SELECTED PAPERS
FROM the 1989 and 1990
GEORGE ROGERS CLARK
TRANS-APPALACHIAN FRONTIER
HISTORY CONFERENCES

Edited by
Robert J. Holden

Vincennes, Indiana
1991
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Dear Reader:

The year 1991 is an important year for the National Park Service. It was 75 years ago on August 25, 1916, that the U.S. Congress established the National Park Service. Its mandate was and still is to conserve the natural and historical resources found in our national park areas and to provide for the enjoyment of those resources by future generations. Historical research and publication are the forerunners of knowledge, preservation and enjoyment, all valuable components to preserving historical resources.

In this year of celebration, it is especially fitting that this fourth volume of selected papers from the 1989 and 1990 George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences be published, thus preserving new research for public access.

The annual history conference is conducted on the campus of Vincennes University and presented cooperatively by George Rogers Clark National Historical Park and Vincennes University. The conference was established in 1983 to encourage research of the American frontier at a time when the frontier was located between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. For the past eight years this gathering has presented a forum for sharing research information with scholars and the general public.

The National Park Service is pleased to be able to help make this publication possible. We trust that the reader will find the material both informative and enjoyable.

Sincerely,

James Holcomb
Superintendent
Dear Reader:

Vincennes University is proud to be associated with the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service in the Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conference. This is a continuing event which has interpreted an important period in the history of our country. The results of the study and deliberation of historians can be found in the Selected Papers, which are part of this publication.

The Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conference is appropriately held on the campus of Vincennes University. VU is the oldest college west of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio River. The history of the college and that of the community and frontier are intertwined. In fact, the University celebrates this year the 190th anniversary of its 1801 founding.

I congratulate the authors and historians for their work in writing the papers, which are part of this publication. It is through continued research and study that we can better understand our history and heritage. I appreciate the opportunity for VU to join with the National Park Service in this publication and encourage the reader to enjoy the selected papers about the history of the Trans-Appalachian frontier.

Sincerely,

Phillip M. Summers
President
Addressing the American Historical Association in 1893, frontier historian Frederick Jackson Turner postulated that the unoccupied land adjacent to the line of settlement had acted as a magnet drawing Americans westward and in the process had helped imbue them with a distinctly American character. Such personal traits as mobility, innovativeness, enterprise, egalitarianism and a dedication to democratic principles, he believed, were products of the frontier experience.

In the century following Turner’s presentation, the study of American frontier history has flourished. There is something basic and elemental in the frontier dynamic that appeals to researchers and readers alike. Thousands of books and articles have been written, but many areas remain to be explored.

The annual George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences were inaugurated in 1983 by the National Park Service and Vincennes University to encourage research into the early recorded years of this region. The great importance of Vincennes during the frontier period makes this historic city a logical setting for these annual gatherings.

This volume from the 1989 and 1990 conferences contains papers on a wide variety of frontier subjects including traders, forts, warfare, Indians and frontiersmen. The geographical area covered in the papers extends from northern Ohio to central Tennessee and from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. The authors provide much material of interest for the professional historian and for the general reader.

Many individuals have given invaluable assistance with the 1989 and 1990 history conferences and the preparation of these
selected papers. I wish to express my appreciation to Terry DiMattio, James Holcomb, Terri Utt, Pat Wilkerson, Richard Day and Pamela A. Nolan of the National Park Service, and to Robert R. Stevens, E.J. Fabyan, Douglas Power, Ken J. Whitkanack, Harold Turner and Barbara A. Kunkler of Vincennes University. A special word of thanks is due Dr. Phillip M. Summers, president of Vincennes University, who has given much support during the past eight years to the conferences and to the printing of the resulting four volumes of selected papers.

Robert J. Holden
Historian and Conference Coordinator
George Rogers Clark National Historical Park

Vincennes, Indiana
August 1991
# Table of Contents

Letter – Superintendent James Holcomb .............................................i
Letter – President Phillip M. Summers ...............................................ii
Preface – Robert J. Holden ...............................................................iii

Traders and Invaders, Assimilators and Destroyers:
The Scots and Irish Among the Cherokee
William L. Anderson ........................................................................1

Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition:
Munition Supplies at George Rogers Clark’s Fort Jefferson,
1780-1781
Kenneth C. Carstens ........................................................................21

Fort Knox I – Forgotten Outpost
William L. Otten, Jr. ..........................................................................35

The History of Fort Washington at Cincinnati, Ohio:
A Case Study
James E. Westheider .........................................................................53

Who Defeated St. Clair?
Leroy V. Eid ......................................................................................69

The Social World of Middle Tennessee, 1780-1840
David C. Hsiung ..............................................................................89

Indian Angst and “Heathenish Practices”:
The Indiana Frontier, 1804-1811
Robert G. Gunderson .......................................................................107

The Myth of the Footloose Backwoodsman
Lucy Jayne Botscharow-Kamau ......................................................121
Traders and Invaders, Assimilators and Destroyers: The Scots and Irish Among the Cherokee

