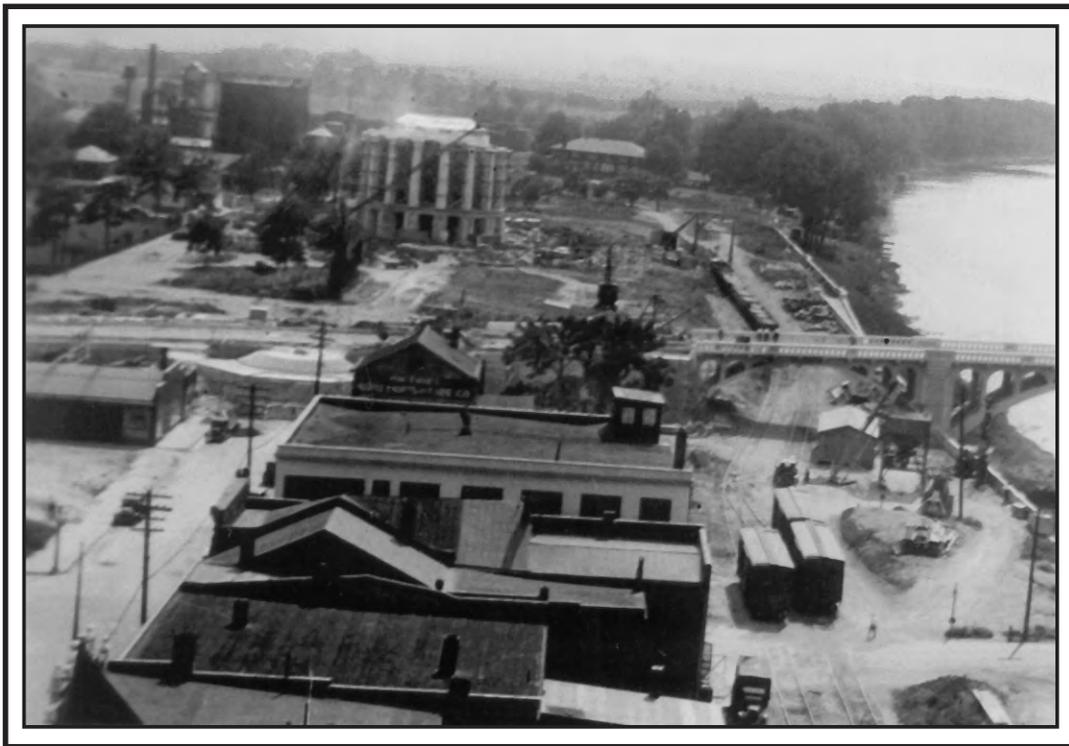


**An Archeological Overview and Assessment of
George Rogers Clark
National Historical Park**



National Park Service - Midwest Archeological Center

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of
George Rogers Clark National Historical Park**

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This report has been reviewed against the criteria contained in 43CFR Part 7, Subpart A, Section 7.18 (a) (1) and, upon recommendation of the Midwest Regional Office and the Midwest Archeological Center, has been classified as

Available

Making the report available meets the criteria of 43CFR Part 7, Subpart A, Section 7.18 (a) (1).



Abstract

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, Vincennes, Indiana, contains the archeological remnants of Fort Sackville and probably all or portions of the eighteenth-century French post established by Francois-Marie Bissot, Sieur de Vincennes, as well as small portions of the adjacent civilian community. The significant remains date from 1733 to 1780. During the 1930s, state and federal groups collaborated on the construction of the George Rogers Clark Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial Bridge and on the landscaping of the adjacent grounds. These efforts were motivated by the desire to interpret the significant role that George Rogers Clark played in the American Revolution and by a depression-era need to create work and economic opportunities.

Partly as a result of recommendations made by National Park Service Historian Edwin Bearss, archeological testing was undertaken in the early 1970s. Staff from the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology at Indiana University directed these excavations. This testing found a few features that could date from the period of greatest historical interest, but overall the results were disappointing. It appears that much of the area of Fort Sackville has been severely impacted by ca. 1900 commercial development and by the construction of the Clark Memorial. Few indications of prehistoric use of land within the park have been found. A new effort to locate physical remains of Fort Sackville or Post Vincennes is not recommended.

Given the complex history of the site, caution should be manifest in all projects that could result in disturbance of the historic grade. This study recommends that a GIS-based cultural resource base map be produced, geophysical surveys of the area around the Old Cathedral cemetery and the Mall should be accomplished, and oral histories of the development of the Clark Memorial, the Mall, and the bridge should be recorded.

Contents

Abstract.....	i
List of Tables	iii
List of Figures.....	iii
Introduction	1
Goals for the Archeological Overview and Assessment	1
Park-Identified Objectives.....	1
Environmental Setting.....	2
Regional Prehistory	3
Site History and Significance	5
Archeological Projects Related to Resources Within the Park.....	7
Fort Knox II.....	7
Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology Excavations	7
Monitoring by Midwest Archeological Center, 1988–1990.....	8
Archeological Work at the Old Cathedral	8
Other Archeological Projects	8
Results of Archeological Projects.....	9
Location of Collections and Records	10
Conclusions and Recommendations	11
Probable Archeological Resources within the Present Park.....	11
Obstacles to the Discovery and Interpretation of Major Archeological Sites	11
Recommended Studies	11
References Cited.....	13

Tables

1. Museum collections from George Rogers Clark National Historical Park stored at the Midwest Archeological Center	10
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Figures

