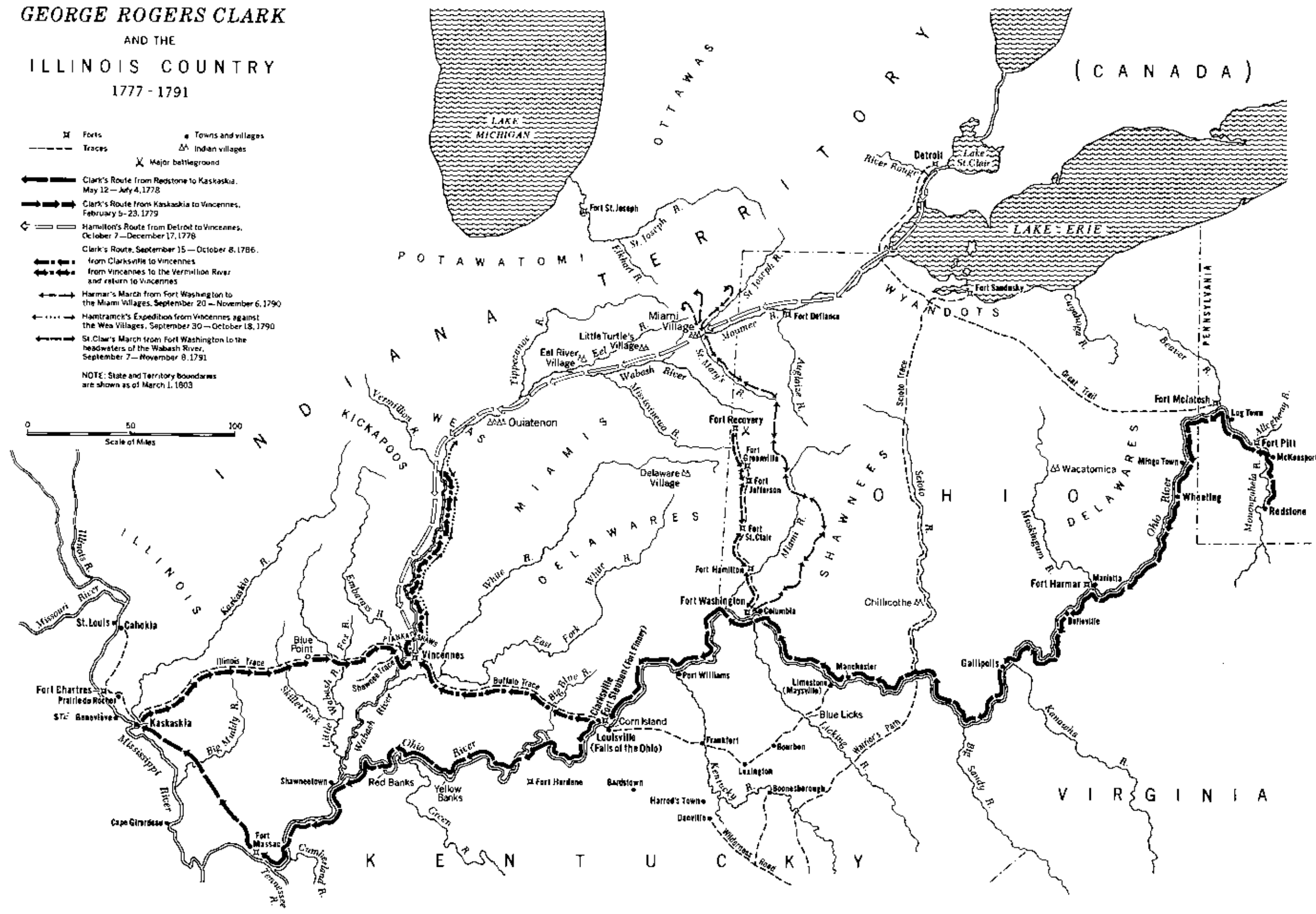
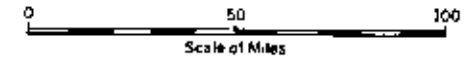
AND THE

## ILLINOIS COUNTRY

1777 - 1791

- ☒ Forts
- Towns and villages
- Traces
- △ Indian villages
- ✕ Major battleground
- ← Clark's Route from Redstone to Kaskaskia, May 12 - July 4, 1778
- Clark's Route from Kaskaskia to Vincennes, February 5 - 23, 1779
- ↔ Hamilton's Route from Detroit to Vincennes, October 7 - December 17, 1778
- ← Clark's Route, September 15 - October 8, 1786, from Clarksville to Vincennes
- Clark's Route, September 15 - October 8, 1786, from Vincennes to the Vermillion River and return to Vincennes
- ↔ Harmer's March from Fort Washington to the Miami Villages, September 20 - November 6, 1790
- ↔ Hamtramck's Expedition from Vincennes against the Wea Villages, September 30 - October 18, 1790
- ↔ St. Clair's March from Fort Washington to the headwaters of the Wabash River, September 7 - November 8, 1791

NOTE: State and Territory boundaries are shown as of March 1, 1803



## CHAPTER XIII

### Fort Knox, No.1, Is Abandoned

A veteran of the Revolutionary War, Captain Pasteur had re-entered the service in 1790. He was stationed at Fort Hamilton at the time orders were received posting him to Fort Knox. General Wayne, who was starting to concentrate an effective force to lead against the Great Indian Confederacy, now issued orders to replace the garrisons at Forts Knox and Steuben with casuals, who had been classified by the surgeons as unfit for duty in the field. The keelboats with the casuals left Fort Washington in late May 1793. As soon as Captain Pasteur and the company assigned to Fort Knox arrived, Hamtramck and his battalion were embarked and headed down the Wabash en route to join General Wayne.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Pasteur on assuming command at Fort Knox on June 24, 1793, announced that he flattered

himself that those under his Command will readily join him with every exertion in promoting Cleanliness in & about the Garrison, one of the first objects, to preserve health, and that they will most charefully adhair strictly to the true principles of Dicupline. At the Same time, it may be Necessary to declair, that any Non Commissioned Officer or Soldiers, that may be found guilty of Deviating from the principles of the Character they profess, Shall be most Severely punished. The main gate will be kept open as Usual, from Troop, till retreat beating. The order against Soldiers going to the Village with the method of Gitty Water from it, will be the same as during the Command of Lt. Colo. Com-mant Hamtramck.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Wayne to Knox, May 27, 1793, and Wayne to Knox, May 7, 1794, in *Anthony Wayne, A Name in Arms: Soldier, Diplomat, Defender of Expansion Westward of a Nation*, ed. Richard C. Knopf (Pittsburgh, 1959), 238, 242, 373.

2. "Fort Knox Orderly Book, 1793-97," *IMH*, 3P, No.2, 138.

For the soldiers there was little recreation at Fort Knox beyond drinking, gambling, and whoring. Punishment for breaches in discipline was swift and severe. On June 26, 1793, Pvt. Thomas White appeared before Captain Pasteur, charged with being drunk while on guard. White pled guilty and was sentenced to receive 35 lashes at the evening's roll call.<sup>3</sup> Ten days later, Pvt. John Hamilton was brought before the Commandant accused of going to Vincennes without a pass, and of asserting a falsehood against Sergeant Price. Hamilton was found guilty, given 50 lashes, and then released to duty.<sup>4</sup>

Three men were confined in the post guardhouse on July 21. Pvt. William Mosely was accused of sleeping on post on the night of the 12th. Lieutenant Ross Bird, having relieved the sleeping sentinel of his musket, Captain Pasteur judged him guilty and ordered him to receive 50 lashes. Pvts. William Curton and William Brown were charged with breaking into and robbing a chest belonging to one of their messmates. The evidence against them was overwhelming, and they were given 30 lashes.<sup>5</sup>

Pvts. Michael Downey and Peter Gordin had visited a Vincennes Tavern on the evening of December 9, 1793. When they returned to the post, they were in their cups and made so much noise that it awakened the other soldiers quartered in the barracks. Haled before the Captain the next day, the two privates were ordered to receive 50 lashes. Pasteur could be merciful, and as Downey was a first offender, he pardoned him.

The soldiers seemed unable to handle the rotgut whiskey sold by the Vincennes merchants, so Pasteur issued a directive that no more ardent spirits would be purchased by the men until further orders. Non-commissioned officers could secure whiskey from Lieutenant Bird at "his discretion and any person found guilty of bringing Such Liquors into the Garrison for the use of the Soldiers contrary to this order" was to be punished accordingly.<sup>6</sup>

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3. Ibid., 139.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 140.

6. Ibid., 144.

On March 2, 1794, Pvt. William Johnson was tried on the charge of "abusing, imposing on, & Cheating Mr. Reed of Post Vincennes, and for haveing made use of Col. Hamtramck's name to enable him to accomplish his imposition." The Court Martial, which was presided over by Captain Prior, found Johnson guilty, and sentenced him to receive 75 lashes at "this evening's Roll Call."<sup>7</sup>

Pvt. Rubin Thomas on August 1, 1794, was caught sleeping on watch by the sergeant of the guard. This was Thomas' third offense, so he received a stiff sentence from Captain Pasteur, 100 lashes.

The Surgeon's Mate on examining Thomas reported that for the time being he was in no physical condition to stand the ordeal. By the 7th Thomas' condition had improved, and the 100 lashes were administered as the garrison watched.<sup>8</sup>

One of the citizens came to Captain Pasteur on March 26, 1795, and charged that one of the soldiers, Pvt. Peter Moore, had killed one of his hogs. Moore denied the charge. Captain Pasteur decided that as Moore was on guard at the time the hog was killed near his post, he must know something about it. He therefore ordered \$4.50 deducted from Moore's pay for the next three months, and the sum paid to the owner of the hog.<sup>9</sup>

On August 20, 1795, Pvt. John Scamehorn was brought before the Commandant accused of mutinous conduct. Found guilty, he received 85 lashes.<sup>10</sup>

Corporal Felt was tried on April 19, 1796, by a Court Martial composed of his brother non-commissioned officers, Sergeant Higgins presiding. Felt was accused of endeavoring "to defame the Character of a Young Lady of the Village and for behaving in a Seditious manner relative to the Commanding Officer's Order." Felt was convicted and sentenced to be reduced to private and to receive 100 lashes. Captain Pasteur was shocked to learn that he had a non-commissioned officer capable of such crimes, and he confirmed the sentence.<sup>11</sup>

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7. Ibid., 146.

8. Ibid., 150.

9. Ibid., 154.

10. Ibid., 156.

11. Ibid., 162.



Sergeant Higgins on August 27, 1796, presided over another court martial. Appearing before the court was Pvt. Henry Nugent charged with persuading a messmate to desert with him, and for selling his uniform. Nugent was judged guilty and sentenced to walk the gantlet 12 times "through the Troops of the Garrison, & to be confined in the Guard House" for 14 days. When he reviewed the case, Captain Pasteur confirmed the sentence of the court, but pardoned the 14 days' confinement. Private Nugent walked the gantlet at guard mount on the 28th.<sup>12</sup>

While the army used the stick to instill obedience, it also employed the carrot. On holidays there were extra rations. Especially welcomed were the ardent spirits. On March 16, 1794, Captain Pasteur ordered that as the next day was St. Patrick's Day all Irishmen in the Garrison were to be exempt from duty and were to receive one gill of whiskey per man.<sup>13</sup> On July 3 it was announced that as the morrow was "the Anniversary of the Independence of the United States, ever Memorable," the garrison was to be exempt from fatigue duty and every man was to receive an extra gill of whiskey.<sup>14</sup> Twelve days later, on the 15th, Captain Pasteur informed the troops that on June 30 and July 1 a handful of soldiers at Fort Recovery had "gained a Complete Victory over the Combined army of Savages, consisting of about 17 hundred warriors." To celebrate this victory, he ordered a 13-gun salute by the fort's artillery, and for the post commissary to break out the whiskey and to issue to each man one gill.<sup>15</sup>

The troops learned on March 8, 1797, of the death of Gen. Anthony Wayne. In accordance with Colonel Hamtramck's orders, the officers and men were to wear "a crape, or Ribbon round the Arm, and on the Sword for the space of one month."<sup>16</sup>

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12. Ibid., 165.

13. Ibid., 146.

14. Ibid., 149.

15. Ibid., 150. At 7 a.m. on June 30, 1794, Little Turtle with about 1,000 warriors had attacked Fort Recovery, but they had been repulsed with heavy losses.

16. Ibid., 167-168. General Wayne had died on December 15, 1796.

The soldiers were carefully drilled against the always present danger of an Indian attack. When the "long roll" was beaten, Sergeant Price with four privates was to dash to Blockhouse No.1, Corporal Higgins with a similar number was to take post in Blockhouse No.2, Corporal Molloy and four privates in Blockhouse No.3, while Corporal Lucus and a like number raced for Blockhouse No.4. Corporal Palmer would replace any of the non-commissioned officers that might be on guard. When they took their battle stations, the non-commissioned officers each were to provide themselves with a slow match and carry it lighted to their posts.<sup>17</sup> On March 16, 1796, the number of men to accompany each non-commissioned officer to the designated blockhouse was increased from four to five.<sup>18</sup>

At sunset the guard were to load their pieces, and upon being relieved in the morning they were to be marched out of the fort to a previously designated station and discharge their pieces at a target. The man registering a hit nearest the center would receive a pint of whiskey.<sup>19</sup>

To prevent a plea of ignorance as to the boundary limits of the Garrison area, Captain Pasteur announced on December 15, 1795, that the north side of the street running east-west by Mrs. Bosseron's house would be the line. Henceforth, any soldier found on or south of that street, without permission, would be judged guilty of disobedience of orders and punished accordingly.<sup>20</sup> On March 4, 1796, the Commandant further restricted his command. If a soldier trespassed more than 100 yards to the southeast or southwest of the post, without permission, he would be off limits.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, events in what was to become the state of Ohio, were to have important repercussions on Vincennes and the Wabash country. General Wayne, President Washington's personal selection to lead the American forces in the next campaign against the Indian Confederacy, had reached Pittsburg in June 1792 and had begun to drill his army.

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17. Ibid., 148.

18. Ibid., 161.

19. Ibid., 143.

20. Ibid., 157.

21. Ibid., 160.

Wayne moved slowly and cautiously. It was October 7, 1793, before he marched northward from Fort Washington with an army of about 2,600 effectives. Wayne soon halted, and his army spent the winter at Fort Greenville. The next spring, an advance party went on to the scene of St. Clair's defeat and built Fort Recovery. After Little Turtle's repulse at Fort Recovery, Wayne crept northward, drilling his men, and screening his front with scouts.

On August 8 Wayne reached Grand Glaize on the Maumee. Here he built a fort, which he named Defiance, and pushed on down the Maumee after the Indians. Little Turtle and his warriors fell back before the Americans, watching anxiously but vainly for an opportunity to surprise them, and at the same time begging from the British the assistance which they had been so often and so freely promised. Governor John G. Simcoe of Upper Canada accordingly advanced with 300 troops to the foot of the rapids of the Maumee and erected Fort Miami from where he supplied the Indians with provisions and ammunition. A short distance above Fort Miami was a dense forest strewn with fallen trees, blown down by an earlier tornado. Here Little Turtle and his warriors awaited attack by General Wayne and his well-drilled riflemen.

The battle of Fallen Timbers occurred on August 20, 1794. Little Turtle and his warriors were routed by Wayne's Legion and fled toward Fort Miami, seeking shelter under its walls. Wayne's legionaires charged to within pistol shot of the British guns and drove the Indians away from its walls into the woods. The British refused to allow the warriors to enter the post, where they had heretofore been welcomed.

The battle of Fallen Timbers was the death blow to the Miami Confederacy. After the engagement Wayne retired up the Maumee and built Fort Wayne. The Legion then returned to Fort Greenville to winter quarters, while Hamtramck and his regiment remained at Fort Wayne. The Indians, following their defeat, gathered on the western shores of Lake Erie and spent a miserable winter, subsisting on the scanty rations issued by the British. Although British agents encouraged them to continue the war, their morale had been sapped by their recent defeat. Little Turtle, Buckongahelas, Tarke, Le Gris, Blue Jacket, and other leaders now visited the Americans and promised to attend a grand council to be held at Fort Greenville in the summer of 1795. On August 3 the Treaty of Greenville was signed, which opened to settlement much of what was to become the state of Ohio.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 137-140; *American Heritage Pictorial Atlas*, 124-125. The boundary of the Indian country established

Captain Pasteur at Fort Knox reported during the fall of 1794, following the battle of Fallen Timbers, that many warriors passed through Vincennes en route for the trans-Mississippi.<sup>23</sup>

With Hamtramck in command at Fort Wayne, his wife determined in the spring of 1796 to visit friends and relatives in Vincennes. At the portage she boarded a vessel. When the craft was within one day of Vincennes on May 21, she fell overboard and drowned. Her body was recovered and was buried the next day in the parish cemetery. A great number of villagers, as well as members of the military, attended the funeral.<sup>24</sup>

The European Wars which began with the French Revolution and continued almost uninterrupted until the battle of Waterloo affected Vincennes. Emigration from the area to Louisiana had ebbed after the establishment of Knox County in 1790. But by 1796 it had resumed. Captain Pasteur in the spring of that year reported to General Wayne that Father Peter Janin, missionary from the United States to the Kaskaskia Indians, had deserted to the Spanish. Father John Francis Rivet, the Vincennes parish priest, notified the Captain that he had had an offer from the Spanish Government to enter their service, but he had declined.<sup>25</sup>

In 1795 treaties were signed by the United States with two of the major European powers, both of which had important repercussions for the people of the Northwest and Vincennes. In accordance with the provisions of Jay's Treaty with Great Britain, the King's troops in the summer of 1796 evacuated the posts they had held within the territorial limits of the United States since 1783--Forts Detroit, Miami, Niagara, Oswego, and Michilimackinac. The Treaty of San Lorenzo with Spain settled the boundary dispute which had agitated relations between the two countries for over 12 years. The Spanish representatives recognized

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by the Treaty of Greenville was to begin at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, ascend that stream to Fort Laurens, then extend west by Fort Laramie to Fort Recovery, from the latter it was to run to the southwest, striking the Ohio at a point opposite the mouth of the Kentucky River.

23. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 550.

24. *Old Cathedral Burial Records*, 5,363

25. Pasteur to Wayne, Jan.20 and May 26, 1796 (McHenry Papers, WLCL)

the 31st parallel of latitude as the southern boundary of the United States. Of much greater importance to the people of the Northwest Territory were the provisions of this treaty conceding to the citizens of the United States the right to navigate the Mississippi and the right of deposit at New Orleans.

The French Directory was understandably displeased to learn that the United States and Great Britain had settled most of their outstanding differences. Citizen Edmond C. Genet and other agents were dispatched to the United States to rally support for France in its war with Great Britain and her continental allies.

On May 25, 1796, Secretary of War James McHenry notified General Wayne that the President had received information that the Directory had employed agents "to gain a knowledge of our military posts in the West, and to encourage and stimulate the people in that area to secede from the union, and form a political and separate connexion with a foreign power."

Three agents were identified by the Secretary. They were: Powers, Collet, and Warin. Georges Collet was described as a former general in the French army, who was six-foot tall, about 40 years old, and spoke English fluently. At least one of these emissaries was expected to travel down the Ohio from Pittsburgh, to Limestone, cross Kentucky, to the Falls, then on to Fort Knox and Kaskaskia, from where he would take a boat to New Orleans.<sup>26</sup>

Wayne, on being alerted to this situation, expressed a fear that the Directory would pressure the Court of Madrid to annul the Treaty of San Lorenzo. He was worried about the possibility of there being a secret article in the recent treaty which had ended the war between France and Spain providing for the retrocession of Louisiana to France in the near future. He accordingly ordered Captain Pasteur and his other post commanders in the Northwest to be on the lookout for these agents and others.<sup>27</sup>

Collet reached Fort Washington from Lexington, Kentucky, on June 22, 1796. Upon his arrival, he inquired of General Wayne's whereabouts. When informed that he was in the field, Collet announced that he would proceed to Fort Massac by boat, from where he would ride overland to Kaskaskia. Meanwhile, Peter Loramie, a trader who

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26. McHenry to Wayne, May 25, 1796, in *Anthony Wayne*, 481-482.

27. Wayne to McHenry, June 27, 1796, in *Anthony Wayne*, 489-490.

was suspected of being a French agent, visited Vincennes. Persons with whom Loramie had spoken reported to Pasteur that he planned to visit various Indian Nations in the Northwest Territory to poison their minds against the Americans. The news was relayed to General Wayne by Pasteur.<sup>28</sup>

C. F. Volney, a natural scientist and world traveler, thus reached Vincennes at a time when the Americans were suspicious of any one with a French accent or name. After a rapid three-day trip from the Falls of the Ohio, Volney entered Vincennes on August 2, 1796, where, he said:

The eye is at first presented with an irregular savannah, eight miles in length by three in breadth, skirted by eternal forests, and sprinkled with few trees, and abundance of umbelliferous plants, three or four feet high. Maize, tobacco, wheat, barley, squashes, and even cotton, grew in the fields around the village, which contains about fifty houses, whose cheerful white relieves the eye, after the tedious dusk and green of the woods.

These houses are placed along the left bank of the Wabash, here about two hundred feet wide, and falling, when the waters are low, twenty feet below the seite of the town. The bank of the river is sloping towards the savannah, which is a few feet lower: this slope is occasioned by the periodical floods.

Each house, as is customary in Canada, stands alone, and is surrounded by a court and garden, fenced with poles. I was delighted by the sight of peach trees loaded with fruit, but was sorry to notice the thorn apple. . . . Adjoining the village and river is a space, enclosed by a ditch eight feet wide, and by sharp stakes six feet high. This is called . . . [Fort Knox], and is sufficient safeguard against surprises from Indians.

I had letters to a principal man of the place, by birth a Dutchman, but who spoke good french. I was accomodated at his house, in the kindest and most hospitable manner, for ten days.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Pasteur to Wayne, July 29, 1796 (McHenry Papers, WLCL).

29. C. F. Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America* . . . (Philadelphia, 1804), 332-333.

The Revolutionary War, he reported, had brought hardships to the French. Siding with the Americans "as duty and discretion enjoined, they were annoyed by the savages, whose animosity was embittered by the remembrance of their ancient friendship and alliance." Their cattle were killed, their village beset, and for the next several years, they could not carry "the plough or hoe a musket shot from their huts." Military service was added to their other hardships.

In 1792 the Federal government had granted each settler who paid the "capitation" 400 acres of land, with 100 more to every male who served in the militia. This domain, which would be ample for a farm, was of little value to the French hunters and trappers, "who soon bartered away their invaluable ground for about 30 cents an acre, which was paid to them in goods, on which an exorbitant profit was charged." By the time of his visit this land was selling for \$2 per acre. Consequently, the French for the most part were left with little more than a garden.<sup>30</sup>

The French complained that they had been cheated and robbed of their land, and that their rights were "continually violated by the courts, in which only two judges out of the five were Frenchmen, who knew little of the laws or language of the English!"

Their ignorance, Volney reported, was profound. There had been no school until the arrival of Father Rivet, "a polite, well-educated, and liberal minded missionary, banished hither by the French revolution." Out of nine French with whom he had spoken, only six could read or write, whereas nine-tenths of the Americans could do both. Volney found their dialect a "pretty good French, intermixed with many military terms and phrases," as the settlement had been made by soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

Captain Pasteur, as was to be expected, questioned Volney as to his business at Vincennes. He explained that he was "traveling for his satisfaction," and that he had previously published several volumes of his travels. He showed Pasteur letters of introduction and recommendation from Colonel Nugent.

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30. Ibid., 334-335.

31. Ibid., 335.

On August 6 Father Rivet and Volney met two Indians at the priest's house. Louis Bolong, who was present, swore that the Indians took Volney by the hand and said "look at us, we are very poor, we are scattered like chickens, and we have no father & no mother, and no village."

Volney, holding one of the redmen (Lassosair's son) by the hand, replied, "I see you look poor but by & by you will see something my brothers. I am a big man & by & by I will come & see you and then you will know me." When he left Vincennes on August 9, Volney told Pasteur that he was going to Fort Greenville by way of Fort Washington.

About this time James Johnson came in with a story that made Pasteur even more suspicious of persons of foreign birth. He reported that he "seriously believed the United States had a very few friends in this country." Father Rivet and Gamelin had recently taken a census of the villagers for some unexplained purpose.

Word now arrived from Kaskaskia that Collet had changed his route to pass through Michillimackinac, having learned that American soldiers were now posted at that point. A visitor from Kentucky, Field, had said that the talk on the Mississippi was that the French would "be in possession of this Territory in less than two years." Seven thousand French soldiers were reportedly en route to New Orleans, and it was rumored Louisiana was to be retroceded to France by Spain.<sup>32</sup>

General Wayne, after reflecting on the information forwarded to him by Pasteur regarding Collet's and Volney's movements, concluded that Volney was a "link in the chain of Commissioners employed to feel the political pulse of the French & other inhabitants in the Western Country, & particularly in the vicinity of our posts."<sup>33</sup>

Dr. George Hunter, an American natural scientist, passed through Vincennes two weeks after Volney's departure. Like the Frenchman, he arrived via the Buffalo Trace, having forded White River 15 miles southeast of town. Dr. Hunter reported that Vincennes was

laid out in squares about 2 acres each. The streets very narrow being only 25 feet wide, & full of Apple & peach orchards. The soil is a blackish sand mixed

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32. Pasteur to Wayne, Sept. 11, 1796 and Louis Bolong's Disposition, (McHenry Papers, WLCL).