William L. Anderson
Western Carolina University

European historians often have made the observation that most of Napoleon’s greatest victories as well as his greatest defeats involved the Russians. In fact, Napoleon left instructions that he wanted his tomb constructed of a special red marble and the only place in which that red marble could be found, ironically, was in Russia. Just as the Russians were major factors in determining Napoleonic history, a similar statement might be made concerning the Scots and Irish in regard to Cherokee history. The Scots and Irish were definitely instrumental in most of the greatest and in most of the worst moments of the Cherokee. In fact, James Mooney, the noted ethnologist who helped preserve much of the Cherokee history and culture, states that families who have made Cherokee history were nearly all of mixed descent, especially the Scots and Irish.¹

Indeed the Scots and Irish seemed to be everywhere along the southern frontier. All of them cannot be identified precisely, but still many others can. They appeared among the Cherokee in many different and varied capacities. They appeared as such notable traders as Cornelius Doharty (1719), Ludovic Grant (1726), James Adair (1735-44 and 1751-59), John Elliot (1750), Daniel Ross (1785) and Clement Vann (1780). They surfaced in unofficial and official capacities for the British crown. Alexander Cuming was an unofficial ambassador to the Cherokee in 1730. In an official capacity there were individuals like George Chicken (commissioner of Indian affairs), Lachlan McIntosh (commanding officer at Fort Prince George), John Stuart (first
appearing as a soldier and later as superintendent of Indian affairs of the South). Both of Stuart’s deputies among the Cherokee, Alexander Cameron and John McDonald, were also Scots. Although technically speaking there were no Scot or Irish missionaries among the Cherokee in the 18th or early 19th centuries, William Richardson, the first missionary to live among the Cherokee, was educated in Scotland and was a missionary for the Presbyterian Church. Scots also appeared as invaders and conquerors like Archibald Montgomery (1760), James Grant (1761), Andrew Williamson and Griffith Rutherford (both in 1776). Even the governors of surrounding states which dealt with the Cherokee were often Scot or Irish. Glasglow-born Robert Dinwiddie was governor of Virginia in the 1750s. The first governor of North Carolina, William Drummond, was a Lowland Scot (1663-1667) as was Gabriel Johnston (1734-1752). Governor Arthur Dobbs who served in mid-century (1754-1765) was Scotch-Irish (his family migrated from Scotland to County Antrim in Ireland in the 16th century); and Samuel Johnston who served as governor of North Carolina from 1787-1789 was also a Lowland Scot. In South Carolina Governor James Glen was from Linlithgow and in the 19th century Governor George Troup of Georgia was also of Scottish descent. And of course, the ultimate defeat of the Cherokee – removal and the Trail of Tears – was brought about largely by the Scotch-Irishman, Andrew Jackson.

A first look should be given to the influence of some of the Scottish traders. Traders as a whole had a bad reputation. They were known to be of the “vilest sort” and the “scum of the earth.” But the Scot and Irish traders were not typical for the most part. Cornelius Doharty was described as an “old Virginia trader and a Scot.” He was considered fair and honest by both the Cherokee and his own government. In fact when the Cherokee War of 1760-1761 broke out, Doharty was spirited away from harm by his Cherokee friends. Although the Cherokee were certainly
familiar with black slavery as practiced by the whites, it was Doharty, as the owner of at least four slaves, who offered the Cherokee the first opportunity to observe it closely in practice. By the 19th century the peculiar institution was adopted by the more progressive Cherokee. It may have been the slaves of Doharty who introduced watermelon to the Cherokee, a crop which they were growing by mid-18th century.9

Ludovic Grant was a Scot who supported the Old Pretender in the “uprising of the '15” and as a ruined Jacobite was transported to America. By 1726 he had taken up residence among the Cherokee and his popularity and fairness gained him considerable influence with the headmen of every part of Cherokee country. Grant is regarded as perhaps the most intelligent and influential of the early traders. He left considerable information on the Cherokee and took at least one Cherokee wife.10

James Adair (1709-1783) was born in County Antrim, Ireland, and his ancestors lived in both Ireland and Scotland. Like many Scots of a later generation he left numerous offspring among the Cherokee.11 Although Adair was considered a diplomat and a peacemaker among the southern Indians, he is remembered primarily as a recorder of Indian history in his History of the American Indians published in London in 1775. Although the major thesis of his book is the idea that the Indians were the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, his work has outlived his thesis. His accurate account of tribal manners, customs and language is invaluable today, giving Adair a permanent place in Native American and Cherokee history.12

Chronologically the next trader who should be mentioned is the Scot, John Elliot. Unlike his Scottish predecessors, Elliot was not liked by the Cherokee. In fact, he was among the most hated of the traders. Little Carpenter, a prominent 18th century peace chief, complained in 1758 that the trade goods were insufficient and the prices too high. Little Carpenter believed that Elliot was
the major source of his complaints. Indeed at one point while Elliot was away, the Cherokee seized his weights and measures and the scales were found to register two pounds underweight and his measuring sticks were several inches short. When the Cherokee War broke out in 1760, militant braves picked Elliot as one of the first to be killed.