1. George Rogers Clark National Historical Park and nearby points of interest in Vincennes, Indiana	iv
2. Alterations to the early-twentieth-century landscape during an early stage of construction of the Clark Memorial	6
3. Alterations to the early-twentieth-century landscape during construction of the Clark Memorial	10
4. Alterations to the early-twentieth-century landscape during construction of the Clark Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial Bridge	12

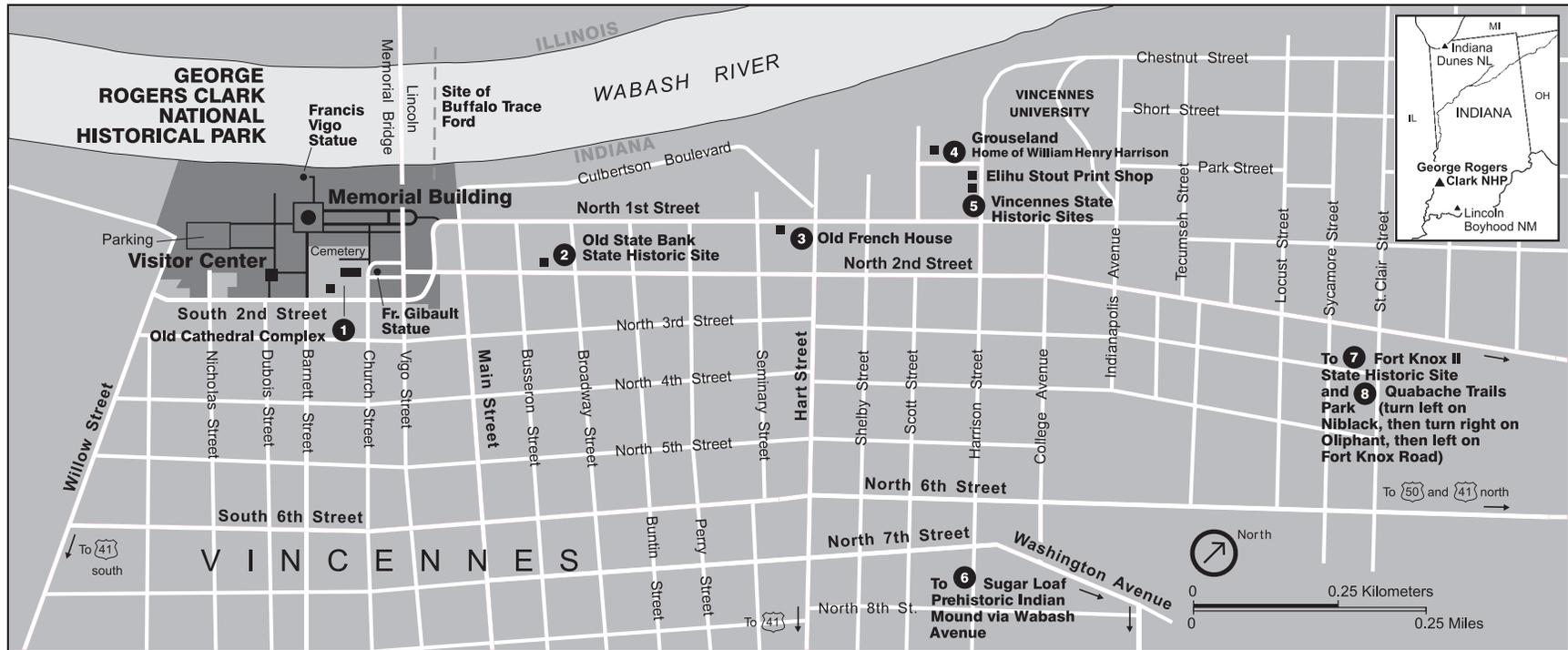


Figure 1. George Rogers Clark National Historical Park and nearby points of interest in Vincennes, Indiana.

Introduction

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park was authorized by the United States Congress in July 1966. The classic George Roger Clark Clark Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial Bridge, and the Wabash River floodwall were constructed between 1931 and 1935 and dedicated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in June 1936. The Clark Memorial and related features were built under the auspices of the state-initiated George Rogers Clark Memorial Commission and the federally formed George Rogers Clark Sesquicentennial Commission. The park presently consists of slightly more than 26 acres in the old commercial center of the city of Vincennes, Indiana (Figure 1).

Goals for the Archeological Overview and Assessment

An archeological overview and assessment is described in the National Park Service's *Cultural Resource Management Guideline* (National Park Service 1997:74) as "the basic element of a park's archeological resources management program." The same guideline lists several standard elements of an overview and assessment. Not all of the elements listed for such a research report, however, are equally relevant for a small urban park that consists of a modern architectural monument and highly landscaped grounds. George Rogers Clark National Historical Park contains no undeveloped land (with the possible exception of a very narrow strip of floodplain), and it is not known to have incorporated any recognized prehistoric sites. Given these circumstances and current management needs, this document focuses on the archeological resources associated with Fort Sackville and the features that preceded and immediately succeeded it.

One of the main objectives of an overview and assessment is to evaluate previous archeological work in light of present research problems. Other objectives include listing the locations of archeological collections and associated records, and providing a comprehensive bibliography. Archeological exploration at, and adjacent to, George Rogers Clark National Historical Park has been quite limited. In addition to archeological reports, archival records related to the eighteenth-century events involving Post Vincennes and Fort Sackville are key resources. Fortunately, Edwin C. Bearss, the long-time National Park Service Historian, prepared two lengthy studies that included the history of the first 100 years of Vincennes and a study of the planning and development of the physical features (memorial building, landscaped grounds, and bridge approach) of the present park.