33. Wayne to McHenry, *Anthony Wayne*, 530-531; Wayne to Pasteur, Oct. 3, 1796 (McHenry Papers, (WLCL).



with good rich mold & produces very great crops of everything without manure. Here is clay for Bricks, & free stone of a soft sandy sort & a dirty yellow color; they have hitherto used Mussel shells to burn their lime off altho they have timber at a distance of ten miles. Their Houses are all of wood & generally of logs--The U. States have on the River at the upper end of the Village a Square Fort which has a blockhouse at each angle & the intermediate space picketed.

On August 24 Hunter and his party left Vincennes for Kaskaskia.<sup>34</sup> The next visitor to pass through Vincennes and describe the town and fort was Moses Austin. While en route to the trans-Mississippi, Austin paused briefly at Vincennes, which he reached on New Year's Day 1797. Like Volney and Hunter, Austin traveled from the Falls over the Buffalo Trace. He noted in his journal that the houses in the village were generally of "one story & badly finished." At this time only about three-quarters of the dwellings were occupied, as many of the inhabitants, with the return of peace following the Treaty of Greenville, had moved out into the countryside and were living on farms.

Captain Pasteur still commanded the 50 men posted at Fort Knox. Mounted in the fort's blockhouses were four 6-pounders which commanded the town and the river crossing. While at Vincennes, where he remained until January 6, Austin stayed at Colonel Small's Tavern, which was the only one in the town at which good accommodations could be had. On the morning of the 6th, Austin crossed the Wabash and proceeded westward over the Illinois Trace.<sup>35</sup>

The Treaty of Greenville brought peace to the Northwest Territory for a number of years, while in the same year the agreements with Great Britain and Spain normalized relations with two of the great powers. By the end of 1796 fears that France was about to re-

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34. John F. McDermott (ed.), "The Western Journals of Dr. George Hunter, 1796-1806," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 53, Part 4 (Philadelphia, 1963), 27-28.

35. Moses Austin, "A Memorandum of Moses Austin's Journey from the Lead Mines in the County of Wythe in the State of Virginia, to the Lead Mines in the Province of Louisiana West of the Mississippi, 1796, 1797," *American Historical Review*, 5 (April, 1900), 528-529.

gain Louisiana had subsided, and Fort Knox lost much of its importance. General Wayne, shortly before his death, proposed that Fort Knox be abandoned and its garrison and stores transferred "to the mouths of the Kaskaskias & Illinois rivers."<sup>36</sup> Wayne's death chilled this proposal. Captain Pasteur was relieved as post commandant on May 16, 1797, and ordered to Fort Massac. Although all available sources have been consulted, it has proved impossible to determine the identity of the officer who replaced Pasteur as commandant at Fort Knox.<sup>37</sup>

The Inspector General of the United States Army on April 6, 1802, wrote to Lt. John Campbell at Vincennes that Captain Honest F. Johnston was to turn over the command of the troops at Fort Knox to him, pending the arrival of Capt. Cornelius Lyman, Lt. Nathan Heald, or Lt. Ambrose Whitlock. Campbell would then proceed to Fort Adams, Mississippi Territory.<sup>38</sup> Ten days later, a second letter went out from the War Department at Washington directing Captain Lyman on his arrival at Fort Knox to fill the empty billets in his company from men in Captain Johnston's company. Soldiers transferred to his company of the 1st Infantry were to "appear on your Rolls with the notation joined from Captain Johnston's company, 4th Infantry, 1802."<sup>39</sup>

Lyman reached Vincennes from Presqu'Isle in June and assumed command at Fort Knox. Not long after he had reached the Wabash, Lyman ran into difficulty when a judgment was secured against him for enlisting a soldier named Perrin.<sup>40</sup> On September 4 he forwarded to Washington the oaths of allegiance taken by members of his company.<sup>41</sup>

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36. Wayne to Secretary of Treasury, Sept. 4, 1796, in *Territorial Papers*, 2, 571.

37. *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, Logan Esarey, (ed.), IHSC, 7, 35.

38. Inspector General's Office, April 6, 1802, NA, Ltrs. Sent, 1800-03, 270. When Governor William Henry Harrison reached Vincennes in January 1801, Johnston commanded the company posted at Fort Knox.

39. Adj. & Insp. to Lyman, April 16, 1802, NA, Adj. & Insp. Office, Ltrs. Sent, 1800-1803, 281-282.

40. Lyman to Secretary of War, July 23, 1802, NA, Ltrs. Recd., W.D. Register.

41. *Ibid.*, Sept. 4, 1802, NA, Ltrs. Recd., W.D. Register.

Lyman at first relied on his subordinates who were familiar with the area. Lieutenant Whitlock accordingly on July 22 reported that wood for the use of the post had been cut on the public land, three or four miles up the Wabash and rafted downstream. It would be a good idea, Whitlock suggested, for the army to purchase two yoke of oxen and a wagon to haul the wood to the river and from the river to the fort.<sup>42</sup>

In 1803 the United States Government determined to relocate Fort Knox. On February 21, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn wrote Governor William Henry Harrison desiring to know what expense would be involved for repairing the barracks and officers' quarters and for what sum land could be procured. On April 13 Dearborn notified Lyman:

When you have consulted with Govr. Harrison and decided on the most suitable Scite for a Military Post at Vincennes, where the land can be obtained on reasonable terms, you will please to inform me accordingly, noting the price the land can be obtained for pr. acre from ten to one hundred acres.

That very month Lieutenant Whitlock had complained that the fort was entirely without "windowglass not a light in the whole of the Buildings, except a few that the commanding officer borrowed from the Governor for the use of his Quarters." At the same time some of the barracks and officers' quarters had either collapsed or were in danger of doing so, because the Secretary authorized Lyman to shelter one-half of his men under "such temporary covering during the hot season" as he might judge to be necessary. Meanwhile, preparation would be made to begin construction of a new fort in the autumn. The cost of these temporary sheds which were to be erected near the "old Barracks" was to be held to a minimum.<sup>43</sup>

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42. Whitlock to Linnard, July 22, 1802, NA, QMG, Consolidated Correspondence File. William Linnard was Military Agent at Philadelphia.

43. Dearborn to Lyman, April 13, 1803, NA, in Secretary of War's Ltr. Bk., 1, 411-412; Whitlock to Linnard, Feb. 9, 1803, QMG, Consolidated Correspondence File.

Lyman in April, May, and July wrote the War Department regarding the proposed site for the new fort, but unfortunately these letters have not survived. All we know about them is the terse descriptions which appear in the War Department's *Register of Letters Received*. Secretary Dearborn replied to Captain Lyman's letter of July 11, in which he had discussed the acquisition of a site, "if one hundred acres of land which will afford a suitable site for a military post at Vincennes can be obtained for one hundred and fifty dollars, I wish Governor Harrison or yourself . . . would make the purchase." As soon as the purchase was consummated, Lyman was to have his men begin erecting "a Stockade-work with a Block House, and accommodations for the Garrison including a small store and a small magazine . . . which should be of brick." Glass, nails, and tools would be forwarded from Pittsburgh.<sup>44</sup>

The land selected by Lyman was at Petit Rocher, a rock outcropping, about three miles upstream from Fort Knox. In the late 18th Century Pierre Gamelin had assigned to Toussaint DuBois a large tract running back from the Wabash at Petit Rocher. DuBois on June 11, 1796, in turn had sold 100 acres to Jeremiah Buckley for \$140. Buckley returned to Pennsylvania, where he died. DuBois then sold the same tract, this time 100 arpents, about 85 acres, to the United States. The deed, executed November 7, 1803, indicates that Buckley was presumed to have died without heirs. The deed read in part:

through the application of William Henry Harrison, esq., governor of the Indiana Territory, and Cornelius Lyman, esq., captain in the first regiment of Infantry, and commanding at Fort Knox, applied to to the said Toussaint DuBois, by the direction of the Secretary of War, to convey to the said United States, for the purpose of building and establishing a garrison thereon, the said one hundred arpents of land so by him agreed to be sold to the said Jeremiah Buckley, which he, the said Toussaint DuBois has consented to do on their paying him the said sum of one hundred and twenty-six dollars so, as aforesaid due by the said Jeremiah Buckley to him, and on condition of the said United States

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<sup>44</sup>. Dearborn to Lyman, Aug. 4, 1803, NA, War Dept., Adj. Gen.'s Office, Old Records Div., Mil. Bk. 2.

satisfying and compensating . . . the said Jeremiah Buckley, or his heirs or assigns, for his or their estate, right, title, or interest of and in the said tract of one hundred arpents.<sup>45</sup>

This tract probably was the best available in the vicinity of Vincennes for a fort. It was a well-timbered slope and commanded a bend in the Wabash. Part way down the grade was an excellent spring, and the Petit Rocher provided a good landing. The easiest approach to the tract, until a road had been opened, would be by water.

On August 5 J. Wingate, a clerk at the War Department, notified "Mofes" Hook to forward to Thomas and Cuthbert Bullett, merchants at the Falls of the Ohio, a number of articles that would be needed by Captain Lyman in erecting the new fort. Included were: bar iron, window glass, nails, broadaxes, adzes, common axes, cross-cut saws, whip saws, hand saws, tenant saws, chisels, augers, drawing knives, gimlets, hammers, squares, gouges, and carpenters' compasses.<sup>46</sup>

From the Falls these articles were transshipped to Vincennes. In October Lyman asked for and received permission from the Secretary to employ a team and carts to facilitate the construction of the new fort. On November 3 Secretary Dearborn directed Lyman to "make use of any or all of the old buildings at . . . [Fort Knox] that the materials thereof can be used to advantage in erecting the new Works." The Secretary in December acknowledged receipt from Captain Lyman of the proposed plan for the new buildings and works. It was his opinion

[that] the dimensions of the works exceed what I should have deemed expedient. It may not, However, be improper to give more room in the Garrison than I had contemplated. I have no objection to the form.

Troops detailed to labor on the fort were to be paid an additional ten cents per day and receive an extra ration of one gill of spirits for each day's work.<sup>47</sup>

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45. *American State Papers, Public Lands*, 4, 16-20.

46. NA, War Dept. Rec., Office of Sec'y of War, Ltrs. Sent, Military Book 1A, 49.

47. NA, War Dept., Reg. of Ltrs. Recd., 2, 92; War Dept. Sec'y of War, Ltrs. Sent, 103, 107. It has been impossible to locate the plan referred to by Dearborn in his letter of December 6, 1803, to Lyman.

Lieutenant Whitlock reported on December 25:

The Expenditures at this post for the present year are considerably augmented by building a New Garrison about four miles from this place [Vincennes], and to meet the expence I have this day drawn on you [William Linnard] for four hundred & fifty dollars & forty-eight cents.<sup>48</sup>

In 1803 the United States spent \$358.50 for fortifications, of which \$200 was budgeted to Fort Knox No.2. No such expenses were listed for 1804.<sup>49</sup> We can not determine the exact date on which construction was started, but it was probably after the receipt of the tools and supplies. On October 1, 1804, warrant number 7842 reimbursed Lyman "for drawing the deeds of a tract of land whereon the fort near Vincennes is erected, \$25.00."<sup>50</sup> Four months before, on June 20, Captain Lyman had written Linnard from the "New Garrison near Vincennes." This letter constitutes strong evidence that by that date work had progressed to a point where the post commander and his troops were able to move into their new quarters.<sup>51</sup>

The Louisiana Purchase, which was consummated in 1803, spurred Captain Lyman's ambitions. On October 22 he wrote a friend in Congress, Oliver Phelps, that he had been at Vincennes since June of 1802. While it was a pleasant duty station, he had been in his present grade a long time, and if the army should be expanded as a result of the "Purchase," he wished to be considered for the rank of major.<sup>52</sup>

There was no expansion of the army at this time, and Lyman received no promotion. Next he tried unsuccessfully to secure the position of commandant at Michillimackinac, but he was fated to remain at Fort Knox for several additional years.<sup>53</sup>

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48. Whitlock to Dumaro, Dec.25, 1803, NA, Office of QMG, Consolidated Correspondence File.

49. *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, 1, 178, 180, 184.

50. *Ibid.*; NA, Sec'y of War, Ltr. Books, 2, 47, 49-50.

51. Lyman to Linnard, June 20, 1804, NA, Office of QMG, Consolidated Correspondence File.

52. Lyman to Phelps, Oct.22, 1803, Collections of the Indiana Historical Society.

53. Lyman to Phelps, Dec.2, 1803, Collections of the Indiana Historical Society.

## Site of Fort Knox No.1

The site is on the campus of Vincennes University, one block east of Scott Street. Most local historians have heretofore located the fort on the northeast side of today's Buntin Street, about midway between the site of Fort Sackville and the campus of Vincennes University. They have rested their case on Robert Buntin's "A Plan of the Borough of Vincennes in the Indiana Territory, as established by an Ordinance of the Trustees of the said Borough on the 18th November, 1816." Buntin came to Vincennes in 1793 and, as a surveyor and holder of many public offices, knew the town well.

On his map at a point on the northeast side of today's Buntin Street is a lightly sketched plan and the notation, "Fort Knox in 1790." While Buntin drew this map and would have been familiar with the location of Fort Knox No.1, there is no proof that he made the notations on the 1816 map. A careful study of the lettering on the map demonstrates that the map was drawn and lettered by one man, undoubtedly Buntin, while other individuals in subsequent periods indicated the presumed locations of Forts Sackville and Knox as well as various property owners.

Dr. John Platt, who is familiar with writing styles practiced in the 18th and 19th Centuries, reports that Buntin employed an essentially italic style characteristic of that period, while the individual who positioned and labeled the forts employed a different style of penmanship which was non-italic and characteristic of the the period after 1850, when steel pens came into general use.

The best evidence for positioning Fort Knox No.1 on the present-day campus of Vincennes University is an indenture drawn January 2, 1804, between William Henry Harrison and George Wallace. Harrison on that date sold to Wallace for \$500 a tract

beginning at a stake on the Northeast side of a  
place situate about 200 yards above Fort Knox

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54. A copy of the Buntin Map, which is on file with the Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, accompanies this report. Mrs. Florence G. Watts of Vincennes has written an article titled, "Fort Knox: Frontier Outpost on the Wabash, 1787-1816," which appeared in Vol.62, No.1, 51-78, *IMH*, in which she states the case for positioning the site of Fort Knox on Buntin Street. In 1966 the Indiana Sesqui-Centennial Commission erected an historical marker for Fort Knox No.1 on the corner of Buntin and 1st Streets.

at Vincennes aforesaid, called the Stone Landing [today's Indiana Avenue] and on the Southeast bank of the River Wabash; thence running North 37-1/2 degrees East 50 perches and 3/10 of a perch to lands of Robert Buntin, Esquire, and late belonging to Nicholas Cardinal; thence running with the line of Robert Buntin lands South 38-1/2 degrees East 135 perches and 5/10 of a perch to a road called the Elm Road; thence with the road South 10 degrees West 33 perches and 6/10 of a perch; thence still with the same road South 51-1/2 degrees West 30 perches and 6/10 of a perch to lands or lots belonging to Francis Vigo; thence with the line of the same North 38 1/2 degrees West 138 perches and 5/10 of a perch to the place of beginning containing 49 acres and 25-1/2 perches.<sup>55</sup>

Tom Emison, a Vincennes attorney and President of the Indiana Historical Society, called this document to my attention on June 5, 1967. A plat of a map locating this tract prepared by Emison accompanies this report.

This indenture pinpoints Fort Knox, No.1, on the Wabash, near today's Indiana Avenue.

Further evidence locating the post at this site is, "A Map of the Vincennes Tract on the Wabash," prepared by Surveyor Thomas Freeman in September, 1803. The Freeman map locates a fort east of the town and one mile west of the mouth of Mill Creek, today's Kelson Creek. This is about where the Harrison indenture places the fort. A map has been prepared locating the fort as shown on the Freeman Map and its relation to the property described in the Harrison indenture. The Buntin Street site would be one and one-half miles southwest of the point where Kelson Creek debouches into the Wabash.<sup>56</sup>

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Service enter into a cooperative agreement with Vincennes University, and that an archeological project be undertaken with the goal of pinpointing and excavating Fort Knox No.1.

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55. Recorded in Deed Book D, pp.61-62; Re-recorded May 30, 1818; Present Record, B-155.

56. The Freeman Map is on file in Record Group No.49, Cartographic Branch, NA.



The Fort Knox No.1 story is one that is of tremendous interest to the Visitor. In his campaigns of 1778 and 1779 George Rogers Clark won for the United States the Old Northwest, but in the period after the Treaty of Paris, Great Britain sought to hold onto this vast and rich region. British agents offered aid and advice, and the Miami Indian Confederation was born. Battles were fought in the war which ensued surpassing in casualties those waged between the army and the Great Plains Indians of the 1860s and 1870s. The battle of Fallen Timbers broke the back of Little Turtle's Confederacy, and the Treaty of Greenville brought peace for a number of years to the Northwest Territory. The Service has the opportunity and obligation at George Rogers Clark National Historical Park to interpret this vital and moving story.

During the 1780s the Continental Congress enacted two significant pieces of legislation--the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Ordinance of 1787 creating the Northwest Territory. The acts, and the enduring results flowing from them, should be interpreted at George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Territorial Years

By act of Congress approved May 7, 1800, the Territory northwest of the Ohio was divided by a line from opposite the mouth of the Kentucky River to Fort Recovery and then due north to Canada. The area to the east retained the title "Territory of the United States Northwest of the River Ohio," and anticipated early admission to statehood. The remainder of the Northwest Territory became Indiana Territory with Vincennes the seat of government. Those championing this legislation had pointed out that certain sections of the territory were

subject to several serious inconveniences which require redress from the general Government; most of the evils which they at present experience are . . . to be imputed to the very great extent of country at present comprised under their imperfect government. The Territory Northwest of the Ohio, from southeast to northwest [is] 1,500 miles and the actual distance of travelling from the places of holding courts the most remote from each other, is 1,300 miles and in a country so sparsely peopled, and so little reclaimed from its native wilderness, this distance alone secures to present barriers almost insuperable against the exercise of the functions of government.<sup>1</sup>

The act of separation was to take effect on July 4, 1800. It was necessary, then, that steps be initiated at once to constitute the new government. President John Adams already had his mind made up when the organizing act was passed concerning the territorial officials, and on the Tuesday following his signing of the bill, he nominated a young Virginian, Captain William Henry Harrison, as governor of Indiana Territory. Harrison had served as an officer in the Indian wars, had been secretary of the Northwest Territory, and at

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1. *Annals of Congress*, 6 Cong., Appendix, 1320.

the time of his appointment was the delegate from that Territory to Congress. When the news reached Vincennes preparations were instituted for receiving the new Governor.<sup>2</sup>

Life at a frontier post would be difficult for the Virginia aristocrat. Besides, there was scarcely a western post at that time with a reputation as objectionable as that of Vincennes. Its location away from the main routes of travel, the difficulty of reaching it, its notoriety for scenes of drunken brawls and Indian fights, made Harrison hesitate before accepting the position. For territorial secretary, President Adams chose John Gibson, while William Clarke, Henry Vanderburgh, and John Griffen were the first judges of the territorial court. Of Clarke little is known. Vanderburgh was a New Yorker who removed to Vincennes soon after service in the Revolutionary army. If he had had any legal training it was apparently unknown to his associates. On circuit, and in serving under special commission in courts of jail delivery, he seems to have done much of the work of the General Court in the Western counties. Little tangible evidence remains of his ultimate professional attainments, but his services seem to have been satisfactory. Judge Griffen was a Virginian of some elegant accomplishments and fond of social pleasures, a man of no great force, and an intriguer.<sup>3</sup>

The census of 1800 gave to Indiana Territory 5,641 whites and Negroes grouped about small villages which were nearly all located near the boundaries and as widely separated as possible. At Michilimackinac, the extreme northern settlement, there were 251 citizens. The fur traders scattered around the Great Lakes were estimated at 300. In the settlement at Green Bay were 50 people. At Prairie du Chien were 65. Lower down the Mississippi the settlements were more

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2. Dorothy B. Goebel, *William Henry Harrison: A Political Biography* (Indianapolis, 1926), 11-12, 36-37. Harrison belonged to a prominent Virginia family. His father was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and afterwards Governor of Virginia.

3. *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809*, XV-XVI; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 174-175.

extensive. In and about Cahokia were 719 people. Just below, in Belle Fontaine Township, were 286. At L'Aigle there were 250. Kas-kaskia and Prairie du Rocher had 679. Mitchel Township had 334. At Fort Massac on the Ohio were 90 souls. In Clark's Grant there were 929. In the interior there was nothing that could be called a settlement except Vincennes, which had 714 inhabitants, while in its immediate vicinity were 819 more. There were 55 fur traders scattered along the Wabash and about 100 at Peoria on the Illinois River. Of the total population, 163 were free Negroes and 135 slaves. The only pure Anglo-Saxon settlements were in Clark's Grant, although there were Americans scattered through the French settlements, and a large number of them at Vincennes.<sup>4</sup>

Harrison did not reach Vincennes until January 10, 1801. In his absence the government devolved on the Secretary, John Gibson. Whether he had any instructions from the Governor cannot be determined. At any rate Secretary Gibson proceeded, immediately on his arrival on July 22, 1800, to establish the new government. He appointed justices for the various courts, clerks, a sheriff, a justice of the peace, a treasurer, and a recorder. On August 1 the work of organizing the militia was taken up and a corps of officers commissioned. At the same time appointments were filled out for the civil officers of St. Clair County.<sup>5</sup>

William Henry Harrison on arriving at Vincennes in January 1801 was lodged at the home of Colonel Vigo, who had offered the builder of his house 20 extra guineas for its completion before the Governor came. Harrison accepted the great parlor, a large room paved with alternate blocks of ash and walnut, and used it as a reception room until his own home was built.<sup>6</sup> A Negro servant had accompanied Harrison on his journey from Berkeley in Virginia. Inaugurating his duties on January 12, Harrison swore in William Clarke, the Chief Justice, who in turn swore in the youthful Governor, also Secretary Gibson, and Judges Vanderburgh and Griffen. The five men then sat "for the purpose of adopting . . . laws," and Harrison's long rule

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4. Dunn, *Indiana, A Redemption from Slavery*, 295-296.

5. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 176.

6. *History of Knox and Daviess Counties*, 242.

over Indiana Territory began. A number of routine measures, such as the organization of the lower courts and militia, and the altering of county lines, were sanctioned.<sup>7</sup>

During this period a practice developed that subsequently caused serious criticism of the Governor. On February 1 Secretary Gibson was appointed a justice of the peace. Three days later, he was named county recorder for Knox County; on the 4th he was made a judge of the quarter sessions court. No doubt there was a shortage of qualified men to fill these responsible offices, but the American people have never accepted the idea of an office-holding class.<sup>8</sup>

In that part of the Northwest Territory organized as Indiana Territory there were two counties--St. Clair and Knox. Wayne County had been organized by Governor St. Clair on August 15, 1796. It included what is today northwestern Ohio, that part of Indiana Territory north of a line from Fort Wayne to the southern tip of Lake Michigan, a small part of today's state of Illinois, eastern Wisconsin, and all of present day Michigan. The county seat was Detroit, which, with nearly all the settled part of the county, remained in the Northwest Territory by the division of 1800.

The Ohio Enabling Act of April 30, 1802, established the northern boundary of that state on a line east from the southern tip of Lake Michigan and added the territory to the north to Indiana Territory, as well as the triangular strip or "gore" lying between the Kentucky River - Fort Recovery line and a line drawn from the mouth of the Big Miami to Fort Recovery.<sup>9</sup>

Residents of Indiana Territory were exempt from that part of the Ordinance of 1787 which required 5,000 free adult males for 2d-grade territorial status and the privilege of electing a legislature. Within a year malcontents and office seekers, who feared a cleanup by Governor Harrison, were seeking to arouse sentiment for representative government. Slavery as well as personal politics may have played a part. Harrison opposed the advance to 2d-grade

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7. Proclamation, January 10, 1801, *Messages & Letters of William Henry Harrison*, Logan Esarey, ed, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, 1922), 1 20-21.

8. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 176.

9. *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 3, 76-78; 7, 3-4.

at this time and called attention to the heavier taxes which would result, but by 1804 the Governor was willing to put the subject before the voters. In the election in September 338 (of the 400 who voted in the Territory) favored the advance. The counties nearest Vincennes gave the largest affirmative vote, the more remote voted against the change. Harrison's proclamation of December 4 proclaimed Indiana Territory to have passed into the 2d-grade and called for an election on January 3, 1805, to choose the nine members of the Territorial House of Representatives.<sup>10</sup>

The proclamation for the September election had not reached northern portion of the Territory (Wayne County) in time for a vote. Detroit inhabitants, separated from Vincennes by more than 300 miles of wilderness, claiming the need of better protection against the British and Indians for the almost 4,000 people in their section, and opposing further tax burdens, had petitioned for a separate government. The previous year a bill for separation had passed the Senate on December 6, 1803, but was scuttled in the House of Representatives, where it was objected to because of the additional expense involved. Encouraged by the vote of the Senate, the inhabitants of the Detroit area again petitioned Congress when it convened in 1804. This time Congress listened and established Michigan Territory by law enacted on January 11, 1805, with boundaries to include that part of Indiana Territory north of a line drawn east through the southern tip of Lake Michigan until it should intersect Lake Erie, and east of a line through the middle of Lake Michigan and then north to Canada.<sup>11</sup>

More than 150 miles west of Vincennes, separated by prairies, forests, and swamps, and connected by a trace, "through a dreary and inhospitable wilderness," lay the most important settlements of the Illinois country. The commercial and religious ties of the old French settlers were closer to St. Louis and New Orleans than to the Americans. The question of land titles had alienated many Frenchmen, while territorial taxes, especially the poll tax, furnished further grounds for discontent.

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10. *Annals of Congress*, 6th Cong., 1st Sess. 1498; *U. S. Statutes at Large*, 2, 58; Kettleborough (ed.) *Constitution Making in Indiana*, 1, 41-43.

11. Goebel, *William Henry Harrison*, *IHSP*, 14; *Territorial Papers*, 7, 99, 118; *U. S. Statutes at Large*, 2, 309-310; Kettleborough (ed.), *Constitution Making in Indiana*, 1, 44-47.

Among the Americans two factions developed. Both were pro-slavery, but differed in the methods to be used to achieve their object. One group was favorable to Governor Harrison and his administrative policies, the other opposed the Governor and demanded the separation of the Illinois counties (St. Clair and Randolph) from Indiana Territory. When Michael Jonas, Harrison's friend in the Kaskaskia Land Office, won the enmity of this latter group through his exposé of fraudulent land claims on the part of some of their leaders, his ouster also became an issue. The people in eastern Indiana favored the separation, because they thought it would aid them in repealing an odious indenture law, which had been recently enacted by the territorial legislature permitting slavery. They likewise hoped that with the Illinois country out of the territory they could shift the territorial capital to some more accessible point than Vincennes. With the cooperation of the anti-slavery men of Dearborn County in the eastern part of Indiana Territory, the anti-Harrison group in the legislature elected Jesse B. Thomas of Dearborn, as delegate to Congress in 1808, on the issue of division of the Territory and the establishment of Illinois as a separate territory. Petitions to Congress were referred to a committee with Thomas as chairman, and on February 3, 1809, President Thomas Jefferson signed the law to take effect March 1, which set off Illinois Territory by the Wabash River from its mouth to Vincennes, then by a meridian line due north to the international boundary. From March 1, 1809, until Indiana's admission as a state in 1816, Indiana Territory included what is now the present state of Indiana, but with a northern boundary ten miles farther south; that portion of the upper peninsula of Michigan due north of Indiana, and the tip of the Green Bay Peninsula.<sup>12</sup>

Governor Harrison was an excellent choice as territorial chief executive. Having crossed the Appalachians in his early manhood his tastes and ideals were western. His education and training raised him above the typical pioneer. He avoided the Puritanic, Federalistic, infallible manner of Governor St. Clair without falling into the opposite, half-fellow manner of many popular politicians. His service in the army further cultivated his naturally generous nature. His marriage to the daughter of Judge John Cleves Symmes brought him a competence and removed him from "the temptations to land-jobbing and defrauding the Indians, practices which have dis-

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12. *Annals of Congress*, 8th Cong., 1 Sess. 489; *Territorial Papers*, 7, 129, 140, 544, 627; Kettleborough (ed.), *Constitution Making in Indiana*, 1, 54-56.

graced" the administrations of many territorial governors. Lewis Wallace, who later served as a territorial governor in New Mexico, summarized Harrison's governmental rights and powers:

He was clothed with power more nearly imperial than any ever exercised by one man in the Republic. He was authorized to adopt and publish such laws, civil and criminal, as were best adapted to the condition of the Territory; he could arbitrarily create townships and counties, and appoint civil officers, and militia officers under the grade of general. Most extraordinary of all, however, to him belonged the confirmation of an important class of land grants. In this regard his authority was absolute. Other approval or countersign was not required. The application was to him originally; his signature was the perfect evidence of title.<sup>13</sup>

Harrison had been appointed to the territorial governorship of Indiana in 1800 by John Adams, a Federalist. To secure his reappointment, it was necessary for him to make a favorable impression on the third President, Thomas Jefferson, a Republican. A considerable correspondence was carried on between them, Jefferson recommending to Harrison that in his appointments he reject dishonest men, those called federalists, and land jobbers. In 1802 the Governor ordered that the new town laid out as the county seat of Clark County be named Jeffersonville, and wrote to the President advising him of the honor.<sup>14</sup>

Governor Harrison's duties kept him away from Vincennes much of the time. In his absence the duties of the office fell chiefly on his Territorial Secretary, John Gibson. He was a Pennsylvanian by birth, and, at the time of his appointment, he was 60 years old. He had been present at the capture of Fort Duquesne by the British and had served under Lord Dunmore at the battle of Point Pleasant. During the Revolution he had served with Washington. While Harrison had had less administrative training than St. Clair, Gibson, though possessed of a fair education, was inferior in this respect to Harrison. Gibson was a plain, blunt, honest man, who quietly performed

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13. Lewis Wallace, *Life of General Ben Harrison* (Philadelphia, 1888), 27.

14. *Messages and Letters*, 1, 127.



apparently acceptable service in a number of offices. "The Journal of the Proceedings of the Executive Government of the Indiana Territory," kept by him, is the best record we have of territorial Indiana.<sup>15</sup>

His position as Superintendent of Indian Affairs occupied much of Harrison's time and energy. It was the policy of the Federal Government, and the all but unanimous desire of the frontiersmen, that the public lands be opened to settlement. It thus became his duty to secure from the Indians the public domain in Indiana. By a series of treaties--the first at Vincennes, September 17, 1802; the second at Fort Wayne, June 7, 1803; the third at Vincennes, August 13, 1803; the fourth at Vincennes, August 18, 1804; the fifth at St. Louis, November 3, 1804; the sixth at Grouseland, August 21, 1805; the seventh at Vincennes, December 30, 1805; and the eighth at Fort Wayne, September 30, 1809--Governor Harrison succeeded in extinguishing the Indians' title to much of the land in the territory south of the future site of Indianapolis.

One of these treaties, the Treaty of Grouseland, was signed in the beautiful home Governor Harrison constructed at Vincennes. When he returned to Vincennes in May 1801, Governor Harrison brought his family with him. Taking advantage of the excellent opportunities afforded an agriculturalist, Harrison occupied himself during his first summer at Vincennes in clearing and fencing a 300-acre farm purchased, it appears, from Colonel Vigo. "I am much pleased with this country," he wrote to James Findley of Cincinnati. "Nothing can exceed its beauty and fertility." But until he could be assured of reappointment by President Jefferson in 1803, he postponed plans to build. In company with the officers posted at Fort Knox, the Governor would spend an occasional afternoon "making war upon partridges, grouse, and fish."<sup>16</sup>

Upon learning that President Jefferson had determined to continue him in office, Harrison arranged in 1802 to have a brick mansion, with its outbuildings, constructed on the 300-acre tract he had purchased. He contracted with Samuel Thompson to mould the brick, paying for them with 400 acres of land, valued at \$1,000. His was the first brick mansion built in Indiana Territory. Of Georgian style, it resembled the

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15. *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809*, XV-XVI; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 183-184.

16. Harrison to Findley, Oct. 15, 1801, *Messages & Letters*, 1, 34-35; Freeman Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe: William Henry Harrison and His Times* (New York, 1939), 36.

Governor's native Berkeley, two and a half stories high, with four great chimneys, and 13 large rooms. On the first floor, as at Berkeley, were two rooms of unusual size, one designed for council meetings and entertainment, the other the family living room illuminated by firelight and candles. Wainscotings of polished black walnut, handcarved mantels, sashes, and doors were the product of skilled workmen in Chillicothe and Pittsburgh. The window glass, ordered nearly two years before, had been brought from England.

The Harrisons named the place "Grouseland" and here they entertained many prominent people. The Governor's receptions in the west parlor, and the balls, when the house would be brilliantly lighted with hundreds of candles, were outstanding occasions. It was here Aaron Burr visited Harrison, and on the lawn and in the nearby walnut grove were held many important conferences with Indian leaders.<sup>17</sup>

The land on which Grouseland stands had comprised Lots Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the Upper Prairie Survey, which included all the river front from Hickman to Hart Street, running back to the Highland Hills, and containing 280 acres. The ground on which the mansion stands, and that constituting the original yard, garden, and outlots, embraced all of that which is bounded on the west by the Wabash, Scott Street on the south, the Park on the east, and today's Harrison Street on the north. In September 1815 a plot of Harrison's addition was drawn, and it was legalized in 1817 by the legislature.

Several months after the Governor and his family moved into Grouseland in early 1804, he received a disturbing letter from Secretary of War Dearborn. The Secretary warned Harrison that Little Turtle and his son-in-law, William Wells, of the Miamis, had been upset about the Delaware Treaty of 1804. They claimed that the Delawares had no right to sell their land to the United States. Chief Billy Patterson of the Delawares, encouraged by the Miami leaders, now declared that Harrison and his people had "got them to sign a Deed for their lands without their knowledge."<sup>18</sup> These tribal messages, together with a plea that Harrison be removed from office, were forwarded to Secretary Dearborn, over the Governor's head. Harrison, who had based his treaty upon the Miami-Delaware agreement at Fort Wayne, was incensed at this duplicity.

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17. George E. Greene, *History of Old Vincennes and Knox County, Indiana*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1911), 1, 282.

18. Billy Patterson to Wells, April 5, 1805, *Messages & Letters*, 1, 122.

Captain Wells, who was the Indian Agent at Fort Wayne, appeared to be in league with the Indians against the government. Wells, Harrison reported, was known to be systematically cheating the tribes. Not another man in the Territory, the Governor declared, possessed as much "unaccountably acquired wealth."<sup>19</sup>

Harrison sent Secretary Gibson and Colonel Vigo to interview the chiefs. Confronted by these agents, the tribesmen agreed that Wells had been talking too much and that his talk was unbecoming to a whiteman. The emissaries were delighted to learn that Wells and Little Turtle had lost much of their influence among the chiefs, and their agitation against the Governor had been attended with suspicion of the sponsors. The principal Miami and Delaware leaders agreed to confer again with Governor Harrison at Vincennes, while the Potawatomi chiefs were also summoned to satisfy any complaints they might voice.<sup>20</sup>

Early in August 1805, Little Turtle and Peccan of the Miamis, Buckongahelas, Teteboxti, Richardville, and other principal Delaware and Potawatomi chiefs arrived with Captain Wells. They stalked into the council room at Grouseland. Harrison and an imposing group of territorial officials awaited them.

Secretary Gibson traced the lines of the Delaware cession in charcoal as the Indians squatted about the floor. The Miamis had declared at the outset that they had yielded only hunting and settling rights to the Delawares who could claim no right to sell. Uniting with the Potowatomis, a poor but numerous tribe, they demanded an increase in their annuities. Harrison bided his time, setting the Miamis against the Delawares to see which would first yield their claim. When the Miamis won, the Governor informed them that since the Delaware claim had been legally settled by treaty, further payment for the disputed cession was out of the question. To gain additional annuities, the Miamis should consider cession of additional land.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Harrison to Dearborn, March 3, 1805, *Ibid.*, 1, 76-82.

20. Gibson & Vigo to Harrison, July 6, 1805, *Messages & Letters*, 1, 141-147.

21. Harrison to Dearborn, August 26, 1805, *Ibid.*, 1, 162-163.

The ensuing Treaty of Grouseland brought a cession to the United States of nearly 2,000,000 acres extending eastward from the ceded Delaware tract, past Clark's Grant as far as the Kentucky River-Port Recovery line. Harrison took precautions to make the agreement binding. By the first article, the Delawares relinquished whatever claim they possessed to the land; Article Two acknowledged cession of the whole by the Miami tribe and its branches, the Weas and Eel River Miamis. Considering the number of Indians involved, Harrison granted a slightly greater compensation than was usually allowed by the Indian Office. In addition it was politic to satisfy the Potawatomis, even though their country lay miles to the north. Gifts of clothing, saddles, and hunting weapons to the value of \$4,000 were delivered, and \$1,600 in additional annuities for ten years promised. Harrison provided several of the principal chiefs with suits of the white man's clothes.<sup>22</sup>

The Treaty of Grouseland was climaxed by much good feeling and praise for the Governor. From Cincinnati, gateway of immigration, came the comment, "The people are much pleased with the purchase made by your Excellency."<sup>23</sup> "Highly satisfactory & pleasing,"<sup>24</sup> was the response from the Secretary of War. But the greatest compliment came from the friendly Delawares. In the future, they declared, they would hold the United States in the same regard as they had their former fathers the French.<sup>25</sup>

The Indians who met with General Wayne at Fort Greenville in 1795 were a beaten, humiliated band, defeated in the field by their enemies, the Americans, and deceived by their protectors, the British. Little Turtle and his generation had had enough war, and were ready to bury the tomahawk. For 15 years thereafter the Indians of the Wabash country had lived in peace with the white man. By 1810 a generation had grown up that had forgotten the miseries of the wars and knew only of the constant encroachments of the Americans.

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22. Harrison to Dearborn, August 26, 1805, *Ibid.*, 164.

23. Chambers to Harrison, Oct. 17, 1805, English Collection, *IHS*.

24. Dearborn to Harrison, Oct. 11, 1805, *M & L*, 1, 169.

25. Harrison to Jefferson, August 29, 1805, *Jefferson Papers*, Library of Congress.

The chief causes of the growing dissatisfaction of the Indians were the steady advance of white settlements into their hunting grounds, the enormous quantity of whiskey peddled to them at exorbitant prices--Harrison estimated that 6,000 gallons were distributed annually to the 600 warriors on the Wabash--and the continual meddling of the British. The fur trade had been all but ruined by Napoleon's Continental System. All these factors served to agitate the Indians, while British agents fanned the growing anger until it burst into flames.<sup>26</sup>

By this time, a new Indian leader had arisen--Tecumseh. Born on Mad River, near Piqua, Ohio, Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, were the sons of a Shawnee father and a Creek mother. Tecumseh had fought under Little Turtle against General Wayne. He was known among the tribes as a fearless, upright, generous warrior, an opposer of the white man, especially of the white man's vices. It was his ambition to unite all the tribes of the Old Northwest into a grand confederation, and drive the settlers across the Ohio.

The Prophet is said to have been a drunkard in his younger years; but he had given up whiskey and had become a prophet, a spiritual leader of his people. He preached against drunkenness, witches, and the civilization borrowed from the white man. Both he and his brother pleaded with their people to return to the customs of their ancestors, and renounce the vices of civilization.

The Shawnees had left their homes in Ohio and, mingling with the Delawares, had settled on the headwaters of White River, near today's Anderson, Indiana. From there the fame of the Prophet had spread. Hundreds of Indians left their villages around the Great Lakes and made pilgrimages to see and hear him. His visions and sermons held the redmen spellbound. Tecumseh took advantage of the popularity of his brother. He spoke with the visiting tribesmen, winning many of their chiefs over to his views. He taught that the Indians all belonged to one family, and should have one central government. Especially did he insist on their common ownership of the land--the common hunting grounds. No tribe, nor man, he told his followers, had a right to sell an acre of the hunting grounds to the whiteman. It had been left to them by their forebearers as a common inheritance. The chiefs had no right to barter it away for a pewter ringlet or a keg of whiskey.

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<sup>26</sup>*American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 799, 801-804; *Ibid.*, 2, 84; *Ibid.*, 3, 453, 462.

On September 30, 1809, the chiefs concluded a treaty with Governor Harrison at Fort Wayne whereby they ceded 3,000,000 acres of land for the petty trifle of \$10,000--one-third of a cent per acre. The Shawnees and Wyandots, both refugee tribes, having no claims to the ceded lands, joined in a bitter protest, threatening to kill the chiefs who signed the treaty, and to murder the first whitemen to settle on the purchase.

Meanwhile, the Prophet was moving to strengthen his position. Several Shawnees, including an old chief, were put to death by his followers for practicing witchcraft. Fearing an outbreak if the Prophet's influence were not curbed, Governor Harrison notified the Shawnees to stop the agitation. He denounced the Prophet as a fool, as an agent working for the British at Malden, and demanded that the northern Indians be sent back to their villages.

The Shawnees followed the advice of the Governor and drove out the Prophet and his followers. The Prophet traveled west and settled on the right bank of the Wabash, near the mouth of the Tippecanoe. Harrison's letter had demonstrated to Tecumseh that his hold on the Indians was not strong enough. He accordingly became more cautious, but he continued his work of organization by visiting the tribes, and cementing his alliances as best he could. The Prophet continued his campaign more boldly than heretofore. In August 1808 he visited Vincennes, and discussed with Governor Harrison their differences.

Prophetstown, as the village on the Wabash was known, soon became a worse nuisance to the whites than Andersonstown had been. British influences became more apparent.<sup>27</sup> Now to agitate the situation came the Treaty of Fort Wayne, whereupon Tecumseh renewed his campaign against the United States by threats to slay all the chiefs who had participated and drive the whites back across the Appalachians, if the land ceded were not returned. So bold were his preparations for war and so insolent was he toward the peaceful advances of Governor Harrison that Harrison finally in July 1810 sent a speech of chastisement to the Prophet and Tecumseh. Referring to this, Harrison reported:

No particular answer was returned by Mr. [Joseph] Barron [the interpreter]. It is to be brought by the brother of the Prophet who will be here in a few days. The brother is really the efficient

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27. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 203-208.

man--the Moses of the family. I have not seen him since the Treaty of Greenville and should not know him. He is described by all as a bold, active, sensible man, daring in the extreme, and capable of any undertaking.<sup>28</sup>

Harrison had learned from Barron that Tecumseh would bring with him to their meeting "about thirty of his principal men and as he knew that the young men were fond of attending on such occasions, that there would probably be one hundred in all." The Prophet had indicated that the Governor might expect "a great many more." Besides the expense of providing for the Indians for from 10 to 15 days, Harrison fretted about having them near. A messenger was dispatched with a request that only the chiefs and a few of the younger braves come to the council. Michare Brouillette, an interpreter, was sent up the Wabash on August 8 "to inforce the necessity of their compliance."<sup>29</sup>

Governor Harrison was satisfied with Tecumseh's assurance that he would bring only a few men, although on August 12, 1810, Captain George R. C. Floyd, commanding at Fort Knox, counted 80 canoes filled with warriors "painted in the most terrific manner." Floyd halted the fleet and examined the canoes. The Indians were prepared for battle. "They were headed," Floyd wrote his wife, "by the brother of The Prophet, who . . . is one of the finest men I ever saw--about six feet high, straight with large fine features and altogether a daring, bold-looking fellow." As Indian canoes carried from two to ten men each; Floyd estimated the force at 400.<sup>30</sup>

It was late in the afternoon of the 12th when Tecumseh reached Vincennes and was escorted to Grouseland, where Harrison was seated on his porch, reading and smoking. The Governor arose to meet the chief, who was neatly dressed in buckskin. His small arms were presents from the British, a tomahawk mounted in silver and a hunting knife in a leather case. Harrison stepped down, extended his hand, and offered the chief the hospitality of his home, but Tecumseh asked merely to pitch his tent "under that elm tree."<sup>31</sup>

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28. Harrison to Secretary of War, Aug. 6, 1810, *Messages and Letters*, 1, 456.

29. *Ibid.*, 457-458.

30. Floyd to Wife, Aug. 14, 1810; Benjamin Drake, *Life of Tecumseh*, (1841), 125.

31. William S. Hatch, *A Chapter in the History of the War of 1812* . . . (Cincinnati, 1872) 113-115

The Indians showed no signs of hostility as they went quietly into camp on Prairie Creek. A council which drew many spectators to Grouseland opened on the third day of Tecumseh's visit. Harrison had set out a neat row of chairs on the lawn which, on the side toward the river, was fenced in by catalpa posts. The territorial officials, including Secretary Gibson, Interpreter Barron, and Captain Floyd, were seated; Lieutenant Jesse Jennings and 12 regulars from Fort Knox were conspicuously present and 100 militiamen were lodged within the house. Tecumseh, bringing possibly one-half his force, 200 warriors, halted at a distance and eyed the enclosure. The Indians hated the white man's fences. Harrison sent Barron to usher the chief forward but a request was brought back that the council be held in Grouseland's walnut grove. So the chairs were removed and the enclosure set out in the grove, southwest of the mansion.

Harrison suggested that his distinguished visitor sit among them; "It is the wish of the Great Father, the President of the United States, that you do so." Tecumseh declined, "My Father?" --The Sun is my father, the Earth is my mother--and on her bosom I will recline!" With these words he stretched himself upon the ground.<sup>32</sup>

In fearless, straightforward language, Tecumseh set forth his dream of an Indian Confederacy, his belief in the common ownership of the hunting grounds, and his determination to kill all the chiefs who had signed the Treaty of Fort Wayne. There could be no peace between the Indians and the whites, he declared, until the land was redeemed.

Governor Harrison, in turn, pointed out to Tecumseh that if it had been the intention of the Great Spirit that the Indians should form one nation he would have given them one language instead of a score. He told Tecumseh that the Shawnees had no claims whatever on the ceded lands, and that they were interesting themselves where they had no business. The land in question had been purchased from the Miamis, who owned it. Tecumseh's eyes flashed with anger as he denied these statements, and charged the Governor and the President with sharp practice toward ignorant tribesmen.

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32. Benjamin Drake, *Life of Tecumseh*, ( 1841) 126; Freeman Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe: William Henry Harrison and His Times* (New York, 1939), 73; Cawthorn, *History of Vincennes*, 28.



Threats of violence voiced by the warriors now became so alarming that when a number of braves leaped to their feet and milled about in a threatening manner, Secretary Gibson, who understood the Shawnee tongue, ordered a militia officer to call up the guard. After this incident, Governor Harrison put out the Council Fire and refused to confer further. The Indians returned to their camp peacefully and the next morning, after profuse apologies by Tecumseh, negotiations were resumed and continued for another week. But when the Council Fire was extinguished, nothing had been accomplished toward effecting a lasting peace.<sup>33</sup>

In the months that followed the settlers in Indiana Territory continued to be harassed by the Indians. Horses were stolen. Several white people were murdered. Harrison was aroused by the reports flooding in to Vincennes, telling of Indian preparations for war. Writing the Secretary of War in April 1811 Harrison observed, "I have pursued the President's directions with regard to the use of pacific and conciliatory measures with the Indians," but, in spite of this, Tecumseh and the Prophet, encouraged by the British agents of Malden, continued to enlarge their following. "Nothing but the great talents of Tecumseh could keep together this heterogeneous mass which compose the Prophet's force," declared Harrison.<sup>34</sup>

A pirogue laden with salt to be delivered to the tribes farther up the Wabash was seized by the Prophet's people in June 1811. As soon as the boatmen returned to Vincennes he reported the loss to Harrison, who dispatched Captain Walter Wilson and Interpreter Barron to Prophetstown, with a speech to the offenders. In his reply dated July 4, 1811, Tecumseh stated that he would be with Harrison in Vincennes in 18 days. He asserted, "when I come to Vincennes to see you, all will be settled in peace and happiness."<sup>35</sup>

Harrison dispatched a sentinel to keep watch along the river. Several days later that officer galloped into Vincennes with news that a formidable war party was descending the Wabash, while numerous Indians were approaching by land. But Tecumseh, for some unexplained reason, halted his followers some distance upstream for

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33. Harrison to Secretary of War, Aug. 22, 1810, *Messages and Letters*, 1, 460-461.