Bearss' Vincennes sites study provides a thoroughly documented review of the archival material related to the founding of Vincennes and the subsequent conflicts associated with Clark's capture, loss, and recapture of Fort Sackville (Bearss 1967). His historic structure report provides a similarly well documented review of the building of the present memorial building and the Lincoln Memorial Bridge (Bearss 1970). While such documents have not always been prepared with adequate concern for archeological questions, Bearss' two reports address archeological concerns in detail. Bearss specifically addressed the topic of the location of Post Vincennes within the community that came to bear Vincennes' name (Bearss 1967:38). Likewise, with respect to Fort Sackville, Bearss (1967) devotes a large portion of his Chapter VII to an analysis that places Fort Sackville and Clark's forces within and adjacent to the property presently administered by the National Park Service.

Park-Identified Objectives

James Holcomb, Superintendent at the time this study was initiated, listed the following as key management objectives for this archeological overview and assessment:

- (1) Report the known and potential archeological resources of the park.
- (2) Identify archeological research and projects needed by the park, including the following projects listed in the park's priority order:

- (a) Map the depth of fill soils throughout the park and make a statement as to the sensitiveness or lack of sensitiveness of the fill soils. If possible, identify areas where park management can plant a tree, remove a tree, bury an irrigation line, etc., without scheduling an archeological excavation.
- (b) Determine the true extent of the Old Cathedral cemetery. Church documents indicate that the cemetery contains far more burials than the present space would allow; consequently, human burials may extend beyond the modern cemetery boundary and into the park.
- (c) Evaluate the possibility that any remains of Fort Sackville can be located, and evaluate the value in excavating them.

Environmental Setting

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park is located in southwestern Indiana on the left bank of the Wabash River about 70 miles above its confluence with the Ohio River. The Wabash River occupies a broad valley. Wabash River valley deposits and those of the tributary streams primarily reflect the hydrologic activities related to the end of the Wisconsin Stage of the last period of glaciation (Winters 1969:1–2). Kellar (1956:12) refers to this region in Indiana as the Wabash lowlands and, like Winters, characterizes the tributary valleys as highly aggraded as a result of accumulations of gravel in the main river channels. He describes the region lying between the Wabash and Ohio Rivers in southwest Indiana as gently rolling uplands that become increasingly rough along the Ohio River in Perry County (Kellar 1958). The Wabash River and associated natural resources are the features that most significantly affected both historic and prehistoric human activities in the vicinity of George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

During the period of Euroamerican colonization, vegetation around Vincennes was a mixture of forest and open prairies in the upland zones, with seasonally marshy areas along the Wabash floodplain. Kuchler (1964) characterized this portion of the Mixed Mesophytic Forest as predominately Beech-Maple, with some open areas of Bluestem Prairie in the uplands. He identifies the dominant trees as Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) and Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*). Other components of the forest included Pecan (*Carya ovata*), Ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*), Elms (*Ulmus* spp.), Basswood (*Tilia americana*), Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), Yellow Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*). The prairie was dominated by Big and Little Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*, *A. scoparius*), Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), and Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and it would have been populated with a host of other grasses and forbs.

J. Potzger et al. (1956) reviewed earlier studies of tree species identified by land surveyors who conducted the original surveys that the federal government used to control title to what was then (1799–1846) public lands. Although sharing much in common with the broader regional characterization of Kuchler, Potzger et al. identify Oak-Hickory forest, Oak Openings (mixed oak and prairie savanna), and more traditional Beech-Maple forest across much of southwestern Indiana. They emphasize the effect of slope on the distribution of the two major forest groups, with Oak-Hickory on the south facing slopes and Beech-Maple on north facing slopes. Their analysis characterizes much of the area adjacent to Vincennes as Oak Openings. Oak-Hickory forest surrounded this parkland, with the more traditional Beech-Maple forest lying mostly to the east and north of Knox County (Potzger et al. 1956:Figure 3).

It is worth noting that along the Wabash south of Vincennes “other tree species” make up substantial percentages of the “witness trees” recorded by the land surveyors. The area of the lower Wabash floodplain may be characterized as Kuchler’s Southern Floodplain Forest (Community Type 113). This region is populated by various Oaks (*Quercus* spp.), Water Tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*), and Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*). This corresponds to Winters’ (1969:6) reference to the “Indiana Pocket,” in which a number of plant and animal species that typically have southern distributions are present (see also Green and Munson 1978:298). The area has been characterized as having a more moderate climate than much of the surrounding area (Winters 1969:5; Green and Munson 1978:298).

Regional Prehistory

Published reports of archeological surveys or excavations in the vicinity of George Rogers Clark National Historical Park are limited, although considerable work has taken place along the Wabash and Ohio Rivers near their confluence. James Kellar (1973, 1983) provides a popular overview of the archeological resources and culture history of Indiana. Howard Winters (1967) describes a survey of the Illinois side of the lower Wabash River and later the excavation of Illinois shell middens at locations east and north of Vincennes (Winters 1969). Winters (1967:15) notes that many of the prehistoric complexes along the middle and lower Wabash “have no precise equivalents in contiguous areas of the Midwest” and concluded that many of the cultural entities had stronger associations with cultural developments to the south, in Tennessee.