34. Harrison to Dearborn, April 1811, *Ibid.*, 490.

35. Tecumseh to Harrison, July 4, 1811, *Ibid.*, 529.

what purpose one could only speculate. The suspense mounted. The editor of the *Western Sun* reported, "53 canoes have certainly been counted . . . and a number [of Indians] have come by land--we cannot estimate the whole at less than 250 or 300 men . . . . What can be the cause of this delay but to put us off our guard." Harrison dispatched Captain Wilson to discover what was on foot but Tecumseh only temporized. After delaying five days to rally his force, Tecumseh re-embarked his warriors.<sup>36</sup>

On July 27, 1811, a fleet of 60 canoes pulled into the stone landing on the east side of the Wabash. Three hundred warriors with their chiefs, followed by a few women and children, swarmed up the rocky hillside to the woods above. Camp was made a little above Vincennes. Preparations for feeding the Indians were simple enough--a handful or two of parched corn was considered a day's ration for each redman. Tecumseh had promised Captain Wilson that he would bring only a few men, but fearing a ruse to cover the long threatened attack on Vincennes, Governor Harrison had called out three companies of militia. He paraded them through the streets with a troop of dragoons, and "by some management in marching and changing quarters" made the three companies appear as four or five. Night and day patrols of horse and foot were active; the Indian encampment was closely watched.<sup>37</sup>

The loud clatter of arms carried a soothing note, yet--for fear of night attack--the citizens could hardly sleep. Harrison wished to get the council over quickly. He requested first that Tecumseh meet him on Monday, but not until the day following did the chief send word he was ready. Tecumseh inquired if armed troops would attend the council, in which case his warriors would be armed. Harrison served notice that only the dismounted dragoons would be present, but he concealed a force of militia inside Grouseland, while body of riflemen loitered conspicuously along the path by which Tecumseh was to approach. Not until late in the afternoon, of July 30, as rain clouds threatened, did Tecumseh finally make his approach bringing nearly 200 warriors with him.<sup>38</sup>

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36. *Western Sun*, July 27, 1811.

37. Harrison to Eustis, Aug.6, 1811, *Messages and Letters*, 1, 542-546.

38. Harrison to Eustis, Aug.13, 1811, *Ibid.*, 1, 543-546.

It was impossible to make an agreement with Tecumseh, who declared that after an extended tour to visit the Creeks, Choctaws, and Osages, he would return and then travel to Washington to see President James Madison. The conference broke up on Wednesday, July 31. Harrison was unable to get the majority of the Indians to leave until Saturday. Tecumseh did not depart until August 5, when he started down the Wabash with 20 men on his visit to the Southern nations. Harrison believed that Tecumseh had meant to attack, and that he had only changed his plans because of the size of the force turned out by the Governor.<sup>39</sup>

Governor Harrison had received orders from President Madison, early in 1811, to attack and disperse the Prophetstown Indians, if he deemed it in the interest of the United States. The 4th United States Infantry, Col. John P. Boyd commanding, was ordered to Vincennes from New England. Harrison issued an order calling for volunteers. By late September, Harrison had assembled in and around Vincennes a small army of about 1,000 officers and men.

Harrison started his force northward from its base at Fort Knox, No. 2, on September 26, and he reached the highlands at Terre Haute on October 3. Here a fort, named Fort Harrison, was built. The army left Fort Harrison on October 29, and pushed on toward Prophetstown. It now consisted of 910 officers and men, of whom 250 were regulars under Colonel Boyd.

On the night of November 6, Harrison and his troops made camp on the bank of Burnett Creek, one mile northwest of Prophetstown, near the Tippecanoe. There early on the morning of the 7th, the army was attacked by the Indians, perhaps 700 strong. The battle of Tippecanoe resulted in a defeat for the Prophet and his followers. On the 8th Harrison re-formed his battered battalions, and, after destroying Prophetstown with all its supplies, returned to Vincennes, reaching Fort Knox, No. 2, on November 18.<sup>40</sup>

The Prophet, following his defeat, left the Wabash and began agitating the Indians farther north and west--the Kickapoos, Winnehagos, and Potawatomis. War parties from these tribes were soon in the field.

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39. Harrison to Eustis, Aug. 6, 1811, *Ibid.*, 1, 542-546.

40. Harrison's Report, *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, 776.

Murders were frequent, and many of the frontier settlements were abandoned, the settlers falling back on the more populous communities such as Vincennes. Governor Harrison on April 16, 1812, issued orders alerting the militia to hold itself ready for immediate action.

On May 12, a grand council was held by the Indians on the Mississinewa. Twelve tribes were represented, and the council lasted two days. British agents again urged the tribes to unite for war, but the Indian speakers expressed opposition to the renewal of the struggle. The agents urged the redmen to visit Malden, where they would be presented with arms and ammunition. It seems that many of the Indians followed the advice of the British, because B. F. Stickney, the Indian agent at Fort Wayne, reported bands of Indians passing his post every day on their way to Canada.

Meanwhile, the Indiana frontier had been put in a state of defense. Blockhouses were erected at strategic points along a line from Fort Knox, No. 2, to Greenville. While the frontiersmen anxiously awaited the Indians' next move, the United States on June 18, 1812, declared war on Great Britain. As the westerners were eager to invade Canada, Maj. Gen. William Hull, after marching to Detroit, crossed the Detroit River with 2,200 soldiers and pushed slowly toward Malden. When the Indians threatened his flank, he fell back and surrendered Detroit on August 16 to Brig. Gen. Isaac Brock. The day before the Indians had taken Fort Dearborn. The fall of Forts Mackinac, Detroit, and Dearborn destroyed what little influence the Americans had among the Indians of the Old Northwest. Tecumseh hastened from tribe to tribe urging them to take up the tomahawk. All were to join in one grand offensive and sweep the Americans back across the Ohio.

Attacking forces moved against Forts Wayne and Harrison. The Indians invested Fort Wayne on the night of September 5, 1812. Harrison, who had resigned as governor, had been commissioned a brigadier general in the United States Army, and placed in command of all troops in the Northwest. From the base he had established at Piqua, Ohio, he sent a column to the relief of Fort Wayne. At the approach of the reinforcements on the 12th, the Indians retired.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 215-218; *American Heritage Historical Atlas*, 136-137; Blanchard, *Discovery and Conquest of the Northwest*, 289.

The American commander at Fort Harrison was Captain Zachary Taylor of the 7th Infantry. A murder had brought Taylor to the area, where he was to win his first victory on the road that was to lead to the White House. Lt. Jesse Jennings had taken a violent dislike for his superior, Capt. Thornton Posey, the commandant at Fort Knox, No.2. When beyond his superior's hearing, Jennings was in the habit of making threats against his life. Posey learned of this. On the evening of June 20, 1811, Jennings sought to force his way into his Captain's room. Squire Purcell, a gentleman living near the post, visited Fort Knox on the evening of June 24. Learning from one of the soldiers that Posey was not in his quarters, Purcell passed on and entered Jennings' quarters. Jennings was in bed reading, while McCall, the deputy contractor, was sitting in a chair. McCall picked up his bottle of grog and walked out, to be followed by Jennings. After waiting a few moments, Purcell followed. As he stepped out onto the parade ground, he heard a noise in Posey's quarters, "resembling the shoving or pushing about of chairs or tables." McCall now walked up with the bottle and asked Purcell to have a drink. They returned to Jennings' quarters, and as they were having a drink, they heard a sharp noise. McCall stepped to the window, and at that instant there was a "bang!" McCall cried, "the Lieutenant is killed."

Purcell and McCall dashed into Posey's quarters, where they saw Jennings lying on the floor in a welter of gore. Posey was standing within the door--his clothes "much torn about the bosom." He ordered a sergeant to "lay the lieutenant's hand straight, draw his boots, and have him decently laid out." He then invited Purcell and McCall to enter his room, and remarked that he had killed Jennings.

Taylor held the rank of captain in the 7th Infantry, when his immediate superior, Jam. George Rogers Clark Floyd, on July 1, ordered him to proceed to Vincennes and relieve Captain Posey as commandant

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42. *Miles' Weekly Register*, 1 (Baltimore, 1811-1812), 72. Posey's Company of the 7th Infantry had been recruited in and around Russellville, Kentucky, in the late autumn of 1808. From Russellville the company had proceeded to Newport, Kentucky, and in early 1810 had been ordered to Fort Knox, No.2. Returns for Captain Posey's Company, 7th Infantry, (National Archives). After the shooting, Captain Posey disappeared from the post.

at Fort Knox. The long-standing quarrel and killing had sapped the morale of the garrison, and Floyd hoped that Taylor could restore discipline.<sup>43</sup>

Taylor reached Fort Knox from Louisville on July 9, and the next day he assumed command of the post. His first task was to have an inventory made of the public property for which he was responsible. When he inspected the fort, he was shocked to discover that it was in a "defenceless state." In addition, the citizens were afraid that they would be attacked at any minute by hostile Indians. Lt. J. W. Albright was given the task of putting the post "in the best possible state of defence." Inspecting the troops, Taylor found that they were "extreamly in want of Clothing so much so that if they were ordered to march to any place at this time they must do so nearly naked unless they could be furnished before they moved." The soldiers, although it was mid-summer, had only about one-half their issue of summer uniforms. Medicines were also in short supply, and Taylor had the post surgeon make out requisitions for items that were lacking.<sup>44</sup>

With a firm disciplinarian in control, the troops quickly went back to soldiering. Within a month, the situation had improved to the point where Governor Harrison, on visiting the post, went a glowing report to the Secretary of War:

Captain Z. Taylor has been placed in command at the Garrison near this. To all the qualities which are esteemed for an amiable man he appears to unite those which form a good officer. In a short time he has been a commander he has rendered the Garrison defensible--before his arrival it resembled anything but a place of defence.<sup>45</sup>

Captain Taylor was not with Harrison at Tippecanoe. The War Department had ordered him first to Maryland and then to Kentucky. He was back in Indiana Territory in the spring of 1812 and was placed in charge at Fort Harrison. On September 3 two men were killed near the post. The next day a party of Indians appeared

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43. Holman Hamilton, "The Vincennes Days of Zachary Taylor," *IMH*, 37, No.1, 65-66. Zachary Taylor of Orange County, Virginia, had grown to manhood on the family farm in Jefferson County, Kentucky. In 1808 Taylor had entered the army as 1st lieutenant in the 7th Infantry.

44. Taylor to Eustis, July 16, 1811, *Ibid.*, 67-68.

45. Harrison to Eustis, Aug.6, 1811, *Ibid.*, 66-67.

before the fort and asked Captain Taylor to meet with them the next day. Taylor suspected that they were on the warpath.

That night he was awakened by the crack of a sentry's musket. Taylor rushed out of his quarters to discover that the Indians had fired the blockhouse at the lower corner of the fort. Of the 50-man garrison over one-half, including Taylor, were on sick call. By the time he had formed his men, the blockhouse, where all the supplies except the powder were kept, was ablaze, and the redmen were pressing the attack. The situation was grim. Nothing saved the fort from destruction but the spirit of the Captain. The gap in the wall, where the blockhouse had stood, was only 20 feet in width, and no Indian dared to pass.

At daybreak the Indians pulled back into the woods and invested the fort. It was necessary for Captain Taylor to get word to Vincennes and Fort Knox. After several failures, a messenger, on a dark night, succeeded in eluding the Indians and reaching Fort Knox. Col. William Russell, who was collecting an army at Vincennes to lead against the Indians, put his troops in motion and soon relieved Fort Harrison.<sup>46</sup>

The attack on Fort Harrison and the victories scored by the British and their Indian allies in the Northwest caused fears for the security of Vincennes. Even before this attack, Colonel Russell had written Secretary of War William Eustis on July 22, calling Fort Knox a nuisance. He stated that it "can defend itself but cannot render any assistance to this place [Vincennes]."<sup>47</sup> He observed that the citizens want to have it near town. The mounting war fever was indicated by the report of the detection at Fort Knox in July of a man with silver buttons thought to be a spy.<sup>48</sup> In spite of the desire for

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46. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 219-220; *Niles' Register*, 3, 90; Returns for Taylor's and Posey's Companies, 7th Infantry, Sept. 30, 1812, (National Archives). Six men from Fort Knox, en route to Fort Harrison with supplies, were also killed by the Indians. These men were: Sergt. Nathan Frederick, Corp. Edward Hicks, and Pvts. James Clay, John Ingram, Elisha Knapp, and John Mason.

47. Russell to Eustis, July 22, 1812, found in *Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest*, 6, Pt. 2, 127.

48. Cockrum, *Pioneer History of Indiana*, 353-353.

a fort nearer Vincennes there was a certain amount of friction between citizens and soldiers, as the commander at the post, Lt. Thomas Richardson, on August 17 was compelled to issue a warning to the merchants against extending credit to the soldiers.<sup>49</sup> Acting Governor Gibson nevertheless felt the necessity to write Secretary of War William Eustis on September 2, 1812, that Fort Knox was too far away to afford any protection to the territorial capital against a surprise attack. If General Harrison had not already done so, Gibson recommended that the fort be relocated at Vincennes.<sup>50</sup> Two months later, on November 11, Gibson reported to Eustis that the Acting Quartermaster at Vincennes concurred in his recommendation. In Gibson's opinion, the removal of "the Garrison from Fort Knox to Vincennes, under the direction of such persons as you may think proper to appoint, will be a measure much conducive to a tranquilization of the Minds of the Citizens here, and be a considerable Saving to the United States."<sup>51</sup>

Secretary Eustis on December 7 notified Gibson that in August Colonel Russell had been authorized "to remove the Garrison of Fort Knox to such place near the Town as with the advice of Governor Harrison might be considered more convenient." If nothing had been done to carry out this directive, Gibson was authorized "to remove the Garrison to such place near the Town as shall be deemed expedient."<sup>52</sup>

Taking advantage of this authority, Gibson had a considerable part of the necessary timber brought down the Wabash and the men quartered in town. On March 31, 1813, he reported opposition on the part of certain officers concerning the location of Fort Knox, No.3. In spite of the authorization to Gibson, Lieutenant Richardson had commenced the construction "upon the most disadvantageous and useless place adjacent to the whole town." Thomas Posey, who had been appointed governor, reported on March 4 that about 100 regulars were engaged in erecting a fortification in Vincennes since Fort Knox No.2 had been dismantled.<sup>53</sup>

By the time Fort Knox, No.3, had been completed, the tide of war in the Northwest had turned. At Put-in-Bay a naval force under Oliver Hazard Perry destroyed the British fleet on the Great Lakes making

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49. *The Western Sun*, Sept., 1812.

50. Gibson to Eustis, Sept.2, 1812, *Territorial Papers*, 8, 198.

51. Gibson to Eustis, Nov.11, 1812, *Ibid.*, 214.

52. Eustis to Gibson, Dec.7, 1812, *Ibid.*, 221.

53. Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, 2, 82, 378, 381, 406-407.



Detroit untenable. General Harrison advanced into Canada, defeating the British and their Indian allies at the battle of the Thames. Among the slain was Tecumseh. An armistice was agreed to between General Harrison and the assembled tribes at Detroit on October 14, 1813. Over 3,000 Indians at Detroit and 1,500 at Fort Wayne had to be fed by the government during the following winter. On July 8, 1814, Gens. William Henry Harrison and Lewis Cass met the tribes at Greenville and explained to them the terms of a new treaty. This treaty, the Second Treaty of Greenville, did not materially alter affairs. The war had been disastrous to the redmen of the Wabash Country. It left them a hopeless, sullen, broken people. Until the outbreak of the war, the Indians had been making considerable progress in adopting the ways of the white man, but this was all destroyed. What was worse, the frontiersmen lost all respect for them, and soon began a systematic campaign to drive the Indians beyond the Mississippi.

Zachary Taylor, now a brevet major for the defense of Fort Harrison, returned to Vincennes in April 1813 as officer in charge of the Regular Army's recruiting service in Indiana and Illinois. He quickly discovered that few men were interested in the Regular establishment when they could enlist in the Rangers. A man enlisting in the Regulars, besides having to sign up for five years, could expect to be subjected to strict discipline at a pay of eight dollars per month, while a Ranger received \$30 per month and was "subject to no subordination, and do but very little duty." In the nine days he had been at Vincennes, Taylor had seen that officers and enlisted men in the Rangers boarded at the best public houses, and their duties seemed to consist of little beyond playing cards and drinking. There was no distinction between officers and enlisted men. Taylor knew of a private in the Rangers who kept a tavern, and another who continued to work as a saddler. Many of the Rangers had not pulled guard duty in over two months.

On the other hand, there were about 50 Regulars at Vincennes. These men were kept busy building a fort

for the protection of the inhabitation of this place & should the Indians make an attempt on this town in the course of a month or six weeks . . . the fort will be of little use as the works progress very slow & but little done as yet for part of those regulars that are fit for duty are generally employed on command.<sup>54</sup>

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54. Taylor to Cushing, April 14, 1813, *ibid.*, 69-70.

Taylor in July was assigned to be commandant of Fort Knox, No.3. He now brought his family to Vincennes, where his second daughter was born on March 6, 1814. The baby's parents named her Sarah Knox Taylor--Sarah for her paternal grandmother, Knox in honor of the fort commanded by her father. The Taylors resided in a cottage owned by Judge Benjamin Parke at what is now the corner of 1st and Hart Streets. Captain Taylor remained in charge of Fort Knox until the spring of 1814, when he was ordered to Missouri.<sup>55</sup>

On May 10, 1815, Judge Parke wrote Governor Posey suggesting that the fort at Vincennes might be abandoned; but the garrison at Fort Harrison should be maintained. Governor Posey evidently agreed for in the *Western Sun* for the period January 6 to February 10, 1816, advertisements appeared requesting all holders of public arms to deliver them to Capt. John T. Chunn, commandant at Fort Knox. The arms were to be boxed and forwarded to Newport, Kentucky. From February 17 to March 23, the arms were to be delivered to William Johns in Vincennes who would receipt for them. The garrison had no doubt left for Fort Harrison by that date. The notices were still signed by Captain Chunn. On February 8, 1817, notice was given that Robert Richardson, ordnance storekeeper of the United States arsenal at Newport, Kentucky, was in Vincennes to collect arms belonging to the United States government. Thus the week of February 10, 1816, seems to mark the end of a military garrison at Fort Knox, No.3.<sup>56</sup>

The same year that Fort Knox, No.2, was dismantled, Vincennes lost its status as territorial capital. There had been no hope even among its own citizens that it would be the permanent state capital, but so long as Indiana Territory included the Illinois country, there was scant agitation for the removal of the capital. With the organization of Illinois Territory on February 3, 1809, the balance of power in the Indiana Assembly shifted to the east, and the struggle for the removal of the capital began.

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<sup>55</sup>. Hamilton, "The Vincennes of Zachary Taylor," *IMH*, 37, No.1, 69-70; Greene, *History of Knox County*, 1, 319. Benjamin Parke was a native of New Jersey, born in 1777. He and his wife arrived in Vincennes in 1801 and made it their home. Several years after his arrival, Parke built a handsome residence on 1st Street, near the Wabash, on a wooded lot, occupying the entire block between Shelby and Scott Streets. It was subsequently purchased and occupied by John Wise, but it continued to be known as the "Parke Place." In 1808 President Jefferson appointed Parke a territorial judge, which office he held until Indiana was admitted to statehood. Greene, *History of Old Vincennes*, 1, 282.

<sup>56</sup>. Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, 1, 690; Vincennes *Western Sun*, Jan.6, 13, 20, 27, Feb.3, 10, 17, 24, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 1816.

The Territorial Assembly, however, soon found an obstacle in its road. Governor Harrison, who owned valuable property in Vincennes, had an absolute veto on all its bills. This was no merely imaginary danger, because Territorial Delegate Jonathan Jennings presented a memorial to Congress on January 20, 1812, complaining of the arbitrary conduct of the Governor in vetoing a bill to change the location of the capital.

In 1810 an attempt to shift the capital from Vincennes to a more central location had been made in the Assembly. Lawrenceburg, Vevay, Madison, Jeffersonville, and Corydon were aspirants. The question was referred to a committee instructed to select a new site. The committee failed to agree and nothing came of this effort. Because of the War there was no meeting of the Assembly in 1812. As soon as the Assembly of 1813 convened, the fight for relocation was again taken up. After a struggle in the Assembly, Corydon was selected by a conference of the Council and Assembly as the new capital. The act was passed on March 11, 1813, and provided that officials and offices should be at Corydon by May 1, 1813.<sup>57</sup>

With the transfer of the territorial capital to Corydon in 1813 and the abandonment of Fort Knox, No.3, in 1816, Vincennes was stripped of its political and military importance. The town on the Wabash, however, for a number of years continued, as it had in the past, to play a dominate role in the social and economic development of the territory and, after 1816, of the state.

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57. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 239-242.

## Site Evaluations and Recommendations

### Grouseland:

The historical significance of Grouseland, the home built by William Henry Harrison, was recognized in October 1961 as a Registered National Historic Landmark under the provisions of the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935.

Many meetings with the Indians took place in this handsome Georgian mansion. The Treaty of Grouseland was signed in the Council Chamber. At Grouseland and in the walnut grove to the southwest occurred Governor Harrison's two confrontations with Tecumseh. These meetings preceded the War against Tecumseh's Confederacy. During Governor Harrison's administration, Grouseland was the center of the social and official life of the territory.

Second only to the site of Fort Sackville, Grouseland is the most important resource in the area for interpreting the story of the Old Northwest and the history of Indiana Territory in the period 1800-1813.

### Fort Knox, No.2

Fort Knox, No.2, is three miles northeast of Vincennes and therefore beyond the city limits, and if a strict interpretation of the legislation establishing George Rogers Clark National Historical Park is adhered to, the Service will not be involved in its development. I feel, however, this is too restricted a view, as Fort Knox, No.2, played an important role in the military history of Indiana Territory in the years between 1804 and 1812. In the late summer and early autumn of 1811, Fort Knox, No.2, was the base from which Harrison's army marched to attack and destroy Prophetstown, resulting in the battle of Tippecanoe.

In 1963 the Indiana Historical Society sponsored an archeological excavation to ascertain, if possible, the exact site of the fort. A portion of the fort's foundations was located that summer by Dr. Glenn Black. Additional work during the ensuing summer by Dr. Black and, after his death, by Dr. James Keller has divulged much additional information about the post.

On March 16, 1964, the Public Service Company deeded to the Indiana Historical Society 41.5 acres of land thus insuring preservation of the fort site. As yet, little has been done by the

Indiana Historical Society to open and interpret the area to the public. I feel that the Service should take steps to cooperate with the Indiana Historical Society in developing the Fort Knox, No.2, site.

### Fort Knox, No.3.

A letter signed by Andrew Dunn on December 12, 1878, and presented to the Francis Vigo Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution by Miss Lucy Jo Hunter of Bloomington, Indiana, contains data pinpointing the location of Fort Knox, No.3. According to Dunn:

In the fall of 1812 or the spring of 1813, they took it [Fort Knox, No.2] down and rafted it down the river and put it up on the river bank opposite the Catholic Church. 2nd. The fort was about 80 yards from the old Cathedral church that was there at that time. 3rd. It was still called Fort Knox the same as before it was moved. 4th. I always understood that when Fort Knox was removed to Vincennes that it was put up on the same site that the old fort stood on that George Clark captured from the British in February 1779. 5th. I think the fort was about five rods wide and ten rods long. 6th. It was built of hughed [sic] logs for pickets set in the ground and 12 or 15 feet high. 7th. There was a gate in the uper [sic] end of the fort and I think there was one in the lower end--there was gates in the sides. 8th. I seen the fort in the fall of 1813 & in 1814 & 1815. 9th. The fort was there in the spring of 1815 when we moved from Vincennes. I don't know exactly when it was torn down, but I think it was some time between 1816 and 1820.

Fort Knox, No.3, is of slight historic significance. If an archeological excavation is scheduled to verify the location of Fort Sackville, the archeologists will have to be careful to keep from confusing it with Fort Knox, No.3, as both forts were positioned in the same area.

## Territorial Capital

The Territorial Hall, as it was known locally, was built about 1800 by Antoine Marschal. On July 9, 1805, the first territorial assembly met in this two-story frame structure, located on the west half of the lot now occupied by the First National Bank, on the southeast side of Main Street, between 2d and 3d Streets. The first story was occupied by the territorial officials and Council, while on the second floor was the room where the House of Representatives convened. The second floor was entered from an outside stairway.

About 1850 the old hall was moved from its Main Street site to a lot at 917 North 3d Street, near Hickman Street, and converted into a "tenant House." In 1919 the old structure became uninhabitable and its owner determined to have it razed. This information reached the Vincennes Fortnightly Club, and it undertook a campaign to restore and preserve the Territorial Hall. Funds were raised, the structure purchased, the title transferred to the city, and the building removed to its present site in Harrison Park. In 1933 the structure was "fully restored" and furnished with period furnishings.<sup>58</sup>

The Territorial Hall is important in interpreting the story of territorial government in Indiana during the period from December 1804, when Governor Harrison proclaimed it a Territory of 2d-Grade, until 1813, when the capital was transferred to Corydon. Unfortunately, the structure is not located on its original site.

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58. *Vincennes Commercial*, March 9 & 12, 1919, and Sept. 11, 1920; *Vincennes Capital*, May 13, 1919; *Vincennes Sun*, April 26, 1919; *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, May 18, 1933; *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809*, Francis S. Philbrick, ed. (Springfield, 1930), 112. The legislature on August 26, 1805, authorized the payment of \$50 out of the General Fund to Marschal for rent.

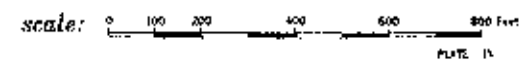


HISTORICAL BASE MAP  
**GEORGE ROGERS CLARK**  
*National Historical Park*

HISTORIC VINCENNES 1816-1819

- Legend**
- Rail Fence
  - Building (occupant unknown)
  - Building (occupant known)
- NOTE: Structures keyed to letters are exact.  
 Structures keyed to numbers are not exact.