James H. Kellar conducted inventory surveys of several counties in southwestern Indiana in the mid-1950s. His reports on Spencer County (Kellar 1956) and Perry County (Kellar 1958) go somewhat beyond typical inventories of the period. Kellar provides an assessment of similarities and differences between the inventories and relates these primarily to topographic factors. Although both of these survey areas contain some features common to Knox County and other parts of the Wabash Lowlands (e.g., highly aggraded tributary valleys), they differ in that they have greater topographic relief. Kellar (1958) notes that Perry County had more rockshelter sites because of the greater relief associated with the bluffs along the Ohio River.

Ben Morris (1969) conducted surveys at three small reservoir locations in the counties of Owen, Putnam, and Parke. His work was limited by inundation and operational activities of the existing reservoirs and landowner access restrictions in the area of the Big Pine Reservoir. He recorded primarily lithic debris and projectile points, most of which he attributed to Archaic period use of the area. Morris’ study area lies about 70 miles northeast of Vincennes, and the reservoir locations are on tributary streams of the Wabash River.

Thomas Green reported a 1972 survey of Posey County and Gibson County in extreme southwestern Indiana (Green n.d.). Green and Munson (1978) analyzed the temporal placements, distributions, and artifact associations of Mississippian sites in southwestern Indiana, particularly along the Ohio River and the extreme southern portion of the Wabash River. Kellar (1979) discussed a Hopewellian component at one of the sites included in Green and Munson’s study.

Mauck (1996) recently reviewed the published and unpublished literature pertaining to southwestern Indiana. The Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology has made abstracts of reports produced from 1986 to 1993 available on the World Wide Web at <<http://www.gbl.indiana.edu/abstracts/cur.html>>. These present results of work conducted throughout Indiana. They provide a good overview of recent research but do not contain references to work in Knox County.

The prehistoric resources of southwestern Indiana fit into the broad framework used throughout the Midwest. Indiana archeological sites can usually be characterized as belonging to one of four major archeological traditions. The artifact inventory and array of site features increase through time, presumably reflecting both increasing population density and increasing diversity of the subsistence and settlement systems. Winters (1967:Table 1) illustrates the sequence of archeological traditions (and some sub-units) for the central and lower Wabash River valley. Kellar (1983:24–25) has also outlined the major traditions and many of the temporal and spatial sub-units for Indiana. Although dates assigned to the transition from one major cultural tradition to another are only approximate, Kellar summarized the regional sequence as follows:

Paleoindian	prior to 8000 BC
Archaic	8000 BC to 1000 BC
Woodland	1000 BC to AD 900
Mississippian	AD 900 to AD 1600

No sites with Paleoindian materials in good context have been excavated in proximity to George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. In Indiana this cultural tradition is known primarily from the recovery of large lanceolate points from cultivated fields and eroded surfaces (Kellar 1983:26). Such finds usually occur as isolated artifacts. Similar styles of points have been recovered in the western and south-western states in association with extinct Pleistocene fauna. Dates assigned to individual point styles are generally based on information derived from stratified sites outside Indiana. The assumption is that the peoples responsible for the production of these tools were primarily dependent on hunting large mammals.

Archaic period sites are more numerous and manifest more complex artifact assemblages than Paleoindian sites. Sites of this period (especially from the early and middle phases) are typically identified on the basis of variation in the form of the large projectile points. It is presumed that rapidly changing climatic factors following the end of the last period of glaciation influenced the settlement and subsistence patterns at the beginning of this period. In eastern North America generally, there was more dependence on plants combined with the exploitation of greater variety of animal resources. There are indications that some endemic plants were actively cultivated during the Archaic, and they become fairly common in collections from later Woodland sites. A number of species, such as Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), Sumpweed or Marshelder (*Iva annua*), and varieties of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* spp.), are represented by large-seed varieties that do not exist in modern wild populations. These cultivated varieties, or “cultivars,” are interpreted as evidence of intensive cultivation and manipulation of seed stocks.

Large middens that contain considerable amounts of shell from river mussels are present along the Wabash River near Vincennes and are associated with the Late Archaic Riverton populations (Winters 1969). Kellar (1983:34) suggests that early pottery may be associated with some Archaic sites in western Indiana. The Archaic period reflects an increasingly complex material culture, distinct regional and temporal variants in artifact styles and subsistence, and elaborate mortuary activities. Munson and Munson (1984) observe a pronounced shift in the use of local vs. foreign cherts at Archaic sites east of Vincennes in central Indiana. In their study area, local cherts were much more commonly used for tools and represented by debitage during the Late Archaic. The Munsons suggest that this may represent a reduction in size of the “territories” of Late Archaic peoples.

Pottery is a consistent element of Woodland Tradition habitation sites and serves as the principal tool for cultural typologies during this period, especially the middle and latter portions. Burials placed in (primarily conical) earthen mounds became commonplace, and this pattern lasted throughout Woodland times. Kellar (1979) summarized the Middle Woodland cultural units known along the Wabash River. Kellar (1979:106–107) and Mauck (1996:6–7) note the absence of Hopewellian traits in sites assigned to the Middle Woodland Allison-LaMotte sequence in the central Wabash River valley above Vincennes. In contrast, sites belonging to Crab Orchard Tradition along the lower Wabash River valley and other lower Wabash River valley sites that are related to the Mann site (12Po2) complex do exhibit numerous Hopewellian traits (Ruby 1992). Late Woodland sites classified as Yankeetown have been located in the immediate area of Vincennes and down the Wabash River valley to its confluence with the Ohio River (Winters 1967:60–71; Mauck 1996:7,8).

Green and Munson (1978:300) discuss the major Mississippian phases in southwestern Indiana. They place Yankeetown phase sites in the terminal Late Woodland era but note that other researchers consider this phase as an “emergent Mississippian” phenomenon. Their discussion focuses on settlement pattern differences between Angel phase and Caborn-Welborn phase Mississippian sites. Both of these manifestations are largely restricted to the Ohio River valley and the lower reaches of the Wabash River valley below Vincennes. Winters (1967:71–83) identified several sites along the Wabash River and Embarrass River in Illinois, which he assigned to two late Mississippian taxa. Winters named the best-represented of these as Vincennes Culture. These sites are concentrated near Lawrenceville, Illinois, which is located a few miles to the northwest of Vincennes.

Archeological work within George Rogers Clark National Historical Park has not revealed any prehistoric material in a context that could be defined as a site. Small amounts of lithic debris have been re-

covered in a few test units indicating that the potential for prehistoric site discovery still exists. No lithic debris has yet been found in association with soil strata or archeological features indicating habitation or resource processing activities. Most occurrences have been in matrices that also contained historic artifacts.

Site History and Significance

Vincennes came into being in the early eighteenth century as a result of French interest in protecting the area between their two commercial enclaves, New France and Louisiana, which were located at the opposite ends of the Mississippi River drainage. British traders had been expanding their area of influence inland from the colonies on the central east coast. The British and their Indian allies were perceived as threatening the water route connecting New France and Louisiana. By 1733 Francois-Marie Bissot, Sieur de Vincennes, had established a post on the Wabash River for the Western Company, a commercial firm operating in Louisiana (Bearss 1967:5–15, Balesi 1992:177–178). By 1733 Vincennes had constructed a small fort consisting of a stockade and two houses, and he planned to add a barracks and blockhouse to accommodate the garrison of 30 soldiers and two officers he had requested from the authorities in New Orleans. By 1736, when Vincennes joined an expedition against the Chickasaw, he was able to recruit about 100 “French militia” to join the small group of regulars (Bearss 1967:250). Although some of the militia may have been recruited from further afield, this number of fighting-age men suggests a good-sized community adjacent to Vincennes’ small fort.

Post Vincennes remained under French control and under the management of Louis de St. Ange from the time of Vincennes’ death during the 1736 expedition against the Chickasaw until the region was transferred to British control in 1763. Bearss, citing a variety of sources, estimates that at the time the British began to have a presence in Vincennes the community consisted of 200–400 individuals. In addition to military personnel and traders, the town contained 60–80 families (Bearss 1967:46–53). A Piankashaw Indian village existed next to Post Vincennes throughout much of the period from its founding to the assumption of British control (Bearss 1967:12, 20, 34, 54). Bearss, citing the failure of a British officer to comment on a fort at Vincennes, concluded that by the late 1760s Vincennes’ fort had been salvaged by settlers in the community.

During 1777, the British placed Edward Abbott in Vincennes, and by the end of the year he had built a small fortified camp christened Fort Sackville (Bearss 1967:62). Bearss located a copy of a plan of Fort Sackville, dated 1778, in the Illinois State Historical Library (Bearss 1967:62, Plate VI). Once again, reference is made to organizing three companies of militia (50 men each) from the community (Bearss 1967:62). Abbott left Vincennes in the winter and returned to Detroit. In the summer of 1778, George Rogers Clark led a small American army into the Illinois country and seized the poorly manned British forts at Kaskaskia on the Mississippi River and at Vincennes on the Wabash River. But by late fall of 1778, the fort at Vincennes was manned by only one member of Clark’s army (Captain Helm) and the community militia (Bearss 1967:74).

By December 1778, Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton had reached Vincennes from Detroit and had retaken Fort Sackville from Captain Helm. Of interest here is a census taken by Hamilton, which counted 621 individuals of whom 217 (35 percent) were fighting-age men (Bearss 1967:84). Bearss summarizes many changes made to the fort’s structure in the winter of 1778. Changes included the construction of conventional blockhouses at two opposing corners, two barracks, a powder magazine and guardhouse, the digging of a well, and the removal of salient angles that had been centered on each wall (Bearss 1967:85–87).

By late February 1779, Clark had besieged Fort Sackville and within two days had forced the surrender of Hamilton and his remaining force. The fort was renamed Fort Patrick Henry by the Americans. By 1782, many of the structural elements of the fort had been salvaged and the remnants appear to have continued to decay (Bearss 1967:136). About 1813 Fort Knox III was erected in the community of Vincennes on or very near the location of Post Vincennes and Fort Sackville (Bearss 1967:239, 267, 268). This post and its two predecessors were created to assert American control over portions of the land ceded by Great

Britain and to provide protection from Indian raiders. In 1967 Bearss cautioned that archeological exploration for the remains of Fort Sackville might encounter remnants of Fort Knox III and that the situation could be confusing (Bearss 1967:268).

Bearss (1967) detailed much of the history of Vincennes through the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and in a subsequent volume he dealt with the development of the memorial up to the establishment of the present national historical park (Bearss 1970). This latter report provides colorful insights into the politics that surrounded the planning and development stages of the memorial. Most useful for the archeological overview and assessment are Chapters 4 and 6 (Bearss 1970), which provide some specific data on the construction of the memorial and the bridge, and on the landscaping of the grounds.