On James Reid's Survey of 1792, there was a  
 St. Henry Street between St. Louis and St. John Streets.  
 This street was subsequently vacated.



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NOTE

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THIS SCALE DRAWING OR MAP IS NOT AVAILABLE ON MICROFICHE.

SEE ~~DRAWING NO.~~ <sup>HISTORICAL</sup> **BASE MAP** ~~ON APERTURE OR~~ IN ORIGINAL

~~DOCUMENTS/REPORTS~~.



## CHAPTER XV

### Vincennes in the Years 1800-1820

Vincennes, besides being the capital of Indiana Territory, became a center of economic, social, intellectual, and religious activity. Even after it was no longer the territorial capital, Vincennes, for several years, continued to be the most important town economically in the region.

By the beginning of the 19th century Vincennes had become a focal point to be visited by travelers and settlers pushing westward. With the establishment of the territorial courts, lawyers and other professional men, such as physicians and surveyors, moved in; a land office was opened in 1804. With the coming of the seat of government came a number of able men who brought with them the manners and traditions of the established aristocracy of the Atlantic Seaboard. Governor Harrison was soon surrounded by a group of personal and political friends whom he had appointed to office.

With the departure of Harrison and the transfer of the capital to Corydon, Vincennes lost much of its social pre-eminence. Vincennes for a number of years, along with Madison and Brookville, remained a center of economic activity in the territory and state. In 1820 the General Assembly enacted legislation establishing the State Seminary at Bloomington, thereby depriving Vincennes of its claim to leadership in education. In the years following Indiana's admission to statehood in 1816 other sections of the state developed much more rapidly. The central region of the state had been opened to settlement by the New Purchase of 1818 and by 1830, of the 63 counties into which Indiana had been divided, 20 had a greater population than Knox.

#### I. Vincennes--The Town

At the beginning of the 19th century most of the inhabitants of Vincennes and its immediate vicinity were French--descendants of the French soldiers and fur traders who had come from Louisiana or New France. They spoke but little English, and few of the new

settlers who were moving in from east of the Appalachians could speak their language. These newcomers referred to the older inhabitants as Canadians.<sup>1</sup>

There was a marked contrast between the modes of living of these two groups. The old "French Town" was composed of families who were primarily trappers, hunters, and fur traders. They raised most of the produce they needed in the gardens surrounding their homes. Their farming was done on the Commons, nearly 5,000 acres of fertile land on the prairie south of the village.<sup>2</sup>

From the Commons, produce was hauled into the village in little two-wheeled carts, made entirely of wood, fastened together with rawhide, and drawn by horses. At the turn of the century, these were the only wheeled vehicles in the region. There were no wagon roads. Goods that came to Vincennes over the Buffalo Trace were carried on pack animals, but most of the traffic with the world beyond was by river. The *habitants'* stock of scrawny horses, swine, and cattle had been depleted during the Revolution and the Indian Wars that ensued, but they still had enough to satisfy their simple needs.<sup>3</sup>

The people were hospitable and pleasure loving. The strains of the fiddle and the sound of dancing feet in the taverns livened the winter evenings, and with the advent of spring a number of the men would be off to visit their friends "in the town." This meant a voyage of hundreds of miles down river to New Orleans, or an even longer and more difficult trip upstream to Montreal or Quebec.<sup>4</sup>

Their houses, usually one story in height, with central hall running through from front to rear and a piazza that in numerous instances ran entirely around the structure, were built of hewed

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1. Volney, *View of the Soil and Climate*, 333-337.

2. Brown, Samuel R., *The Western Gazetteer or Immigrant's Directory* . . . (Auburn, 1817), 65-66.

3. *History of Knox and Daviess Counties, Indiana* (Chicago, 1886), 245-246; Volney, *View of the Soil and Climate*, 334; Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois* . . . (Chicago, 1854).

4. Volney, *View of the Soil and Climate*, 336-337.

logs. These were placed upright and the spaces between filled with thatch or hewed shingles. Some of these dwellings were given a coat of stucco, and most of them were whitewashed with a lime made by burning the mussel shells found along the Wabash. The gardens, fenced in with poles, contained many kinds of fruit and flowers, as well as herbs and vegetables. It is small wonder that Volney, emerging from three days' journey through the woods, found the village a cheerful sight.

Besides Francis Vigo, the principal fur traders at Vincennes were the Spaniard Laurent Bazadone and the French house of Lasselle on St. Jerome Street. The storehouses of Bazadone, built of hewed logs, two stories in height, were loopholed for defense by small-arms. In their collars were stored stocks of merchandise, including bottles and casks of excellent wines and French brandy shipped upstream from New Orleans. At these trading houses standard articles such as salt, blankets, whiskey, iron kettles, hatchets, and knives were stocked for barter with the Indians.<sup>5</sup>

There had been a Piankashaw village at Vincennes for as long as any one could recall, and several hundred Indians were usually camped near the post. Some were members of nearby tribes; others had traveled hundreds of miles bringing furs and pelts to trade. With these Indians the French associated on terms of friendship and equality. Many a Frenchman had married or lived with a squaw, and the erect carriage, black hair, and high cheekbones of the *habitants* showed their strain of Indian blood. John Law, the first historian of Vincennes, described these men as he remembered them, "with tall arrowy forms, mild, peaceful, always polite; their typical dress including a blanket capote, a blue kerchief around the head and sandals for the feet."<sup>7</sup>

Far different from the easy-going Frenchman were the newcomers who moved in from Kentucky and points farther east in ever-increasing numbers, many with land warrants for service in the Revolution. Their motivation was the thought of free or cheap lands and the establishment of farms. While the French saw so much unused land and needed so little that their requirements were met by the Commons, the Americans were the type that had to acquire title to the land, clear it, fence it, and then either move on or acquire some more.

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5. Lee Burns, "Life in Old Vincennes," *IHSP*, 8, 439-440.

6. *History of Knox and Daviess Counties*, 240-242.

7. Law, *Colonial History of Vincennes*, 17-18.

During the first year a settler would built a half-faced camp, to be succeeded as soon as possible by a cabin of round logs. Thaddeus Harris, in his journal of his travels in the west in 1803, described a log cabin as being built of unhewn logs, usually without a window, and with a hole in the roof for the escape of smoke.<sup>8</sup>

With their simple tools, the axe, adz, drawknife, and auger, the pioneers built furniture for their cabins and implements for their farms. Flax and cotton were grown for weaving and spinning, and besides homespun, the Americans used deerskin and buckskin for making clothes and moccasins. For these people, the abundant game, supplemented with wild fruits and berries, honey, and maple sugar, furnished the principal source of food until a clearing was made and the first crop harvested. Then hog and hominy became the staple diet. Cornmeal was made by pounding the dried corn in a wooden mortar and sifting it through a sieve of deerskin in which tiny holes had been punched. From this meal there came the corn dodger and johnny cake.<sup>9</sup>

Much has been written about the hardships of the pioneers, yet the early American settlers who migrated to this area with its mild climate and fertile soil had many advantages. Those near Vincennes could trade at a settlement that had been established nearly 70 years, and most of those who came to southern Indiana built their cabins within a short distance of a navigable stream. It was a land of opportunity, and within the first 15 years of the 19th century more than 60,000 persons were to establish themselves in the territory. Their greatest hardship was the necessity of protecting themselves from the Indians, who bitterly resented this invasion of their land.<sup>10</sup>

A number of travelers passed through Vincennes during these years and left descriptions of what they saw. Edward Hempstead, a representative of Jared Mansfield, Surveyor General of the United States, was in Vincennes in the summer of 1804 to witness the implementation of the treaties signed with the Delawares and Piankashaws.

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8. Thaddeus Harris, *The Journal of a Tour into the Territory Northwest of the Alleghany Mountains* (Boston, 1805), 15, 41.

9. *History of Knox and Daviess Counties*, 88-89.

10. Dunn, *History of Indiana*, 274-290; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 168; *History of Knox and Daviess Counties*, 131, 136, 138, 170, 171, 242.

On July 30 he reported:

this place is at present very healthy, the weather is exceptionally warm --In addition to this I am told there are not the usual signs of the season being in the least unhealthy --And unless some great change takes place in the course of a few weeks, I am persuaded there will be little or no danger of the ague.

Vincennes . . . contains upwards of a hundred houses, most of them in a battered situation, poorly constructed and wretched in appearance. The Governor's house [Grouseland] is the best in it --The streets are narrow, and the public buildings are not to be boasted of, yet the soil is luxuriant, and the society genteel.<sup>11</sup>

Twelve years later, in July 1816, David Thomas, an English traveler and author, visited Vincennes. He observed that beyond the crossing of White River no hills were encountered, and much of the way was across prairies. Several miles east of the Wabash, his party re-entered the woods. Two miles from Vincennes, the group descended "into the prairie that spread around" the town. Low hills were visible on the horizon, "while in the immediate ground, the academy, [Vincennes University] rising above the range of buildings, imparted a cast of grandeur to the scene." To the southeast were "two mounds of extraordinary size" which rose from the hill at the edge of the prairie.<sup>12</sup>

Vincennes, Thomas reported, was on the bank of the Wabash, which at this point was about 300 feet across. The town was built on a "sandy plain resting on gravel." Vincennes "embraced a great extent of ground; but large gardens, near most of the houses, leave it but small claims to compactness." There were several "good buildings of frame and brick," while the majority were of log and plaster, on which the traveler could bestow "no commendations."

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11. Hempstead to Mansfield, July 30, 1804, found in *Bulletin Chicago Historical Society*, March 1936.

12. David Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country in the Summer of 1816* . . . (Auburn, 1819), 142.

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8. Thaddeus Harris, *The Journal of a Tour into the Territory Northwest of the Alleghany Mountains* (Boston, 1805), 15, 41.

9. *History of Knox and Daviess Counties*, 88-89.

10. Dunn, *History of Indiana*, 274-290; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 168; *History of Knox and Daviess Counties*, 131, 136, 138, 170, 171, 172.

Thomas reported, "resembles nothing that we have seen in the western country. A pole may be thrust perpendicularly downward to the depth of twenty feet."<sup>17</sup>

The next morning Thomas called on Benjamin Parke, who lived in

a spacious brick building [Grouseland], erected by the late Governor Harrison, situated at the north end of town, and which adds much to the appearance of the place. The ground in front is level; but the slope towards the river is easy, and admits of delightful gardens. At this time the tomatoes were full grown and abundant; and the black mosella which loaded the branches furnished an agreeable repast; but the Chickasaw plumbs, with one solitary exception, had all ripened and disappeared.<sup>18</sup>

Thomas reported that in July 1816 there were in Vincennes eight brick houses, 93 frame houses, and 150 French houses. These were exclusive of barns, stables, and vacant structures, which Thomas believed would number 150.

On the Commons outside of the town were "many cellars and old chimney places," which led him to conclude that "Vincennes had decreased in the number of buildings."<sup>19</sup>

William Faux visited Vincennes on October 30, 1818. The town, he wrote, is "situated in a fine woodless Prairie" on the banks of the Wabash, a fine broad, clear, and generally deep stream. When the river was at low stage, weeds poked their heads through the surface, and when they rotted impregnated "the air with pestilence." The previous year, a man passing through the area had lost seven cows to milk sickness.

Lodging was secured by Faux at the Vincennes Hotel, his landlord assigning him his best room and bed. Even so, Faux shared his room with a sick traveler from St. Louis.<sup>20</sup>

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17. Ibid., 165-166.

18. Ibid., 168.

19. Ibid., 191.

20. William Faux, "Memorable Days in America . . . found in *Early Western Travels*, ed. Reuben G. Thwaites, 25 vols. (Cleveland, 1905) 9, 206-207. By this time there were a number of inns and taverns in Vincennes.

The town, he noted, had grown very slowly, and is "an antique lump of deformity." Although long the capital and "mother town" of the territory, Vincennes looked like "an old, worn out, dirty village of wooden frame houses, which a fire might much improve." The only church was the Roman Catholic, "the inhabitants being principally French Canadians, and the rest the refuse of the east, whose crimes have driven them hither, or dissipated young men unable to live at home."

Faux reported that a steam mill yielding only 30 pounds of flour for one bushel of wheat [weighing 60 pounds] operated seven days a week. Neither did the blacksmiths observe the blue laws. The Knox County Courthouse was "externally an elegant building, but decaying before finished, as though the state were unable to finish what it had so well begun before counting the cost." Vincennes University, "a very respectable edifice," was in little better condition.<sup>21</sup>

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The tavern of Peter Jones, marked by a sign bearing a portrait of Thomas Jefferson, was regarded as the gathering place for the more aristocratic element. Permanes Beckes became the landlord of this popular tavern in 1807. Other taverns were those of John D. Hay, John McCandless, and Hyacinthe Lasselle. The Lasselle tavern, a large two-story structure, was famous for its hospitality. Many banquets were given in its dining hall, including one to celebrate the completion of the first courthouse, and it was here that Governor Posey lived during the few months of his administration before the removal of the state government to Corydon.

Frederick and Christian Graeter, fur traders who had come to Vincennes from France before 1800, announced in 1808 that they had opened a house of entertainment at the well-known stand "the sign of the Ferry Boat." Some of the early daybooks of this tavern are extant and their entries throw interesting side lights on life in early 19th century Vincennes. The price of a meal was 25 cents, and lodging for the night was 12 1/2 cents. Whiskey was sold for 25 cents a pint, while a punch and brandy toddy was \$1 a glass or \$1.50 for a bowl. A spiced and sugared drink known as Sangarce was a speciality of the tavern. Burns, "Life in Old Vincennes," *IHSP*, 8, 454; Cauthorn, *History of the City of Vincennes*, 181; *Western Sun*, Dec. 2, 1807; *History of Knox and Daviess Counties*, 150, 177; Greene, *History of Old Vincennes and Knox County*, 133.

21. Faux, *Journal*, 206-209. At the time of Thomas' visit two years before, the steam grist- and sawmill was under construction. It



Dr. Samuel B. Judah of New York City was at Vincennes in November 1827. He reported:

Vincennes is a melancholy-looking place. Good brick Court House--brick seminary--a few good brick houses, Gen'l Harrison's the most attractive. Samuel [the Doctor's son] lives in a 2-story frame 26 ft front 20 deep, 3 rooms below, also Kitchen & Smoke house, poorly built--Indeed all the houses in the west are so.

There are 1600 inhabitants--7 stores well stocked--trade for 40 miles around--profits large. \$10,000 worth of goods is a full stock for the largest merchant for a year. The principal inhabitants get their groceries from New Orleans. There is a cotton factory [Bonner's] on a small scale operated by an Ox-mill, and a good public Library of 1800 vols. Very few of the houses are painted. Town lots are \$35 to \$50 the acre. Horticulture not much attended to. Samuel has the best garden here, tho only 1 year old. He has asparagus & celery, which are not uncommon. His lot is 2 1/2 acres, fine well--sheep; 2 horses, 2 cows, beehives.

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had begun operating in January 1818. According to Adlard Welby, the mill, which was on the bank of the Wabash, near Grouseland, also carded wool and cotton. Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country*, 195; Welby, *English Settlements*, 236-237. The courthouse, according to Thomas, was a two-story brick building, 40 x 59 feet. He described it as "very handsome and commodious." As of January 1, 1818, there were in Vincennes: 18 Stores of Merchandise, 6 Taverns, 4 Groceries, 4 Blacksmith Shops, 2 Gun Smiths, 3 Saddlers, 4 Tailors, 2 Cabinet Makers, 3 Hatters, 1 Silver Smith, 1 Tin Factory, 1 Chair Maker, 1 Tobacconist, 1 Tanner, 1 Apothecary, 2 Newspapers--*Western Sun* and *Indiana Centinel*, 7 Lawyers, 7 Doctors, 1 Limner, 1 Chapel, 1 Academy, 1 Post Office, 1 Bank, 1 U.S. Land Office, 1 Court House, 1 Jail, 2 Market Houses, and 1 Livery Stable.

The plain people live on cornbread & hominy. Children are fed on mush & milk, economy is the custom. People are generally poorly clad--many blacks, poor miserable race. So much can be raised that the people in general labor but little.<sup>22</sup>

Fine farms near Vincennes, he learned, could be purchased at \$2 or \$3 per acre. A hard working man could buy the best land from the United States at \$1.25 per acre, and in "a few years by industry can become an independent farmer and be what is called a good liver--that is, eat plenty of cornbread--and pork into the bargain--but no molasses."<sup>23</sup>

## II. The Buffalo Trace.

The most important trace or road in what is now southern Indiana during the period from 1780 to 1820 was the Buffalo Trace. It entered Indiana at the Falls of the Ohio, led in a northwesterly direction, and left the territory at Vincennes. The distance over this route from Clarksville to the Wabash was 114 miles. Buffalo passing over it in great numbers had kept it open before the coming of the white man.<sup>24</sup>

Vaudreuil, the governor of New France, in 1718 had commented on the great number of buffalo counted in the woods along the Ohio, and reported that travelers often found it necessary "to discharge their guns to clear a passage for themselves."<sup>25</sup> Buffalo roads or "streets," as they were called by the early hunters, criss-crossed the woods and meadows. Probably the most famous were in Kentucky, where the herds, seeking salt, moved from one salt lick to another, and made passages through cane brakes--almost impenetrable to men--"as trodden and wide as in the neighborhood of a populous city."<sup>26</sup>

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22. Samuel B. Judah, "A Journal of Travel from New York to Indiana in 1827," *IMH*, 17, No. 4, 346-347.

23. *Ibid.*, 348.

24. George R. Wilson, "Early Indiana Trails and Surveys," *IHSP*, 6, 349.

25. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 9, 886.

26. Mann Butler, *A History of the Commonwealth of Kentucky from its Exploration and Settlement by the Whites to . . . 1813* (Louisville, 1834), 24-25.

In 1773 a surveyor, James Douglass, marveled at the vast number of buffalo encountered. The licks, as he described them, comprised

about ten acres of land bare of timber, and of grass or herbage; much trodden, beaten and depressed below the original surface; with here and there a knob remaining to shew its former elevation . . . To this lick, from all parts of the neighboring country, were converging roads, made by the wild animals that resorted to the place for salt, which both the earth and water contained.<sup>27</sup>

Salt licks in southern Indiana attracted the Buffalo herds, too. The Moravian missionary, John Heckewelder, returning from Vincennes to the Falls of the Ohio in 1792, passed a "Buffalo Salt Lick," probably French Lick, which he described as a "salt spot, several acres in size." "So trodden down and grubbed up" was this area that

not a blade of grass can grow and the entire woods are for miles around quite bare. Many heads and skeletons of those animals are to be found which were either shot from time to time, or had died there. From here a great many buffalo trails lead out.<sup>28</sup>

In their annual migrations north and south in the spring and autumn, and in their shorter passages between salt licks and springs and meadows of one area, the buffalo had an instinct for choosing the easiest grades and most direct routes. The passing and re-passing of these great herds made the beds of the roads as hard as modern highways. Daniel Boone, in opening the Wilderness Road, availed himself of both the Indians' "Warrior Path" and a buffalo road. Years after these animals had disappeared from the area, the incoming settlers found their roads, though clogged and covered with brush and fallen trees, so direct and convenient and so hard of surface that they cleared and opened them for their own use.

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27. *Ibid.*, 22.

28. "Narrative of John Heckewelder's Journey to the Wabash in 1792," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 7, 173-174.

The trace from the Falls of the Ohio to Vincennes, or parts of it, was made by the buffalo. That it followed a direct and convenient route is evidenced by the fact that Indians and then the white fur-traders used it for years. In early records and travelers' accounts, this route was referred to as the Kentucky Road, Vincennes Trace, Louisville Trace, Clarksville Trace, Harrison's Road, Clark's Trace, Trace to the Falls, Old Indian Road, and Lan-an-zo-ki-m-wi. Henry S. Cauthorn in his *History of the City of Vincennes* wrote that it was called the Buffalo Trace "by old residents who had traveled over it." According to Cauthorn, the buffalo on their spring and autumn migrations "crossed the Kentucky River . . . in Scott county [Kentucky], the Ohio at the falls at Louisville, and the Wabash at the ford just below this place [Vincennes], and thence to the rich prairie lands of Illinois beyond."<sup>29</sup>

The exact route that this trail followed at the time of the earliest references to it cannot be determined. It is evident that its course varied from time to time or else that there were alternate paths that could be taken along the way. If it were originally made through the woods by buffalo, there would probably have been several paths at certain points from which a traveler might choose. His choice depending on such conditions as the season, weather, and the location of Indian camps and war parties.

Information found in Clark's *Memoirs* affords conclusive evidence that by 1779, the Americans were using an overland route between the Falls and Vincennes. On their journey they passed through a wilderness of forests and thickets abounding in game. Indians from their towns on the Wabash and White rivers hunted there, and warriors, armed and incited by the British, made travel over this route hazardous.<sup>30</sup>

Ebenezer Denny, an officer in Harmar's regiment who accompanied the column on its return from Vincennes in the fall of 1787, recorded in his Journal:

In this route we pursued General Clark's trace, made a twelve month ago, on his way against the Wabash Indians. First and second day passed through tolerable land; third day very indifferent, owing to the path keeping about three and four miles distant, for thirty miles up the north fork of White river, which led us through neither rich nor level land, but just across the heads of gullies

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29. Cauthorn, *History of the City of Vincennes*, 16.

30. *George Rogers Clark Papers*, 8, 298, 301.

leading into the White river. Fourth day's march, passed over a great deal of good land, particularly near the Great Lick, which is not far distant from the road. When within a few miles of the Lick, our hunters had leave to go ahead. Presently heard the report of both their guns, and in a few minutes five buffaloes made their appearance, bearing furiously toward the head of the column. When within fifty paces, the men in front were permitted to fire; this turned the heads of the animals; they passed along and received the fire of the whole line. three were shot down near the rear, where they approached within twenty paces. Fifth day's march through pretty good land. Sixth, barren. Seventh, broken with knobs and small mountains, until we got within seven or eight miles of the Rapids.<sup>31</sup>

Moses Austin, who reached Vincennes on January 1, 1797, wrote that by this time the trace had been blazed so that a stranger could follow it without fear of going astray. Secondly, there was now a boat of some sort available at the White River crossing. Perhaps, this was Joshua Harbin's ferry, which was established about this time on White River northwest of the site of White Oak Springs, today's Petersburg.<sup>32</sup>

On February 11, 1797, William St. Clair and others from Kaskaskia forwarded a memorial to the Post Office Department asking that a post road be established from Louisville by way of Vincennes to Kaskaskia.<sup>33</sup> Several years were to pass before Postmaster General Joseph Habersham acted on this request. On November 28, 1799, he sent to John Rice Jones

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31. "Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny," *Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, 7, 312-313.

32. "A Memorandum of M. Austin's Journey from the Lead Mines in the County of Wythe in the State of Virginia to the Lead Mines in the Province of Louisiana West of the Mississippi, 1796-1797," *American Historical Review*, 5, 527.

33. Charles Burrall to St. Clair and others, Dec. 14, 1797, *Territorial Papers*, 2, 633.

at Kaskaskia a bond and contract for carrying the mail over this route once every four weeks. Jones' offer to perform this route for \$600 was accepted by the Department.<sup>34</sup> General Washington Johnston was named postmaster at Vincennes,<sup>35</sup> and by March 21, 1800, Habersham could write:

I am glad to find the communication by Post is at length Opened to Kaskaskias. I shall be glad to find that the productiveness of the Offices at Vincennes and Kaskaskias will allow of more frequent communication by Post than the present arrangement admits of, as it will give me pleasure to extend the Benefits of this useful Institution to that distant portion of the Union.<sup>36</sup>

On March 22, 1800, the route between Louisville and Vincennes was established as a post road, and the Postmaster General forwarded to John Rice Jones the following schedule for carrying mail:

Leave Louisville on Thursday at 3.PM. every four weeks from the 27th Feb.  
Arrive at Vincennes on Monday noon.  
Leave Vincennes--ditto--3. PM.  
Arrive at Kaskaskias next Sunday. 10.AM.

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34. Habersham to Jones, Nov.28, 1799, *Ibid.*, 3, 70-71.

35. Habersham to Johnston, Dec.1, 1802, *Ibid.*, 7, 81. General Washington Johnston was born November 10, 1776, in Culpeper County, Virginia. He came to Vincennes in 1793. He was the first postmaster of Vincennes (1800), the first lawyer in Vincennes, the organizer of the Knox County Bar Association, a member of the first territorial legislature, a member of the Board of Trustees of Vincennes University, Adjutant-General of Indiana Territory, three times chairman of the borough of Vincennes, twice president judge of the court, a member of the state legislature for several terms, and during the seventh session speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives. George R. Wilson, "General Washington Johnston," *IMH*, 22, No.2, 145.

36. Habersham to Johnston, March 21, 1800, *Territorial Papers*, 3, 78-79.

### Return

Leaving Kaskaskias on Monday noon every four weeks  
from the 17th Feb.

Arrive Vincennes at . . . Sunday noon.