Figure 2. Alterations to the early-twentieth-century landscape during an early stage of construction of the Clark Memorial. View is to the approximate northeast. Photograph courtesy of Dennis Latta of George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

Archeological Projects Related to Resources Within the Park

Fort Knox II

Starting in the early 1960s, archeologists from what was to become the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology began to excavate the site of Fort Knox II (Johnson 1964; Gray 1988:9–11). Gray (1988) summarizes the excavations undertaken at Fort Knox II. This American military fort was built in 1803 about three miles above Vincennes on the Wabash River (Bearss 1967:234–239). The post was occupied until 1813, when it was superceded by Fort Knox III, located in Vincennes (Gray 1988:44–45). The third Fort Knox existed until 1816 (Gray 1988:45).

Also in the late 1980s, the National Park Service was directed to undertake a new-area study of Fort Knox II and evaluate the option of adding this property to George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. The study identified multiple state and federal entities that could administer the site of Fort Knox II and did not make a specific recommendation that the area be incorporated into George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. The results of the archeological work at the nineteenth-century Fort Knox II do not offer much to assist either park managers or archeologists at George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology Excavations

In 1970 and 1971 Curtis Tomak, representing the Glenn A. Black Laboratory, undertook excavations primarily in the mall area in front of the memorial building. Tomak's excavations appear to have been sponsored by the National Park Service with the intent of addressing Bearss' recommendation that an archeological project be planned to evaluate the possibility of the survival of physical remnants of Fort Sackville (Bearss 1967:134). Tomak's excavations concentrated on the center of the Mall near the memorial building, although work was also undertaken at the other end of the Mall (near the bridge) and beside and in front of the old cemetery. His initial trenches were designed to intercept remnants of the southwest wall line of Fort Sackville. If it survived, it was thought that the fort wall would be manifest as a post-filled trench oriented more or less parallel to the mall. Tomak did not discover such a feature in his initial excavations, and the tests near the bridge-end of the Mall were devoid of features that could even speculatively be associated with Fort Sackville (Tomak 1972:27, 28).

In the excavation units closest to the memorial building Tomak's crew eventually discovered partial remains of a small building and two trenches containing post molds (Tomak 1972:29–38). Both Tomak's Wall A and Wall B begin near the remains of the small (archeological) building in front of the memorial and extend toward what is now the back of the Old Cathedral cemetery. Both trench features were damaged by late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century developments. Only Wall A could be followed (intermittently) to the boundary between the park and the property of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. These features were first identified as probable remains of fort walls (Tomak 1972:32, 62). However, after much consideration of the known and possible dimensions of the three forts thought to have been located in this area, Tomak (1972:50) concluded that it was not clear what had been found. Tomak's only concentration of potential eighteenth-century artifacts came from a shallow trench in front of the Old Cathedral cemetery (Tomak 1972:42, 52–61).

Tomak provides a good analysis of several of the problems that hinder the interpretation of the archeological features he observed. The development of the commercial structures that dominated this portion of Vincennes from before 1900 until the 1930s resulted in considerable disturbance of the historic grade (Tomak 1972:17–18, Figs. 6 and 7). The demolition of these structures and the subsequent grading and landscaping further compromised the historic surface (Tomak 1972:20–21). References to directions and distances in the historic documents are also less than clear (Jones 1995; Tomak 1972:2–3, 12–13).

In 1975, staff from the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology monitored the excavation (by heavy machinery) of the basement or lower level of the new visitor center. Kellar oversaw the archeological work but did not actively participate. Although two features were discovered and excavated, they were judged to postdate the era of Post Vincennes and Fort Sackville. Even though Kellar noted the coopera-

tion of the construction crew, he also observed that the process was flawed enough that objects or features associated with Fort Sackville could have been destroyed (Kellar n.d.).

Monitoring by Midwest Archeological Center, 1988–1990

On two occasions staff from the Midwest Archeological Center have undertaken limited excavations at George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. In 1988, Forest Frost directed a crew that tested the location planned for the placement of a small stone monument to U.S. Navy ships named for the community of Vincennes. This monument is located just to the north-northeast of the intersection of Second and Vigo streets. It is within the area that had been landscaped during the construction of the Clark Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial Bridge. The upper 70 cm of the deposit were interpreted as being associated with the bridge construction. The material recovered from 70 cm to 93 cm below the surface was considered to date between 1850 and 1900. In deposits between 93 cm and 123 cm below surface (cmbs) a very small number of artifacts was recovered. One of these was a chert flake, suggesting prehistoric or early contact period Native American use of the area.

In 1990 Mr. Frost led a crew that excavated four test units in advance of the construction of the present maintenance facility in the southwest corner of the park. The site of this facility is away from the likely location of Fort Sackville and was ascertained to have been the location of a hotel and is close to the location of a glass factory (Frost 1990). It is also near the former gas plant that supplied gas to downtown Vincennes. One excavation unit was carried down to a depth of 285 cm and two of the others were excavated to 150 cm. Only the fourth excavation unit reached what was thought might be original grade (at a depth of 45 cm). No artifacts were recovered attributable to the era of the Revolutionary War.

Archeological Work at the Old Cathedral

In 1996, Rob Mann undertook a test of areas close to the Old Cathedral Complex, where a drainage system was going to be installed (Mann 1996). He concluded that three of the tests had encountered evidence of grave shafts. The soil features that marked the initial recognition of the graves were encountered at 30–70 cm (11–27 inches) below the modern surface. The grave shafts were initially recognized as sand and gravel intrusions into the “intact A horizon” (Mann 1996:10). One feature was excavated to ca. 170 cm (5.5 ft), at which point evidence of a wood coffin was encountered and the excavation was halted. The area adjacent to the Old Cathedral is thought to have been used as a cemetery at least from the mid-1700s through the mid-1800s. In his analysis of the Clark Memorial, Bearss (1970:106) cites a local newspaper account of the discovery of a human skull and other bones at a depth of 4 ft (120 cm) in a gravel matrix. The discovery was made by a contractor installing the irrigation system in the 1930s and was found in an area east-northeast of the Old Cathedral Complex.