Leave Vincennes at 3. PM.

Arrive at Louisville the next Thursday 10.AM.<sup>37</sup>

According to one traveler, the road from Louisville to Vincennes, "is tollerable tho not very good, but from Vincennes to Kaskaskias the path is very good."<sup>38</sup>

The Buffalo Trace by 1800 was the major overland route in southern Indiana. Indeed, it was so well-known by 1804 that Governor Harrison used it as a marker to locate a treaty line with the Indians. According to the Treaty of Vincennes, signed August 26 and 27, 1804, the trace was referred to as the boundary line. The treaty read:

As it is the intention of the parties to these present that the whole of said road shall be within the tract ceded to the United States, it is agreed that the boundary in that quarter shall be a straight line, to be drawn parallel to the course of the said road, from the eastern boundary of the tract ceded by the treaty of Fort Wayne, to Clark's Grant, but the said line is not to pass at a greater distance than half a mile from the most northerly bend in said road.<sup>39</sup>

To locate this straight line, as called for by the treaty, it was necessary to survey the Buffalo Trace by chain and compass. The survey was begun July 11, 1805, by William Rector at Parker's Improvements on the west line of Clark's Grant, about one and one-half miles from the Ohio River.<sup>40</sup>

As was to be expected, bloodshed stained the trace. In 1807 a band of savages attacked the Larkin family, father, mother, and five children, on the trace. The father was killed and the rest of the

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37. Habersham to Jones, March 22, 1800, *Ibid.*, 3, 77-801.

38. Burrall to Pope, Dec. 15, 1797, *Ibid.*, 2, 633-634.

39. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 689-690; *Senate Documents*, 39, 70-71.

40. *Centennial History and Handbook of Indiana*, 31.

family carried off into captivity. This nasty incident hastened efforts to afford more protection to travelers. A detachment of 20 or more rangers was organized under Captain William Hargrove to patrol the trails in southern Indiana. The men were divided into three divisions, the first to patrol the trace between Vincennes and French Lick, the second from French Lick to the Ohio, and the third to range the area from the Falls of the Ohio to Lawrenceburg.<sup>41</sup>

Blockhouses were erected at strategic points in the settled areas, to which families were ordered to flee and seek safety when bands of Indians approached. At the "Mud Holes" on the trace, near today's Portersville in Dubois County, Fort McDonald was erected by John and William McDonald. Woolsey Pride erected a blockhouse on the trace at White Oak Springs. Ranger camps were located on the trace.<sup>42</sup>

By November of 1807 the Indian threats had evaporated and most of the rangers were sent home. But this was only a lull. With the outbreak of the War of 1812, troops from Kentucky and the eastern Indiana counties, answering Harrison's call, marched over the Buffalo Trace en route to their designated rendezvous at Vincennes and Fort Harrison.<sup>43</sup>

Over this road, on the return of peace, came pioneers in search of cheap land on which to settle. Pack horses and wagons threaded their way, loaded with household effects and agricultural tools precious to the frontiersmen. Many pioneers from the Atlantic Seaboard took passage on boats at Pittsburgh and disembarked at the Falls. For these people, the Trace provided an easy route to western Indiana and Illinois. A tavern keeper near New Albany in 1819 estimated that upwards of 5,000 souls had passed his place of business on their way to Missouri that year.

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41. William M. Cockrum, *Pioneer History of Indiana* . . . (Oakland City, 1907), 202.

42. Ibid., 204; George P. Wilson, *History of Dubois County* . . . (Jasper, 1910), 30,38.

43. *Western Sun*, Aug. 18, 1812.

44. Wilson, *History of Dubois County*, 27; Cockrum, *Pioneer History of Indiana*, 132-169.



Perhaps the first stage line in Indiana passed over the Buffalo Trace. In the spring of 1820 Foyles started a stage line from Vincennes to Louisville. His advertisements stated that it was the first line to be established in the state.<sup>45</sup>

Thomas Lincoln and his family, when they migrated to Illinois in 1830, entered Vincennes via the Buffalo Trace.<sup>46</sup>

In Indiana today there are a number of roads that follow, in general, the alignment of the Buffalo Trace. Between New Albany and the Floyd County line, U.S. Highway 150 parallels the Trace. In Harrison County the Trace lies about midway between U.S. 150 and State Highway 64. U.S. 150 in crossing Orange County passes four to six miles north of the Trace. In Dubois and Pike counties State Highway 56 parallels the Trace. Across Knox County, State Highway 61 is to the north and parallel to the Trace's alignment.

### III. Francis Vigo

Francis Vigo removed from St. Louis to Vincennes between 1780 and 1783. By doing so, he benefited by land acts passed by the Congress in 1788 and 1791 granting 400 acres of land to heads of families who had been residing in Vincennes since 1783, and who had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States. Besides the 400 acres granted him, Vigo became--through purchase--the owner of many other tracts that had been granted by Congress to other inhabitants. By 1804, when the United States land commissioners visited Vincennes, he was judged the largest land-holder in the area.<sup>47</sup>

He continued to engage in the fur trade after moving to Vincennes, sending his furs to Detroit by way of Miamitown. He had as his associates in business at this time Pierre Menard, later governor of Illinois, and Toussaint Dubois, for whom Dubois County, Indiana, was subsequently named. Vigo became an influential citizen, taking part in all the important affairs of Vincennes.

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45. *Early Travels in Indiana*, 138, 142, 236-237, 256-257, 257, 274, 279 and 294.

46. *The Lincoln Way*, Illinois State Historical Library, Reports of-- 1913 and 1915.

47. Cauthorn, *History of the City of Vincennes*, 178.

During his first years at Vincennes, the fur trade was very lucrative, but following the outbreak of the French Revolution profits fell and precipitated a panic among the fur dealers. It got worse after the entrance of Great Britain into the Continental Wars in 1793. These events in Europe hurt both the small and large operators. Vigo suffered greatly. He received a very low price for his furs, while he had to pay high prices for merchandise. The Miami Company of Detroit, with whom Vigo dealt, went broke in 1790, with James Abbott agreeing to accept for his portion of the debts due the company the amount owed Vigo. Other creditors of Vigo were: John Askin, the T. Williams Company, and Andrew Holmes.

A severe illness during the period, 1798-1800, put his affairs into further confusion. He was compelled to mortgage much of his land as security for the payment of his debts. He consulted Governor St. Clair and Judge Jacob Burnett concerning the large draft that he held on Oliver Pollock, hoping that he could collect on it. This draft dating back to December 4, 1778, was for \$8,716.40 lent to George Rogers Clark. Three other drafts had been drawn on Pollock for a sum of about \$2,500, but Vigo had already sold these smaller ones at a great loss. At the close of his meeting with these men, he intended to leave the draft with them (and believed that he had) so that they might do what they could to secure payment. Later, in 1834, when Vigo's claim came up in Congress, the draft could not be found either among the papers of St. Clair and Burnett, or of Vigo.<sup>48</sup>

Vigo had the opportunity to serve his government on several occasions. In 1787 he furnished the troops at Fort Knox under Major Hamtramck with 16, or 17,000 rations at a time when provisions could not be brought in.<sup>49</sup> He performed services for Gen. Anthony Wayne similar to those for Clark by informing him of the number and designs of the foe. In December 1790 Secretary of War Knox asked him to deliver two talks each to the Chickasaws and Choctaws. Governor Harrison in 1805 sent Vigo and John Gibson to hold a conference with the Potawatomis and Miamis.<sup>50</sup>

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48. Riker, "Francis Vigo," *IMH*, 26, No.1, 14, 17-18.

49. Vigo Papers, No. 247; *Rept. No. 216*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess.

50. *Ibid.*

In religious as well as civil and military affairs, Vigo was prominent. The Catholics of Vincennes were neglected by their church in the early days. Father Gibault had visited them infrequently, but during his absence baptisms and marriages were privately performed by the notary and later revalidated by a priest. In 1792 Father Benedict Joseph Flaget, who subsequently became Bishop of Bardstown and Louisville, was sent as the first resident priest to Vincennes. Vigo had been influential in securing his appointment by Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore. Father Flaget made his home with Vigo during the four years that he remained in Vincennes. He often spoke of his debt of gratitude to him and went to see him as late as 1834.<sup>51</sup>

In the closing months of the 18th century, Vigo built, at the northeast corner of Second and Busseron streets, one of the finest homes in Vincennes. The large parlor had a high ceiling, imported mantle, and parquet floors--inlaid floors of diamond shaped pieces of black walnut alternating with white oak. It was surrounded by a veranda painted white, its blinds the "purest" tint of green. It was completed by the time Governor Harrison arrived in 1801 to take up his office as Governor of Indiana Territory,<sup>52</sup> and he occupied part of the house until Grouseland could be built.<sup>53</sup>

Vigo in 1802 was chosen as a representative to the convention held that year at Vincennes to discuss the extension of slavery into Indiana Territory. He was pro-slavery, owning several slaves himself. Two years later, he was called to preside at a meeting of the inhabitants of Knox County to consider the propriety of adopting the 2d-grade of territorial government.<sup>53</sup>

When Vincennes University was chartered in 1806, he was chosen one of the trustees. An examination of the minutes demonstrates that Vigo took an active part in the deliberations and served on a number of committees. His name is signed to the constitution of the circulating library begun the same year, indicating that he was a shareholder. He gave several books to the library, among them: Vol. II of *Washington's Letters* and Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*.

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51. H. Alerding, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Vincennes* (Indianapolis, 1883), 99-100.

52. Hubbard M. Smith, *Historical Sketches of Old Vincennes . . .* (Vincennes, 1902), 163.

53. *Early Chicago and Illinois*, Edward Mason ed. (Chicago, 1890), 236; *Indiana Gazette*, Aug. 28, 1804.

After he lost his town house and 30 tracts of the French Donation lots, about 12,000 acres, to settle his debt due the Miami Company, Vigo removed from town to a farm three miles southeast of Vincennes. In 1830, 13 years after the death of his wife, the farm was sold to Vigo's nephew, Archibald McKee. Vigo, however, continued to make his home there, going to Vincennes from time to time where he stayed with his friend, John Badollet. He spent the last few months of his life at the home of Mrs. Betty LaPlante, whom he had taken into his own house as a little girl and provided for until her marriage. Here he was taken care of until his death, which occurred on May 22, 1836. Refusing to confess and receive the sacraments of the Catholic Church, he was buried in Greenlawn Cemetery.<sup>54</sup>

An inventory of his estate after his death revealed that his personal property, consisting mostly of household goods, was valued at \$77.62. His "Rights and Credits" consisted of a note from Antoine Reneaud for \$30.52 and the claim on Virginia for supplies provided Clark's army. With interest due, it then amounted to about \$32,000.

The Vigo claims dragged on until 1872, when an act passed both Houses of Congress referring it to the Court of Claims. In 1876 a settlement of \$49,890.60 was paid to Vigo's heirs.<sup>55</sup>

#### IV. St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church

Like Francis Vigo, Father Gibault had established himself in Vincennes. It was 1785 when he made the move. On doing so, he wrote the Bishop of Quebec:

I have sufficient confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, to have hopes of banishing barbarism soon from Vincennes, where the inhabitants, especially the young people, have had no religious principles for the last 23 years, except when I passed there

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54. Alerding, *History of the Catholic Church*, 99-100.

55. 30 Cong., 1 Sess., House of Representatives, *Report No. 216*; C. C. Baldwin, "A Centennial Lawsuit," *Western Reserve Historical Society Tracts*, 1, No.35.

on my brief missions. . . . They grew up like Indians around whom they lived. I gave them and still give them catechetical instructions twice a day, after mass, and in the evening before sunset.

By the beginning of June, Father Gibault had made considerable headway. Even the smallest boys in the village could now serve the mass, whereas at the time of his arrival in 1785 the only one who could do so was an old man born in Europe. Indeed, he would have been well pleased with his flock, but for the "wretched liquor trade which I can not eradicate, and which compels me to refuse the sacraments to several, for the Indians commit horrible disorders when in liquor."

He had been compelled to employ a ruse to get a new church built. When the people of Cahokia sent word begging him to take charge of their parish, he discreetly let the word spread. The people of Vincennes, fearing that they were about to lose their priest, agreed to build a new church "ninety feet long by forty-two broad, on a foundation of boards." By June 6 they had felled some of the wood and had quarried "several fathoms" of stone for the foundation. The upright posts would be only 17 feet in height, as "the winds are so violent in these parts, that even this is rather high for strength." The structure currently in use as the church would be turned into a priest's house. The lot selected was a large dry one in the middle of the village, which he, with the churchwardens, had obtained 16 years before. He begged the Bishop to sanction the erection of the new church under the name of St. Francis Xavier on the Wabash.<sup>56</sup>

Father Gibault and the other priests in the Northwest Territory were soon caught in a dilemma. John Carroll of Maryland in 1784 had been named Prefect-Apostolic for the Catholic Church in the United States, and as such he presumed his jurisdiction to embrace the nation. As Catholic churches were organized in Kentucky and western Pennsylvania, the old French posts were no longer isolated. Father Gibault, however, still claimed to be Vicar-General of the Bishop of Quebec. The upper Northwest was still held by Great Britain, notwithstanding the Treaty of Paris, and the Bishop of Quebec had his priests at Detroit and in time on the River Raisin and on the Maumee.

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56. John D. G. Shea, *The Life of Archbishop Carroll, and the Catholic Church in Colonial Days* (New York, 1886), 469-470.

Bishop Carroll on May 5, 1788, notified the Bishop of Quebec that he had appointed Huet de la Valinière as his Vicar-General in the Illinois Country. Following Father La Valinière's departure for the west, Bishop Carroll was notified by Father Gibault that for the past 19 years he had held that title. To add fuel to this jurisdictional dispute, Bishop Carroll had been receiving for some time reports, "very unfavorable" as to Gibault's conduct. The Bishop of Quebec, in the meantime, had determined not to get involved as long as Father La Valinière did not penetrate any further into his diocese, or compromise him by his acts.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, Father Gibault had continued to hold on at Vincennes. In 1788 he narrowly escaped with his life, as the Indians became increasingly hostile. Paul Desouisseau was slain and Bonvouloir was wounded in an attack. So close to the priest were they at the time that his habit was stained with their blood.

As he was reluctant to serve under a Spanish or American bishop, Gibault asked the Bishop of Quebec to recall him. Father Gibault moved to Cahokia, and from there he visited Vincennes in October 1789. In 1790 he forwarded to Governor St. Clair a petition for a grant of part of the Seminary Lands at Cahokia in compensation for losses sustained by him. This was granted, although the United States had no title to the land.<sup>58</sup> Bishop Carroll, on learning of this, protested to the government against this alienation of church property to a member of the clergy. In a huff, Father Gibault removed from the Diocese of Baltimore, taking up residence in Louisiana. He finally settled at New Madrid, where he died in 1801.<sup>59</sup>

A layman Pierre Gallet, acted as guardian of the church from the departure of Father Gibault until the arrival of a new parish priest.

The Vincennes Catholics early in 1792 appealed to Bishop Carroll to send them another priest. On June 5 he wrote announcing that Father Benedict Joseph Flaget was ready to proceed to the west.

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57. *Ibid.*, 466-467.

58. Fleming, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 64-68.

59. Shea, *Life of Archbishop Carroll*, 472.

Father Flaget had left Baltimore by wagon for Pittsburgh in May, carrying a letter of introduction from Bishop Carroll to General Wayne. From Pittsburgh, he took a flatboat to Louisville.

On December 21, 1792, the new pastor reached his parish. He found the church in a dilapidated state. "It was a very poor log building, open to the weather, neglected, and almost tottering. The altar was a temporary structure of boards badly put together. He immediately set to work to repair the church."

His congregation was, if possible, in a more miserable condition. Out of 700 souls, the priest was able with all his missionary zeal to induce only 12 to receive holy communion during the Christmas season. Father Flaget was a temporal as well as a spiritual leader. He stimulated the people to industry, opened a manual-training school, induced better cultivation of land by proper implements and appliances, and obtained looms. He extended his ministry to the Indians, and during a smallpox epidemic he baptized many of them on their death beds. Amid all these labors, he was himself stricken in October 1793, but, recovering, he continued his good work until he was recalled. Father Flaget left Vincennes at the end of April 1795, returning to Baltimore by way of New Orleans.<sup>60</sup>

Fathers Levadoux and Janin visited Vincennes occasionally during the weeks following Father Flaget's departure and before the arrival of Father John Francis Rivet. In addition to his duties as parish priest, Father Rivet was charged by the Government with teaching the Indians the advantages of the Christian religion. For this service, he was given a yearly allowance of about \$200. Writing to Secretary of War Samuel Dexter on September 15, 1800, Bishop Carroll reported:

He [Father Rivet] visits the neighboring Indians and applies himself incessantly in fulfilling the objects of his appointment, and disposing them to maintain a friendly temper toward the United States. He is indefatigable in instructing them in the principles of Christianity, and not without success, which, however, would be much greater if the traders could be restrained

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60. Spaulding, *Sketches of the Life, Time, and Character of the Right Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget* (Louisville, 1852), 29-36, 45-46.

from spoiling the fruits of his labors by the introduction and sale of spirituous liquors. In the discharge of his useful occupations, Mr. Rivet has undergone much distress. The Indians afford nothing for his subsistence; on the contrary, he is often obliged to share the little he possesses with them, or lose influence over them.

From December 1798 he acted as Vicar-General, and frequently visited the soldiers posted at Fort Knox, many of whom were Irish Catholics. Father Rivet died on February 13, 1804, and was buried in the center of French Cemetery.<sup>61</sup>

The church to be seen today was begun in 1824 by Father John Leo Champomier, but was not completed until after the arrival of Simon Bruté de Remur, the first Bishop of Vincennes in 1834. The cornerstone, laid March 30, 1826, contrary to those of today, was placed underground. Shortly after the cornerstone was laid, a wild hurricane in November all but demolished the partially completed structure.<sup>62</sup>

#### V. Elihu Stout and the *Western Sun*

Elihu Stout, the son of Judiah and Mary Stout, was born on April 16, 1782, in Newark, New Jersey. Ten years after the end of the Revolutionary War, Judiah Stout moved to the west and settled at Lexington, Kentucky. There young Elihu obtained employment on the *Kentucky Gazette* which was edited by William Bradford, dean of Kentucky printers. After learning the trade, Elihu, ambitious to edit a newspaper of his own, moved on. He arrived in Vincennes in 1803 eager to try his fortunes. Governor Harrison befriended Stout, and outfitting a boat sent him to Frankfort, Kentucky, by way of the Wabash, Ohio, and Kentucky rivers, where he obtained the necessary equipment, including a wooden press.

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61. Shea, *Life of Archbishop Carroll*, 487-488.

62. Vincennes *Post*, May 8, 1934; Cawthorn, *History of the City of Vincennes*, 114; *Western Sun*, March 4, 1826.



He soon returned to Vincennes, and on July 31, 1804, published the first issue of the *Indiana Gazette*. In April 1806 fire destroyed the building in which the *Indiana Gazette* was published, along with the press and type. The spirit of Stout was not subdued, and he immediately returned to Kentucky determined to organize a new venture. While in Kentucky, he obtained another press and a supply of paper which he carried to Vincennes on pack mules over the Buffalo Trace.

On July 4, 1806, the first issue of the *Western Sun* appeared, succeeding the short-lived *Indiana Gazette*.<sup>63</sup>

In August 1807 George C. Smoot became a partner to Stout, but he retired the following November, and was succeeded by Jonathan Jennings, who tired of the work within a month. Stout continued the paper, the first in Indiana Territory, and in 1817 added the words *and General Advertiser* to the head.

Abraham Lincoln, at the time of his family's removal to Illinois in March 1830, visited the office of the *Western Sun and General Advertiser*. Young Lincoln had been an avid reader of the *Sun*, since 1824. In 1845 the Stouts sold the newspaper to John B. Jones.<sup>64</sup>

## VI. Vincennes University

In 1804 Congress granted Indiana Territory a township of land for a seminary of learning. The second session of the territorial legislature "held at the Borough of Vincennes" ordained that a "university be and is hereby instituted and incorporated, within this territory, to be called and known by the name and style of the Vincennes University." Twenty-two trustees, including Governor Harrison, Territorial Secretary Gibson, Territorial Judges Vanderburgh, and Parke, and Francis Vigo, were designated by the legislature.

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63. Elizabeth M. Denehire, "Indiana's First Newspaper," *IMH*, 31, No.2, 125-130; Douglas C. McMurtree, "The Need of a Printer in Indiana Territory," *IMH*, 32, No.1, 34-37; *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, Aug.12, 1934.

64. *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, Aug.12, 1934; *A Guidebook to Historic Vincennes, Indiana*, Compiled by James D. and Marie L. McQuaid, and Larry Stains (Vincennes, 1965), 55-57.

The Latin, Greek, French, and English languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, logic, rhetoric, and the law of nature and of nations were specified as proper studies. Indians would be encouraged to attend. The trustees were required, as soon as funds permitted, to establish an institution for the education of females. A \$20,000 lottery was authorized for equipment and support of the institution. Professors and students were exempt from military duty.

The Committee on Building selected two adjoining tracts, belonging to Vigo and Vanderburgh, forming nearly four squares, and bounded by Perry, Sixth, Hart, and Fourth Streets, "the finest and most suitable locality in the borough for the college ground." Building materials were scarce and construction costs high, and it was April 1811 before the school was opened. A traveler described the structure in 1816 as "a commanding structure" with walls of brick. The building was 65 feet long, 44 feet wide, and had three stories. It was designed for 18 rooms. Although over \$10,000 had been expended, the structure "stood unfinished."<sup>65</sup>

The Reverend Samuel Scott, a Presbyterian minister who operated a private school at Vincennes, began instruction in 1811 (including the elementary branches). But the Indians were more interested in Tecumseh's plans than in higher learning, and no funds were available for a female institution. Although the school operated after a fashion from 1811 to 1825, when it became Knox County Seminary, the corporate organization was allowed to lapse. No state funds were appropriated for the school. In 1822 the Indiana legislature took over the lands of this school for the new state seminary at Bloomington; two years later it declared Vincennes University no longer in existence.<sup>66</sup>

The Board of Trustees objected to this seizure of property. A long legal battle ensued with the United States Supreme Court finally ruling on the case in 1852, vindicating the University's claims. During the ensuing 55 years, the state legislature made three appropriations totalling \$202,133. This, however, was scant compensation for the loss of more than 23,000 fertile acres.

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65. Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country*, 195; Hubbard Smith, "History of Vincennes University," paper read at Foundation Day Exercises, Dec. 6, 1900.

66. *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1800-1809*, 178-184; Curtis Shake, *A History of Vincennes University* (1938).

Deprived of its income from its land, the University was compelled to sell its campus in 1838. With the small sum remaining, \$500, it purchased a new site on the corner of Fifth and Busseron.<sup>67</sup>

### VII. The Vincennes Library

A meeting was held at William Hays' Inn on July 20, 1806, which gave birth to the first library in Indiana Territory, and one which survived for 77 years. The present public library of Vincennes is an outgrowth of the idea which led to this conference over which Governor Harrison presided.

At the second meeting held on August 2, a committee named on July 20 to draw up a constitution made its report. The draft presented was considered, amended, and adopted. The Library Company was to sell 100 shares at \$5.00 each "payable in specie, or in such books as the President and Directors should judge proper for admission and at such values as the President and Directors should determine." Each shareholder was to pay annually \$2.00 on each share held. Yearly meetings of shareholders were provided for, and the officers were to consist of a President, seven Directors, and a Librarian. These were to be chosen annually by the members of the Company. The shareholders were empowered to increase the number of shares from time to time in response to increasing demand.

The Library was to be open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. "for the delivery and return of books to and from subscribers." Each share was to entitle a subscriber to one book at a time. The minutes for August 2 list the names of 87 shareholders, six of whom owned two shares each, while the remaining 81 owned a single share. Smaller volumes could be held for one week, and larger ones for two weeks. No shareholder was permitted to lend any book drawn from the library "to be read out of his own house." For any book "so lent out" a fine of twenty-five cents was to be collected.

John Badollet was elected President of the Company and Benjamin Parke, Librarian. The President and Directors were requested to seek an "act of Incorporation" from the territorial legislature. At a meeting of the President and Board on August 9, 1806, it was arranged that

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*67. A Guidebook to Historic Vincennes, 61.*

the shareholders should be notified that books in payment for shares would be received on August 23. Presumably, many of the subscribers paid not in coin but in something rarer and more acceptable--books.

By March 24, 1809, there were 245 volumes in the Library. The minutes of that date show but 46 shares owned by 40 shareholders. Evidently, many who had started in the venture had dropped out. At this meeting, the Librarian was asked to destroy *Calipoedia* (one volume) and *Piggy Black* and *Wilmot Bond* (in five volumes), which were in the opinion of the committee of "immoral tendency" and "unfit to be found in the possession of an institution the object of which is to diffuse useful Knowledge and correct moral principles."<sup>68</sup>

The location of the books in the earliest period--the place from which they were delivered and to which they were returned--is unknown. It is reported that the Library was housed in Grouseland in the period following the departure of Governor Harrison to take command of the troops in the War of 1812.<sup>69</sup> His eldest son, John Cleves Symmes Harrison, occupied the home for a time. There is evidence that the Library at another period was located in a rear room of the building which served as courthouse and jail.<sup>70</sup> This building stands at the corner of Fourth and Buntin Streets.