Other Archeological Projects

In 1975, Superintendent Lagemann monitored the excavation of a trench west of the new visitor center. He observed a number of large mammal bones that he collected. These were examined at the Midwest Archeological Center and determined to be the partial remains of a domestic cow. No archeological feature is known to have been associated with the bones.

In August 1997, Park Archeologist Bret Ruby, Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, excavated shovel tests in a landscaped traffic island within George Rogers Clark National Historical Park (Ruby 1997). The goal of the shovel testing was to identify archeological features and artifacts prior to the disturbance of the area associated with the renovation of the landscape plantings. The initial plan called for the excavation of twelve 50 cm by 50 cm test units in an area of approximately 70 m by 20 m. A grid was established with zero east and zero north located at the intersection of the sidewalks along Patrick Henry Drive and Second Street. Eventually, two 50-cm-square tests and 10 auger holes were excavated at 10-m intervals across the area.

Results of Archeological Projects

The architectural features that Tomak encountered in his excavations at George Rogers Clark National Historical Park could not clearly be attributed to any of the forts that may have been built adjacent to, or on top of, each other (Tomak 1972). No plan is known for Post Vincennes, and little detail is available on Fort Knox III (Bears 1967:268). At French military and fur trade forts in the Southeast, palisades were often formed of quartered logs (ca. one to one and a half feet in diameter) set in trenches about 3 feet deep (Waselkov 1989:xiii–xiv). More information is available on Fort Sackville and the changes that Hamilton had made to it during the winter of 1778–1779 (Bears 1967:85–87, Plate VI). Details of common domestic architecture of early French villages suggest a number of non-fort features that could be represented by the trenches and post-molds that Tomak recorded. Franzwa (1973) describes residential properties in Ste. Genevieve as

laid out in squares about the size of a small city block. Enclosing the square was a stockade fence of vertically-placed pointed logs, usually cedar or oak, about seven feet high, with about three feet of the log in the ground.

Within such a fenced lot would have been a house and perhaps one or more outbuildings, many of which were also constructed of vertical posts set in trenches. Bearss (1967:229) cites an account of Vincennes in 1796 by C.F. Volney in which he observed “Each house, as is customary in Canada, stands alone, and is surrounded by a court and garden, fenced with poles.” Later, Bearss (1967:231) cites an account in which Vincennes is described as being “laid out in squares about 2 acres each.” A square with an area of 2 acres would have sides of approximately 295 feet. Peterson (1993), describing property in the village of New Chartres near St. Louis, quotes from the record of a 1760s transaction:

to wit: one house built on sills, consisting in two rooms, two closets, a shed, the lot belonging to said house, of which the parties cannot tell the dimensions, and on which there is a barn covered with straw, a pigeon house, a well of wood and other conveniences; said lot enclosed with cedar posts on all its faces ...

Peterson indicates that such palisade type fencing was common in the villages of the upper Mississippi and compulsory in some settlements (Peterson 1993:10–11). He attributes both defensive and animal control functions to the practice.

Tomak (1972:50) concluded, “the writer is just not sure what has been found.” However, in other sections of his report he was able to deduce that the limited number of datable artifacts made it likely that the archeological features he dubbed “Wall A” were of nineteenth century origin and he doubted that he had located Vincennes’ post (Tomak 1972:49, 63). Tomak went to great lengths to attempt to match the potential segments of “wall trenches” with different estimates of the dimensions of Fort Sackville and the last Fort Knox, but without very successful results.

In 1970 and 1971 a meager concentration of eighteenth-century artifacts that were not clearly associated with the remains of any historic structure was recovered from a shallow excavation unit in front of the church cemetery. Frost’s (1988) work near the memorial dedicated to warships named Vincennes and the approach to the Lincoln Memorial Bridge indicated the 1930s grade was about 70 cm (28 inches) below the modern surface. Mann’s work around the Old Cathedral Complex and Tomak’s work near the boundary between the Mall and Old Cathedral cemetery indicate, as expected, that this area has had the least change in grade since the period of Clark’s taking of Fort Sackville. Tomak’s field notes and report indicate that as much as 5 ft (150 cm) of fill exists in the Mall area in front of the memorial building. Elsewhere, it is likely that ca. 30 cm (1 ft) of primarily nineteenth-century material overlies the remains from the eighteenth century. Tomak noted about a foot of overburden near the boundary between the park and the Old Cathedral cemetery lot. Ruby’s testing between the bridge and the downtown business district revealed a substantial amount of late disturbance associated with the development of the present bridge and memorial. He did not find objects or deposits that appeared to relate to either prehistoric or early historic use of the area.

Location of Collections and Records

Since the Midwest Archeological Center began working at George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, all of the resulting collections have been housed at the Midwest Archeological Center (Table 1). The records and collections resulting from Tomak's archeological work in the 1970s are presently curated at the park.

Table 1. Museum collections from George Rogers Clark National Historical Park (GERO), Vincennes, Indiana, curated at the Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC), Lincoln, Nebraska.

GERO Accession	MWAC Accession	Project Year	Author, Investigator
25	17	1975	Lagemann
22	294	1988	Frost
26	362	1990	Frost



Figure 3. Alterations to the early-twentieth-century landscape during construction of the Clark Memorial. The large hole excavated in front of the memorial is at, or near, the probable location of Fort Sackville. View is to the approximate west. Photograph courtesy of Dennis Latta of George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Probable Archeological Resources within the Present Park

It is likely that the present park incorporates land that contains all or portions of Post Vincennes, Fort Sackville, and Fort Knox III. It is also possible that portions of a civilian community that grew around Post Vincennes are within the park boundaries. The Piankashaw village that existed near the community of Vincennes during portions of the French era probably lies outside the park boundaries. It is, however, possible that an earlier protohistoric or prehistoric Native American community occupied portions of land now within the park.

The palisade walls and bastions or blockhouses of the forts would be the most diagnostic features, but traces of them would also be difficult to interpret if damaged by subsequent developments. With a few exceptions, buildings within the various posts might be difficult to differentiate from earlier or later civilian structures. Certainly the documents summarized by Bearss indicate that Fort Sackville contained a few modest buildings, and there is nothing yet reported indicating that Post Vincennes was substantial. Through the French period and probably well past Clark's seizure of Fort Sackville, the village would have had a much lower density of development than the modern community. The descriptions of contemporary frontier French communities, cited above, would indicate that one or two residences would have occupied the space of a modern city block.

Obstacles to the Discovery and Interpretation of Major Archeological Sites

The century and a half of substantial development of the downtown and riverfront of the community of Vincennes no doubt adversely impacted the physical remains from the period of colonial conflict. Portions of the riverfront have been affected by the construction of a railroad bed, a levee, the current seawall, the Bierhaus and Sons grocery warehouse, and other commercial buildings recorded on fire maps of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Tomak 1972:Fig. 6). Historic-era photographs in the park collection illustrate the substantial impact of the construction of the Clark Memorial, the Mall, and the Lincoln Memorial Bridge (Figures 2–4).

Tomak (1972:17, 18) encountered buried pavement from First Street, as well as ditches for curbs and trenches that held utilities buried beneath First Street. He noted that fill placed in front of the memorial building caused the walls of several excavation units to slump or collapse. The depth of fill and modern developments for tourist use made it difficult to excavate in large blocks. While less costly and less disruptive to park operations, the use of narrow trenches made it more difficult to interpret the fragmentary archeological remains that were encountered.

Given the likely fragmentary remains of the early forts and associated structures it would be unwise to plan an archeological project specifically to seek the surviving features. Costs would be high and the disruption of other visitor uses of the memorial would be substantial. The physical remains would not, in all likelihood, be of a nature or in a location that would allow them to be interpreted in place. The physical remains would not add greatly to the park's ability to interpret the historic events that contribute to the significance of the park's location. Any maintenance or development project that might involve excavation to a depth approaching the historic grade should be reviewed with the recognition that significant archeological features and artifacts could be encountered.

Recommended Studies

Three projects would contribute to knowledge of the park and preservation of historic materials without interfering with routine park operations. The first consists of producing a detailed resource and boundary map integrated with Geographic Information System (GIS) data. A GIS-based map would allow the ca. 1900–1930 developments (streets, buildings, utilities), the Clark and Lincoln memorial constructions, the 1970s archeological features and excavations, and the present park boundary to be compared with various scenarios for the locations of Post Vincennes, Fort Sackville, and Fort Knox III. The

city of Vincennes has a topographic map that could be used as one layer of the GIS map. Additional layers could be geo-referenced to the topographic layer by reference to three or more common points.

The second project entails a geophysical assessment of the locations, amounts, and types of fill applied over portions of the historic grade and the extent to which the historic grade has been reduced or removed in other locations. Previously unknown graves might be detected as well. If the officials responsible for the Old Cathedral Complex agree, a geophysical survey to include a search for unmarked graves would begin within the present cemetery. This first stage would establish baseline data, or a signature, by taking measurements across known graves using ground-penetrating radar and soil resistivity techniques. This information is essential for the interpretation of data gathered from areas outside the fenced cemetery that possibly contain unknown graves. Mann's (1996) testing provides significant local stratigraphic data to facilitate interpretation of the geophysical data.

The other goal of the geophysical work should be to map the fill used to create the modern surface around the Clark Memorial, the Mall, and the approach to the Lincoln Memorial Bridge. It is likely that ground-penetrating radar and soil resistivity will prove useful for mapping the stratigraphy of the fill soil, although seismic techniques might also be suited to this task. It might be possible to map a few of the pre-memorial developed features (e.g., streets, utilities), but it is not realistic to expect to detect remains of the eighteenth-century posts or Fort Knox III. Rather, the objective is to develop a basis for evaluating the potential impact of park maintenance and development projects and to define areas that might be suitable for future archeological research efforts.

The third project has an inherent time constraint. Oral histories of the Clark and Lincoln memorial constructions should be sought and recorded. A few individuals who were old enough to be aware of the developments should still be available for interviews. Such a study will not be possible in a few more years, and such a project might lead to the discovery of additional photographs and other records that could be copied for the park's collections. Modern computerized techniques may make it possible to extract surprisingly accurate information about the changes to the ca. 1930 grade from old photographs.



Figure 4. Alterations to the early-twentieth-century landscape during construction of the Clark Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial Bridge. The probable location of Fort Sackville is in front of the columned memorial building and near the railroad overpass. View is to the approximate south-southwest. Photograph courtesy of Dennis Latta of George Rogers Clark National Historical Park.

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