In the Minutes of May 26, 1812, there is a statement that a committee had been named by the Directors to investigate the possibility of housing the Library in the University building. (Evidently, this was before the books were kept at Grouseland.) The efforts of the committee failed.

After the books were removed from Grouseland, whenever that may have been, they were kept in rented quarters. In the Minutes of a February 1830 meeting it was resolved that "the Librarian be authorized to pay the rent of the room wherein the library is kept out of Library funds provided the same does not exceed One dollar per month."

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68. Jane Kitchell, "The Old Vincennes Library," *IMH*, 28, No. 4, 240-246.

69. Cauthorn, *History of the City of Vincennes*, 27.

70. *Vincennes Sun*, March 31, 1919.

A list of books found in the minutes for 1813 included:

Leland's *Philip of Macedon*  
Robertson's *History of America* (2 vols)  
Maimbourgh's *History of America*  
*Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*(5 vols.)  
Reid's *Essays* (3 vols.)  
*Atwood on Rectilinear Motion*  
Guthrie's *Grammar* (2 vols.)  
Blair's *Lectures* (2 vols.)  
Vattel's *Law of Nations*  
Morse's *Geography* (2 vols.)  
Witherspoon's *Works* (2 vols.)  
Miller's *Retrospect* (2 vols.)  
Pinkerton's *Geography* (2 vols., with maps)  
Robertson's *Charles V* (3 vols.)  
Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* (with appendix)  
Ossian's *Poems*  
Andrews' *Views*  
Goldsmith's *Animated Nature* (4 vols.)  
Varlow's *Husbandry* (2 vols.)  
*Ladies Companion*  
*Eloise*  
*Mirabeau's Gallery of Portraits*(2 vols.)  
*Lectures on Female Education*  
*Mysteries of Udolpho*  
*Gil Blas*  
*Begger Girl*  
*Carver's Travels*  
*Introduction to the History of Denmark* (in French)  
*Principles of Literature* (in French).

This is undoubtedly a selected list, because the total number of volumes cited is 48, whereas, four years earlier there were 245 books in the collection, and three years later it had grown to more than 700.

Various methods were used to secure books or funds with which to buy the books. In 1810 the territorial legislature authorized the Vincennes Library to raise funds through a lottery. Numbered tickets were prepared and sold, a part of the returns being used for prizes. Most of the books purchased for the Vincennes Library were ordered from Philadelphia.<sup>71</sup>

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71. Kitchell, "The Old Vincennes Library," *IMH*, 28, No. 4, 240-246; Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country*, 195.

There is no direct connection between today's Vincennes Public Library and the old Vincennes Library. The modern institution was organized in 1888 and formally opened on April 18, 1889. The Library Company was dissolved in 1883 and its collection of books and manuscripts sold to Vincennes University.

#### VIII. Vincennes State Bank

In 1814 the legislature of Indiana Territory chartered two banks, the Vincennes Bank and the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank of Madison. The charters, which were to run for 20 years, provided for specie payment of all notes, that interest on loans should not exceed 6 percent, and that loans be made to the territorial government in anticipation of taxes. There were besides these banks at least two private banks of issue, the one at Brookville, and the Steam Mill Company at Vincennes.<sup>72</sup>

The Indiana Constitution of 1816 recognized the Vincennes and Madison banks as incorporated banks, and provided that either might be made a state bank. Consequently, the Vincennes Bank was made the State Bank in January 1817, by law, the intent of which was to create a banking monopoly in the state. The charter, for 21 years, provided a capital increase to \$1,500,000 of which \$375,000 might be subscribed by the state. There were to be 14 branches, capitalized at from \$10,000 to \$35,000 each to accommodate three counties, and to be constituent parts of the parent bank. Total debt was never to exceed twice the amount of paid-up stock, rate of discount was to be 6 percent, and the bank was not to issue more notes than it could redeem.<sup>73</sup>

This was an ambitious scheme for the new state which with a scant 75,000 people was expected to absorb more than two million dollars of capital stock. Although the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank was supposed to become a part of the system, its stockholders refused, and thus the most profitable banking area was largely cut off from the State Bank. Only three of the authorized 14 branches were organized--Brookville, Corydon, and Vevay. The first State Bank was sponsored largely by

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<sup>72</sup>. *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1809-1816*, Louis B. Eubank and Dorothy L. Riker, eds. (Indianapolis, 1934), 747-763.

<sup>73</sup>. *Laws of Indiana, 1816-1817*, 185.

the propertied party of tradesmen and politicians of Vincennes, Corydon, and Brookville. They controlled the bank and the legislature, and were favorably connected, through the congressman with Federal patronage. Opposition to the bank was spearheaded by Elihu Stout, founder of the *Western Sun*.<sup>74</sup>

The State Bank operated until 1824, when it failed. It had been caught in the hard times of 1818 and 1819, while the parent bank at Vincennes had financed the Vincennes Steam Mill. When the mill was destroyed by fire, the bank lost \$91,000. A large part of the business of the bank was to provide money for purchasers of public lands. Under a ruling by Langdon Cheeves, the bank notes were no longer receivable at the land office. This was made good by the stockholders.<sup>75</sup>

#### IX. The Borough Government

The limits of the borough of Vincennes were described by the territorial assembly in 1805 as beginning

on the Wabash on the line that divides the Vincennes lots and the plantation of William Henry Harrison, thence along said line to the outer boundary line of the common, thence along the said line to the southern extreme of the Cathrenette [sic] Prairie, thence by a line north west to the Wabash, thence along the said river to the place of beginning.<sup>76</sup>

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74. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 204-267. In 1816 Nathaniel Ewing was president of the State Bank, while Isaac Bradford was cashier. Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country*, 195.

75. Esarey, *History of Indiana*, 1, 267.

76. *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809*, 112.

In 1806 this act was amended to read,

The Borough of Vincennes shall hereafter be bounded by the plantation of William Henry Harrison on the north east, the Church lands on the south west, the river Wabash on the north west, and the lines of the common as laid out for the inhabitants of Vincennes in pursuance of an act of Congress on all the other parts and sites there of, excluding throughout the Cathrenette [sic], and Lower Prairie lands.<sup>77</sup>

Agreeable to the charter passed by the territorial legislature on September 6, 1814, for incorporating the "Borough of Vincennes" an election was held at the courthouse to elect "nine fit persons to act as trustees" for the borough. The trustees were to hold office for 12 months. Elected were: Jacob Kuykendall, John D. Hay, Samuel Thorn, Henry Rable, Christian Graeter, Elias McNamee, Benjamin I. Harrison, Mark Earnest, and Wilson Lagow.<sup>78</sup>

At a meeting of the trustees held on February 8, 1815, a committee consisting of Harrison and Graeter was named "to draught a subscription, for the purpose of raising funds for the purchase of ground to build a MARKET HOUSE on." If they could raise \$250 by subscription, they were empowered to purchase of Pierre Boneau and his wife the lot opposite Graeter's Tavern at \$500.<sup>79</sup>

The sum was raised and the Boneau lot purchased. On May 3 Thorn and Hay were named to "contract for materials for the purpose of building a market house, . . . 16 x 48 feet, one story high, the pillows [sic] of Brick at equal distances of 8 ft. and to be covered with cypress shingles."<sup>80</sup> Four weeks later Graeter was named to the committee, while another committee was organized to "have the fences

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77. *Ibid.*, 197.

78. "Vincennes' First City Government," *JME*, 5, No.1, 1.

79. *Ibid.*, 3.

80. *Ibid.*, 5.



of Doct. Kuykendall and Geo. Wallace removed for the market square, to be built upon, which ground was given by said Gentleman for the use of said market square."<sup>81</sup> It was reported on June 30 by Harrison<sup>82</sup> that a loan of \$400 had been secured for building the Market Square.<sup>83</sup> William Lindsey was given the contract for building the structure.

On March 29, 1815, Kuykendall, Hay, and McNamee were given the task of surveying and numbering the town lots, beginning at the upper or lower end of the town.<sup>84</sup> McNamee was named to draft a law imposing a tax on "lots & other property within the borough [and], also a law for imposing of a Tax or fine on all free persons for drunkenness, running Horses, in the streets and other improper conduct." An ordinance was enacted at this time<sup>85</sup> for the punishment of Negroes and servants for improper conduct.

In numbering the lots, the assessor was to begin on the Wabash adjoining the Church Lands. The tax on each lot was to be "one and a half per cent, per annum."<sup>86</sup>

On February 5, 1816, new trustees were elected. The new board held its first meeting on the 15th, and Frederick Graeter was elected chairman, and J. H. Hay, clerk. John Ewing was named "to inquire for a suitable place for the Board to hold their Meetings."<sup>87</sup> On February 23 Ewing reported that Peter Jones and M. Barnett had each "offered use of a Room gratis . . . & that C. Graeter offered to furnish a Room for twenty-five cents each meeting." The Board decided to hold its meetings at Barnett's.<sup>88</sup>

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81. *Ibid.*, 13.

82. *Ibid.*, 16.

83. *Ibid.*, 18.

84. *Ibid.*, 4.

85. *Ibid.*, 5.

86. *Ibid.*, 6.

87. *Ibid.*, 23.

88. *Ibid.*, 24.

## X. Alice of Old Vincennes

The historical novel, *Alice of Old Vincennes*, by Maurice Thompson, was published in 1902. Thompson had arrived in Vincennes in 1892 in search of material for a novel and was referred to Benoit Fritsch, a well-read citizen of the city, who ran a saloon on Main Street. Fritsch was steeped in local lore and enjoyed discussing the early history of the area with Thompson and his other patrons. Tradition has it that it was he who supplied the popular names of girls in the Clark era, and from these Thompson selected the name of Alice for his heroine.

After the publication of the novel, Judge Charles B. Lasselle, who was born at Vincennes in 1819, recalled that "Alice of Old Vincennes" was well-known to the early inhabitants. Her real name was Mary Shannon, and she was the daughter of Captain William Shannon, one of Clark's lieutenants. In his *Memoire* Clark wrote that Captain Shannon was taken prisoner by a party of the enemy as his column was approaching Vincennes. After the surrender of Fort Sackville, Clark redeployed his command. Captain Shannon was one of those ordered to Kaskaskia. A letter addressed by Shannon to Captain Francis Bosseron on June 15, 1779, shows that he was still in the Illinois country at that time.

About 1784 Shannon secured from the Court of Vincennes a tract near the village, on the west side of the Wabash. This was on land also claimed by the Piankashaws. Of the Americans who attempted to make improvements on their grants west of the Wabash, some were slain by the Indians, others became alarmed and returned to Kentucky, while a few remained at Vincennes, where they were protected by the French.<sup>89</sup>

Shannon, however, determined to hold onto his grant. The Indians attacked his cabin, murdering Shannon and all his family, except Mary. She fled and the Indians gave chase and soon overtook her. In great distress, she cried, "Oh, mon Dieu, Oh, mon Dieu." The Indians recognized these words as French, supposed her to be a French girl, and released her. She raced toward Vincennes and hailing persons on the opposite bank, she called for help. A boat was sent across and she was rescued.

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89. Dillon, *History of Indiana*, 184.

According to Thompson's novel, Gaspard Roussillon became Alice's foster father. Lasselle argued that Captain Francis Bosseron was the Gaspard Roussillon of the novel. First, because throughout the story he is referred to as captain and major. On August 10, 1778, George Rogers Clark had appointed Bosseron "captain of a militia company at Poste Vincennes." This was the first commission issued by Clark after he and his troops left the Falls of the Ohio.

While he was at Kaskaskia, Shannon had written Bosseron, and when he did, he concluded with the words "My compliments to Madame Bosseron," which he would not do unless their families were close socially. Bosseron being wealthy and of a liberal nature, it was natural that he step in and protect the orphaned child of his friend, so Lasselle wrote.

Judge Lasselle knew "Alice" well in her old age. One of his playmates had been her youngest son, named William Shannon, after her father. Their families being neighbors, he had often visited in "Alice's" house. Mary Shannon Buntin died on December 30, 1840, and was buried in Mountain Cemetery.<sup>90</sup>

According to the Vigo Bible, there were five Shannon girls and one boy. Mary, the Alice of the novel, was born in 1777, making her two years old when Clark recaptured Fort Sackville. This destroys the story of Thompson's heroine participating in raising the colors over the old fort and falling in love and marrying one of Clark's officers.<sup>91</sup>

## Site Identification and Evaluation

### I. Vincennes in the Years 1800-1820

With the exception of Grouseland and the Territorial Hall, there are few buildings extant in Vincennes that are known to date back to this period. Those that do are the old Knox County Courthouse and the brick building at the southeast corner of Main and First Streets. The old courthouse, better known as the Niblack House, is now the home of American Legion, Post # 73.

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90. Charles B. Lasselle, "Notes on Alice of Old Vincennes," *IMH*, 4, No. 2, 81-85; D.A.P. 6, Francis Vigo Chapter, Vincennes, Ind.; Knox County, Indiana, Cemetery Records, 1939, 112.

91. Smith, *Historical Sketches*, 284. In real life Mary Shannon married Captain Robert Buntin. *Ibid.*, 106.

The Service should be prepared, in cooperation with local groups interested in history, to see that these structures are properly identified and interpreted. Additional sites associated with this period and deemed to have significance in interpreting the economic, intellectual, religious, and social history of Vincennes have been identified on the pertinent Historic Base Maps. Among these are: (a) the Buffalo Trace; (b) site of Vigo's house; (c) St. Francis Xavier; (d) Stout's Print Shop; (e) Vincennes University; (f) Vincennes State Bank; (g) Market House; (h) home of Mary Shannon Buntin; (i) American Hotel; (j) U.S. Land Office; (k) Hay's Tavern; (l) Greater's Hotel; (m) Post Office; (n) Madame Godare; (o) jail; (p) site of Harrison and Tecumseh confrontation; (q) Lasalle's Hotel; and (r) Benjamin Parke's home.

## II. The Buffalo Trace

The field notes compiled by William Rector in 1805, when he ran his 1805 survey of the trace, and the surveyors' field notes of the rectangular surveys of 1805-1807 pinpoint the Buffalo Trace between Parker's Old Improvements, one and one-half miles from the Falls, and the White River crossing at Harbin's Ferry, 15 miles southeast of Vincennes. From the White River crossing to Vincennes the trace can be plotted on the Freeman Map, titled, "A Map of the Vincennes Tract on the Wabash."

In 1830, when the Lincolns crossed into Illinois, there were two points at which the Wabash could be ferried at Vincennes. Neither of these crossings was located at the site of today's Lincoln Memorial Bridge. One of these crossings was known as Baley's and was located opposite Hart Street, while the other was located at the foot of Busseron Street.

## III. Francis Vigo

There are today in Vincennes three sites identified with Vigo. They are: (a) the lot at the northeast corner of Second and Busseron streets, where his town house stood; (b) his grave in Greenlawn Cemetery; and (c) a statue by John Angel erected on the grounds of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. The lot where his house stood is vacant and is used for a city parking lot. As the restored State Bank of Indiana adjoins this lot on the east, the Service, in cooperation with

the local historical society, should mark and interpret at this site the Vigo story, because it is more intimately associated with him than the statue site, while the roads in Greenlawn are tortuous. At present, the Vigo lot is owned by the city and is used as a parking lot.

#### IV. St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church

At least two Catholic churches preceded the present day structure. The first was built about 1749 by Father Sebastian Meurin. It was a rude structure, built of unheven timbers set on end with the interstices filled with mud. This church was located about 50 yards south of Fort Sackville.

The second church was started by Father Gibault in 1786, and it was completed by Father Plaget in 1793. David Thomas, the English traveler who visited Vincennes in 1816, reported, the church built "by the French Roman Catholics, and in their own style," is 66 feet in length, 22 feet in width, and 9 feet from ground to eaves. It had "a kind of steeple, about eight feet high, with a small bell." At the time of his visit, there was no priest stationed at Vincennes.<sup>92</sup>

When John Law, the area's first historian, came to Vincennes in 1817 he reported that the Catholic Church fronted on Water Street, running back to Church Street, toward the present cathedral. The building was a plain structure "with a rough exterior, built of upright posts, 'chunked and daubed' . . . with a rough cast of cement on the outside; in width about twenty feet; in length about sixty feet; one story high, with a small belfrey, and an equally small bell, now used at the more elegant and symmetrical building."<sup>93</sup>

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92. Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country*, 195.

93. Law, *Sketch of the City of Vincennes*, 10-16.

Mrs. Elizabeth Andre, who was 93 at the time, told Historian Hubbard Smith in 1902 that,

she, in company with the late L. L. Watson and Mr. Vital Bouchie, now living, took their first communion in the first [sic] church built here, and describes it as built of posts or upright slabs, and further stated that this old church was used up to the time of the erection of the present cathedral. She describes the entrance to the church as facing the river.<sup>94</sup>

The church, which Mrs. Andre recalled, remained standing until the present cathedral was roofed. It was then torn down.<sup>95</sup>

In addition to interpreting Father Gibault's role in the George Rogers Clark story and that of the Catholic Church in the Old Northwest in the Park Visitor Center, the Service should continue to take advantage of the good relations established by Superintendent Albert Banton with the parish priests in charge of St. Francis Xavier. Not only is the church closely connected with the many facets of the Clark story, but the books and manuscripts in the Bruté Library constitute a valuable resource for historical research in the period.

To the north of the church, and adjoining the grounds of the Park, is the old French Cemetery. Unfortunately, only a few of the early graves are marked.

#### V. Elihu Stout and the *Western Sun*

According to one local historian, the late Father Joseph H. Somes, Stout in 1804 purchased the old cooperage shop of Jean B. Caloutre, on the northeast corner of First and Buntin Streets, where he published the *Indiana Gazette* until it was destroyed by fire.<sup>96</sup> The Office of the *Western Sun* during the period between 1806 and 1820 was located at the same site. Adjoining the Territorial Hall, on the campus of Vincennes University, is a small frame building, which is a "replica" of the office of the *Western Sun*. The replica of the print shop was constructed in the early

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94. Smith, *Historical Sketches of Old Vincennes*, 122.

95. Cauthorn, *History of the City of Vincennes*, 114.

96. Joseph H. Somes, *Old Vincennes* (New York, 1962), 134.

1950s under the sponsorship of the Lincoln Free Press Memorial Association. It was built of lumber from the Vigo Mansion and brick from the Vincennes University Buildings which were razed at this time. The structure was completed in July 1954 and formally dedicated on October 7, 1956. In constructing the replica, the architects used as their guide a 1903 photograph of the building on 1st and Buntin Streets in which the print shop was reportedly located in 1830, at the time of Abraham Lincoln's visit. This photograph was owned by Mrs. Lawrence Rish, Stout's great-granddaughter. Stout's print shop is open to the public and is manned by students from the University. The Service should cooperate with the University in interpreting the story of Indiana's first newspaper and its dynamic publisher.<sup>97</sup>

#### V. Vincennes University

The University, the oldest in the state, has occupied three sites since it was incorporated in 1806. The first campus consisted of the lots bounded by Perry, Sixth, Hart, and Fourth Streets. In 1838 the original campus was sold and a new site for the school purchased on the corner of Fifth and Busserson Streets. A three-story brick building housed the University from 1878 to 1953, when the campus was moved to its present site in and around Harrison Park.

Dr. Isaac K. Beckes of the University and his staff are extremely interested in local history and interpreting it to the visitor. Students from the University offer informational service at the Territorial Hall and the Office of the *Western Sun*. In 1964 the popular Trailblazer Train was inaugurated by Vincennes University to transport visitors over the Vincennes "Mile of History," with interpretative stops at sites of major historic interest. In conjunction with its Trailblazer Train, the University's Department of Historical Preservation operates a Log Cabin Tourist Center in Harrison Park.

Located in one of the wings of the Curtis G. Shake Library on the University campus is an excellent library, specializing in regional history. The director of this library is Larry H. Stains.

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97. Vincennes *Sun-Commercial*, Sept. 6 and Oct. 8, 1956.

As the University has pioneered in providing access to and interpreting the area, the Service should cooperate with Dr. Beckes and his staff of the Department of Historical Preservation to continue and expand these programs, as visitation to the area increases.

#### VII. The Vincennes Library

Two structures in which the Vincennes Library was located have been identified. One was in Grouseland and the other in the old Knox County Courthouse (the Niblack House). The story of the Library is one that will probably have to be interpreted to the public at the Visitor Center.

#### VII. Vincennes State Bank

It has been impossible to pinpoint the site or sites of the First State Bank. The Second State Bank, which was chartered by the legislature in 1834, was located in a handsome structure adjoining the Vigo lot on Busseron and Second Streets. This three-story building has recently been restored at the cost of \$50,000 by the Francis Vigo Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Department of Conservation of the State of Indiana.

The Service, in the interest of public relations, will probably have to enter into a cooperative agreement with the State of Indiana to utilize this structure in its interpretive program or in the management of the area.

#### IX. The Borough Government

The Market House, erected by the borough government in 1815-1816, was located on Fourth Street, between Busseron and St. Peters Streets. This structure was razed before the turn of the century. In cooperation with the local historical society, the Service might mark this site, but like the Vincennes Library any interpretation will have to be at the Visitor Center.

#### X. Alice of Old Vincennes

The house in which Mary Buntin (Alice of Old Vincennes) lived was located on the southeast corner of First and Dubois Streets. This house was torn down before the turn of the century, and replaced by a "quaint brick" structure with dormer windows. In the 1920s this was the home of Charles Kuhn, mechanical foreman of



the Vincennes *Commercial*. While he owned the house, Kuhn had it modernized on the Dubois Street side by the addition of a porch. In 1965 the State Department of National Resources purchased for \$13,500 the "legendary home of 'Alice of Old Vincennes'." <sup>96</sup>

In view of the popularity of the "Alice of Old Vincennes" story, the Service will have to identify the site of Mary Shannon Buntin's home. This site is within the boundary of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

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96. Vincennes, *Sun-Commercial*, Dec. 24, 1932, and Nov. 25, 1965; *Vincennes Commercial*, Feb. 23, 1927, and Aug. 4, 1928; Personal Interview, Judge Curtis Shake with Bearss, June 13, 1967.

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APPENDIX  
Bissot Genealogy

- I. François Bissot de La Rivière was born in 1617 at Pont-Audemer in Normandy. He emigrated to New France before 1639, and he died at l'hotel-Dieu of Quebec on July 26, 1673. On October 25, 1648, he married Marie Couillard, daughter of Guillaume Couillard and Guillemette Hébert. To François and Marie Bissot de la Rivière were born 12 children: (1) Jean-François Bissot (Dec. 1649-Nov.1653); (2) Louise Bissot (Sept.1651-March 1733); (3) Genevieve Bissot (May 1653-unknown); (4) Catherine Bissot (March 1655-unknown); (5) Claire-Françoise Bissot (April 1656-March 1710); (6) Marie Bissot (July 1657-July 1719); (7) Guillaume Bissot (Sept.1661-between 1676-1681); (8) Charles-François Bissot (Feb.1664-March 1718); (9) Marie-Charlotte Bissot (June 1666-unknown); (10) *Jean-Baptiste Bissot de Vincennes* (Jan.1668-1719); (11) Jeanne Bissot (April 1671-unknown); and (12) François-Joseph Bissot (May 1673-May 1745).
- II. Jean-Baptiste Bissot de Vincennes was born at Quebec January 19, 1668. He was an officer in the troops of the detachment of the Marine, and he died among the Indians of what is today Indiana in 1719. Jean-Baptiste on September 19, 1696, at Montreal married Marguerite Forestier, daughter of Antoine Forestier and Marie-Madeleine Cavalier. To Jean-Baptiste and Marguerite Bissot de Vincennes were born seven children: (1) Marie-Louise Bissot de Vincennes (June 1697-April 1771); (2) Claire-Charlotte Bissot de Vincennes (May 1698-April 1773); (3) *François-Marie Bissot de Vincennes* (June 1700-March 1736); (4) Marguerite-Catherine Bissot de Vincennes (Sept.1701-May 1767); (5) Catherine Bissot de Vincennes (Oct.1704-Sept.1778); (6) Michel Bissot de Vincennes (Oct.1706-Jan.1709); and (7) Pierre Bissot de Vincennes (Aug.27, 1710-Aug.29, 1710).
- III. François-Marie Bissot de Vincennes was born at Montreal on June 17, 1700. He became an officer in the detachment of the Marine, and was burned to death by the Chickasaws in March 1736. In 1733 he married \_\_\_\_\_ Longpré daughter of Philippe Longpré of Kaskaskia. To the marriage were born two daughters--Marie Therese and Catherine.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



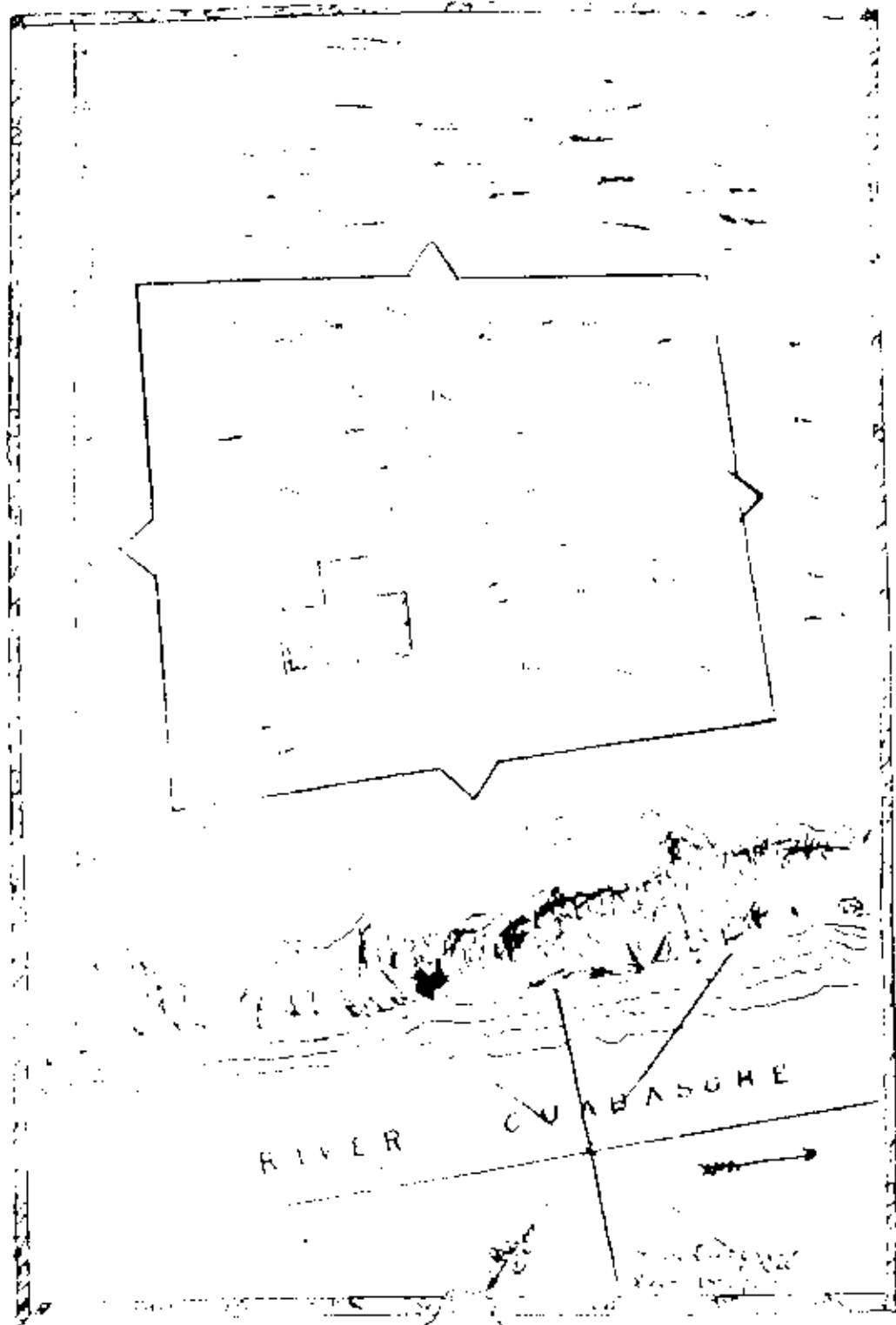
PLATE V

"George Rogers Clark on His Way to Kaskaskia," by  
Howard Pyle, courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute,  
Tulsa, Oklahoma.



PLATE VI

"Plan of Fort Sackville, by Henry Duverner,  
Dec. 22d, 1778," from files Indiana State  
Library.



Plan of Fort Suroville  
M. VALENTIN

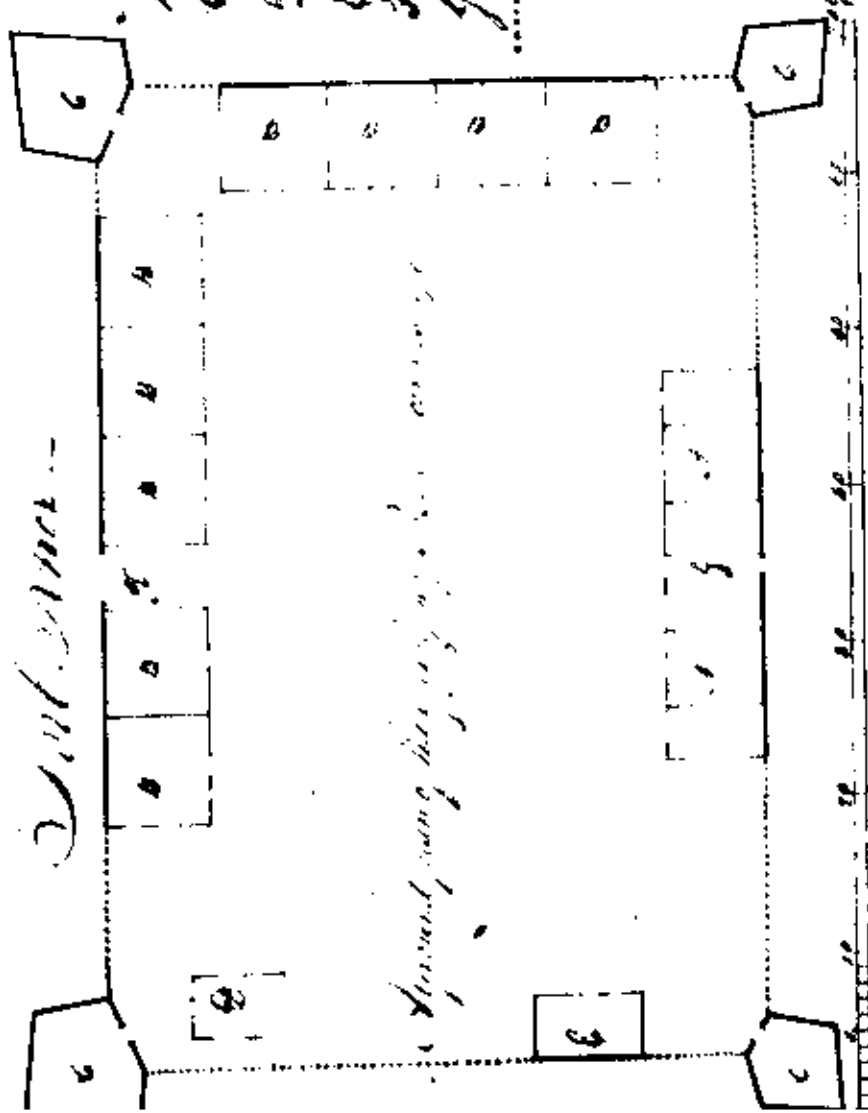
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1910

PLATE VII

"A Ground Plan of the Garrison of Post Vincennes 1788",  
Original in McHenry Papers, Indiana Historical Society.

*Plantation*



1. Office towards the front
2. Store or barracks on the right
3. Black house towards the left
4. Messing on the left
5. Blacksmith's shop
6. Main gate towards the front
7. Saddle post
8. Old garden

*Approved by the Hon. Secy of War*



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 GEOLOGICAL LIBRARY  
 WASHINGTON, D.C.

PLATE VIII

"A Plan of the Borough of Vincennes in the Indiana Territory as established by an Ordinance of the Trustees of the Said Borough on the 18th November 1816." Robert Buntin, Surveyor. Files Indiana State Library.

PLATE VIII

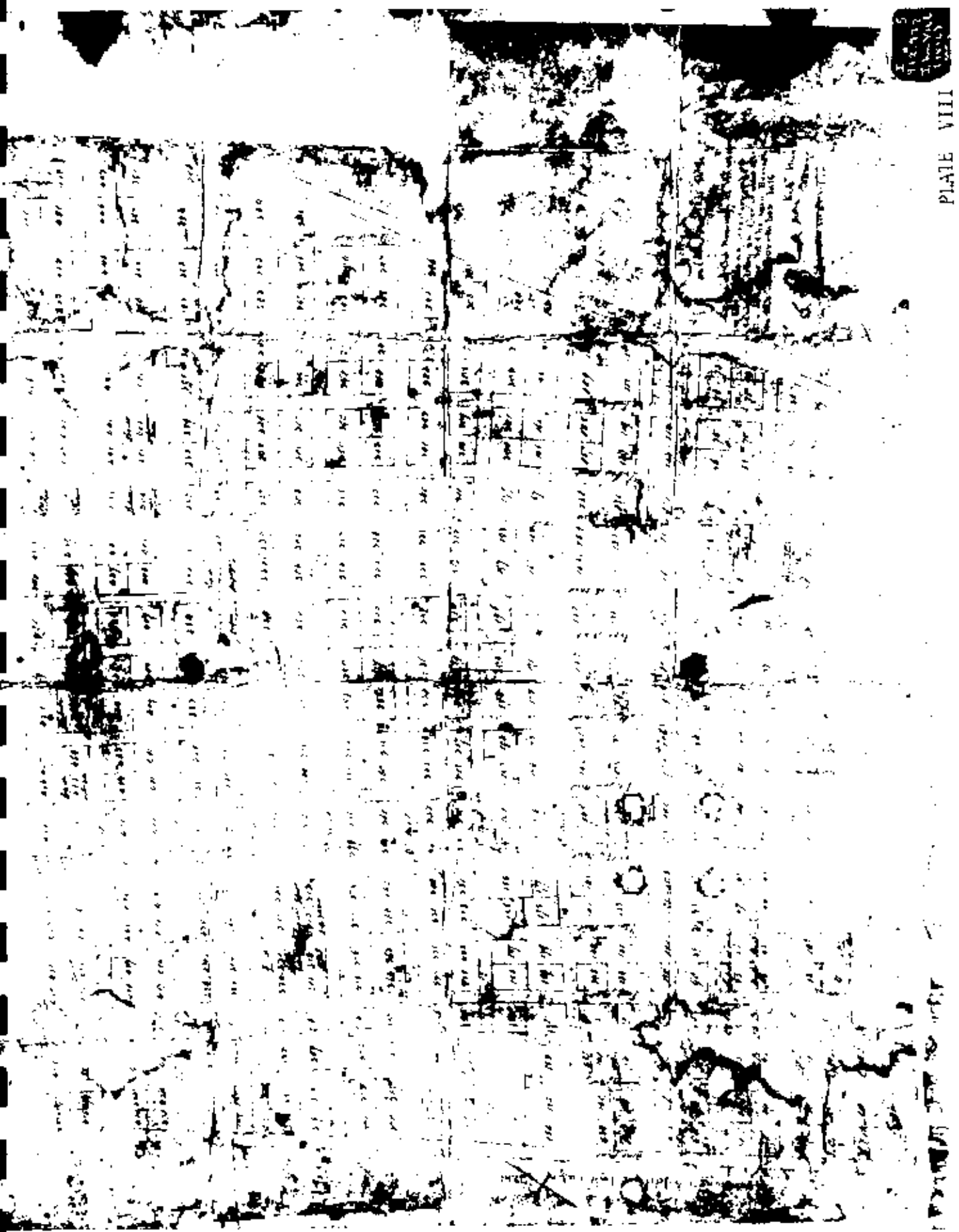




PLATE IX

Plat of the Land Described in the Indenture Drawn  
January 2, 1804, between William Henry Harrison  
and George Wallace.

EMISON & EMISON  
ATTORNEYS  
T. A. EMISON

124 N. W. 11th

EMISON & EMISON  
LAWYERS  
CITIZENS TRUST BUILDING  
SECOND AND MAIN STREETS  
MUNCIE, INDIANA

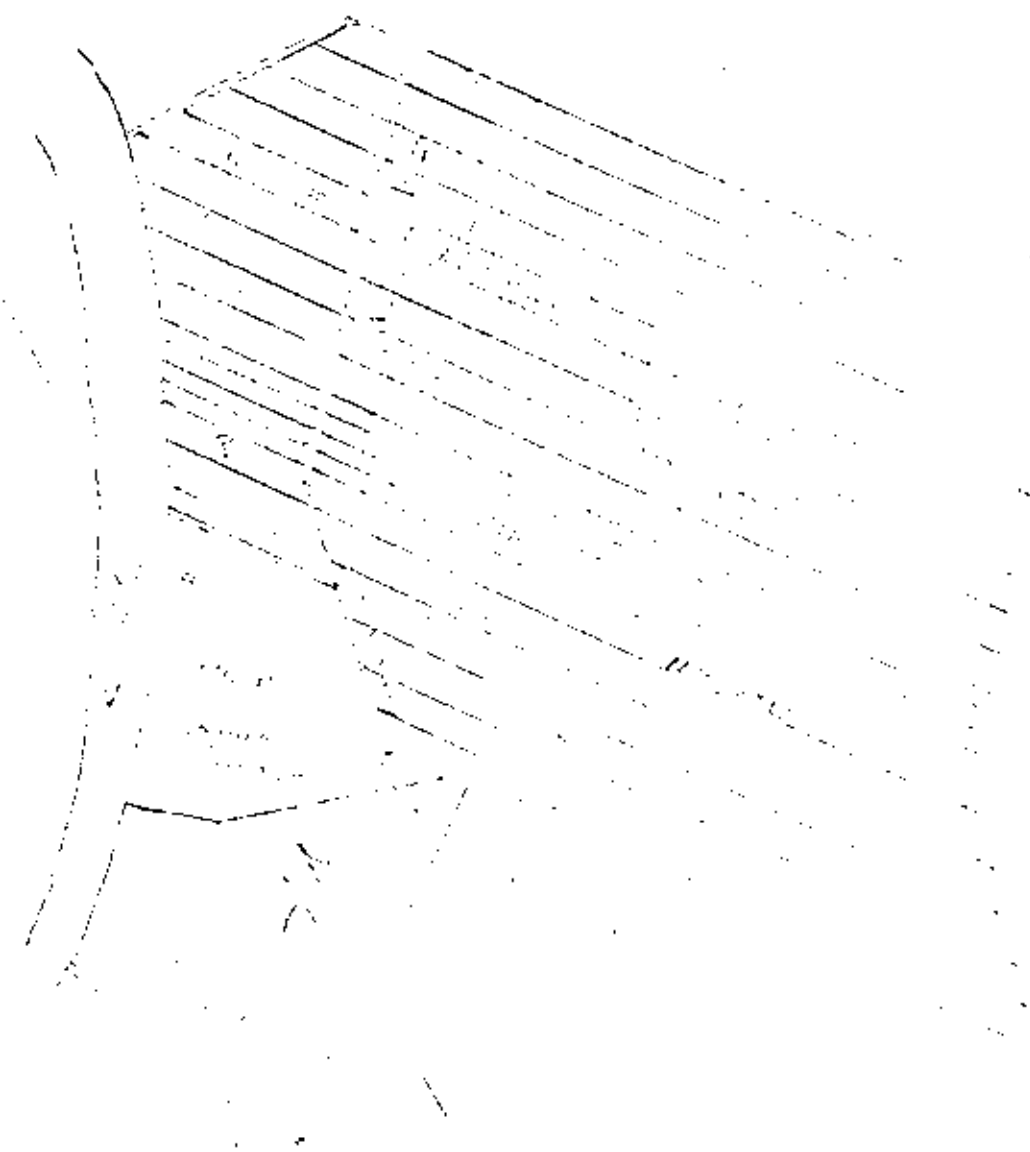


PLATE X

Continuation of the Plat of the Land Described  
in the Indenture Drawn January 2, 1804, between  
William Henry Harrison and George Wallace.

529.75

2237.11

Robt. Plumbin (Michigan Cultural)

NE 1/4  
50.00 P

52.50 P  
135.00 P

49 A + 25 1/2 P  
Vico → Will → Geo Under

NE 1/4  
138.00 P

Francis Vico

2237.11  
2237.11  
2237.11

5000  
5000  
5000

5000  
5000

5000  
5000  
5000

PLATE XI

Grouseland, General William Henry Harrison, Territorial Governor of Indiana, 1801-1802, built Grouseland in 1802-1804, and lived there from 1804 to 1812. Owned and administered by the Francis Vigo Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, it is a National Historic Landmark.--Photo, courtesy George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.



PLATE XII.

Territorial Hall. The first Territorial Legislature met here beginning in 1805, when Indiana was advanced to a 2d-stage territory. In the 20th century the building was moved to Harrison Park, where it is today. -- Photo, courtesy George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

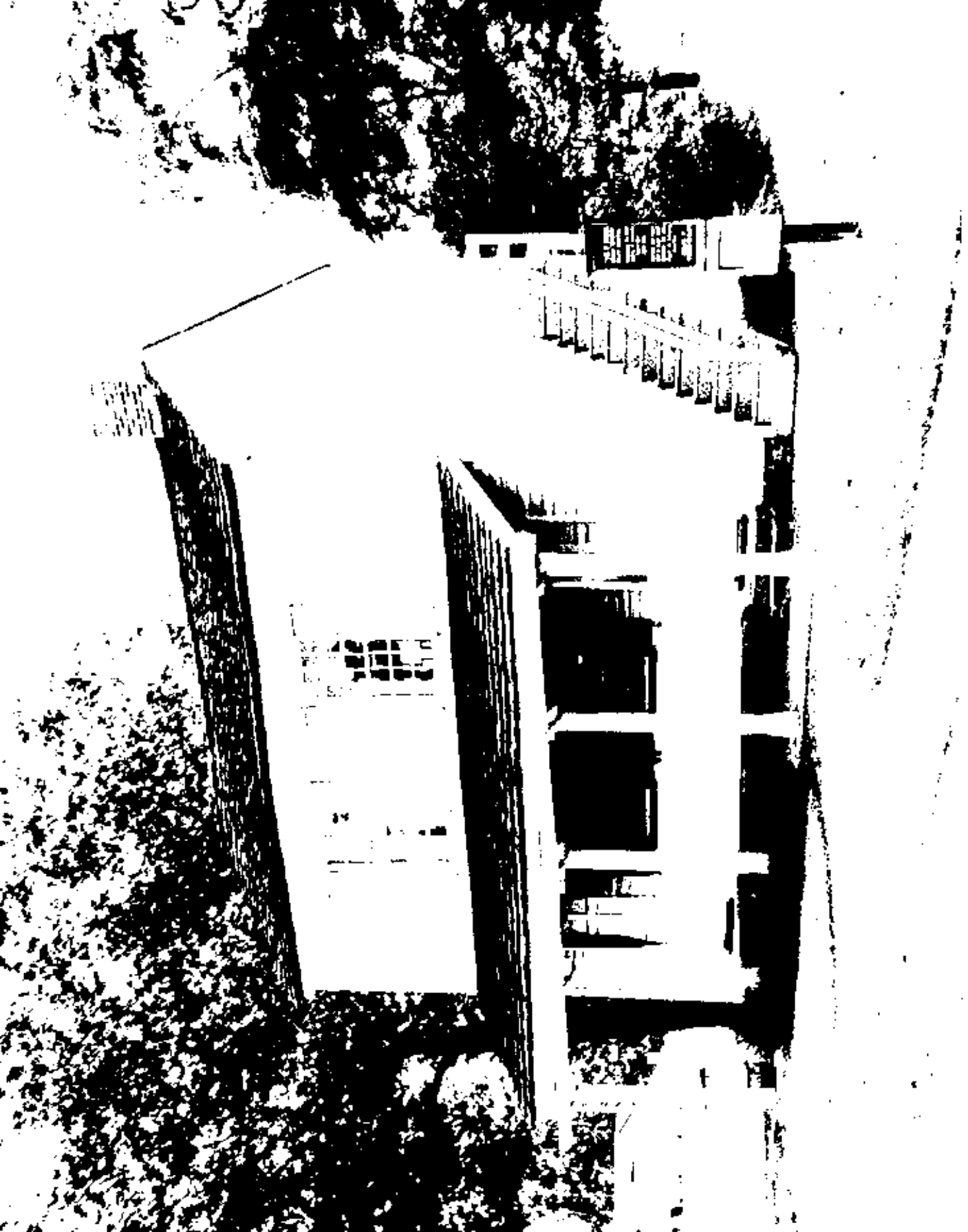




PLATE XIII.

Replica of Elihu Stout's Print Shop where the *Western Sun* was printed, 1806-1820. This structure, which stands on the campus of Vincennes University, was completed in 1954 under the auspices of the Lincoln Free Press Memorial Association.--Photo, courtesy George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

10/10/10

10/10/10

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10

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PLATE XIV.

Second State Bank of Indiana, Chartered by the State Legislature in 1834 has been restored by the Francis Vigo Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Indiana Department of Conservation.-- Photo, courtesy George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

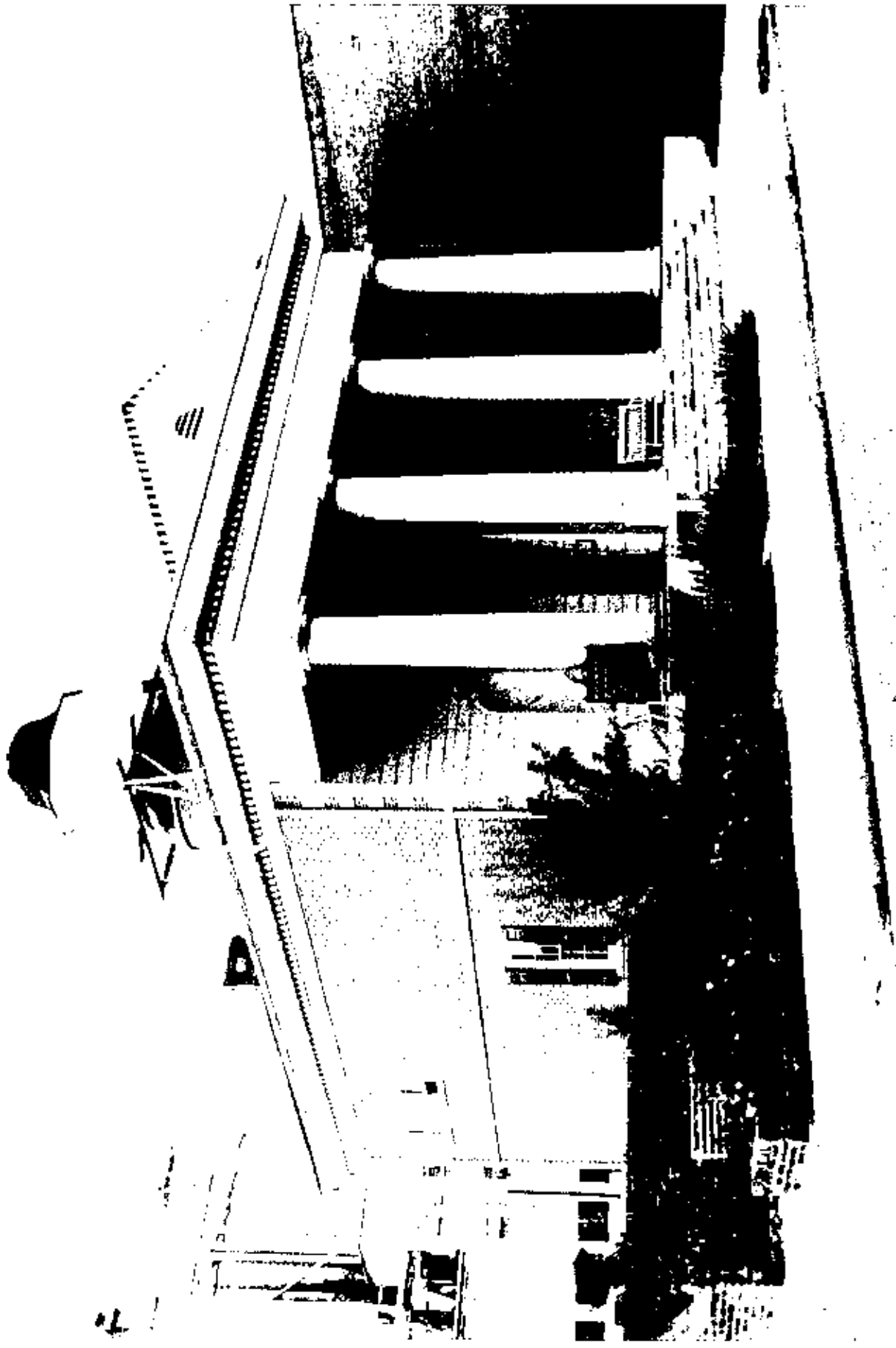


PLATE XV.

George Rogers Clark State Memorial. This magnificent memorial to George Rogers Clark and the Winning of the Old Northwest was completed and dedicated in 1936, at a cost of approximately \$2,500,000. (Federal contribution in the amount of \$1,500,000; State of Indiana, \$650,000; City of Vincennes and Knox County, approximately \$250,000)--Photo, courtesy George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