One last Scottish trader worth mentioning is Clement Vann, who established a trading post in Cherokee country about 1780. He married a Cherokee woman and had a son, James, who built a personal empire controlling more than 4,000 acres, 100 slaves, numerous orchards, a blacksmith and a liquor still. In doing so, he set an example for aspiring mixed bloods in the 19th century. Vann helped establish the Moravian mission and school at Spring Place where many future leaders of the Cherokee Nation such as Elias Boudinot, Stand Watie and John Ridge were educated.

The first Scot who appeared in an unofficial capacity among the Cherokee did so in a way that deserves a historical novel. This Scot was the eccentric Alexander Cuming (c. 1692-1775) who appeared in 1730. Cuming was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and wanted to be involved in Indian education. Later his wife had a dream about going into the American wilderness and he organized a private trip to South Carolina. Arriving in Charleston in December 1729, Cuming traveled to Cherokee country the following spring taking some guides and others with him. By the time he was deep in Cherokee country, Cuming had at least four other Scottish companions (George Chicken, Angus McPherson, Ludovic Grant and Lachlan McBain). Cuming visited Moytoy of Tellico (in present-day Tennessee) and proclaimed him emperor of all the Cherokee – a title for which later Cherokee would vie and in so doing would upset the entire Cherokee political organization.

Cuming also somehow got the Cherokee to recognize the supreme authority of England and persuaded the first Cherokee
to visit England on his return trip. Among the Cherokee who went to England with Cuming was Little Carpenter. This trip gave Little Carpenter the prestige to move forward in Cherokee politics and started his career as the greatest 18th century Cherokee leader. Cuming's trip undoubtedly added strength to the Anglo-Cherokee alliance and his journal and correspondence serve as a source on Cherokee culture.  

Another Scot, John Stuart (1718-1779) was, according to his standard biographer, a descendant of the royal house of Scotland. Stuart was born in Inverness in 1718. Although he and his father did not participate in the 1745 Jacobite uprising, they were probably Jacobite sympathizers. This possibly explains why, in 1748, Stuart came to America where he opened a store with Patrick Reid, another Scot. In 1757 he was appointed a captain in the South Carolina provincial army and was sent to Fort Loudoun to reinforce that newly established fort in Cherokee country. Tradition has it that shortly after his arrival in Cherokee territory he married Susannah Emory, the mixed blood granddaughter of Ludovic Grant. They had one son who inherited from his father a bushy shock of red hair and whom the Cherokee called Oo-no dota or Bushyhead. Oo-no dota founded a family who remains prominent in Cherokee society today. One of Stuart's descendants, Jesse Bushyhead, was the first Cherokee to become a Christian minister. He also became chief justice of the Cherokee Supreme Court and he led one of the groups of Cherokee west during the Trail of Tears.

During the Cherokee War, Stuart's life was saved by Little Carpenter. In 1761, the English crown appointed Stuart superintendent of the Indians in the South. (Incidentally, his counterpart, William Johnson, superintendent of the Indians in the North, was also a Scot who brought over many highlanders to the Mohawk Valley in New York.) Stuart was a loyalist who constantly was criticized by the Americans for trying to use the Indians against
them. His papers show, however, that he was reluctant to employ the tribes against the colonists and he did so only under pressure from his superiors.

Almost all the men employed by Stuart were Scots, including Alexander Cameron and John McDonald, the two deputies Stuart sent to Cherokee country. Cameron, whose real name was McLeod, was a native of Scotland who is believed to have migrated to Georgia with the highlanders who settled at Darien in 1736-1737. Although not well educated and “not brought up to business” he secured the rank of ensign in the Independent Regulars of South Carolina and probably served in the Cherokee War. He was stationed at Fort Prince George for about a year after that conflict and was employed by Stuart not long after the Independent Regulars were disbanded. By 1768 he was promoted to deputy superintendent and resided among the Cherokee. Cameron was a loyalist during the American Revolution, hoping to prevent any outbreak on the part of the Indians until the British were ready for a combined effort. Cameron married a Cherokee woman and had three children by her. The Cherokee obviously appreciated “Scotchie” as they affectionately called him, and gave him 12 square miles for his mixed blood offspring. According to one historian, Cameron lived like a Scottish nobleman among his clansmen at his Lochaber estate in South Carolina.

John McDonald was another Scot who was Stuart’s second deputy superintendent among the Cherokee. McDonald was born in Inverness about 1747 and came to Charleston around 1756. He obtained a license for a trading post near Fort Loudoun where in 1769 he met and married Anna Shorey, the mixed blood daughter of interpreter William Shorey (who accompanied Henry Timberlake and some Cherokee to London in 1762). McDonald was a loyalist during the American Revolution. After the Revolution he moved to Chickamauga (near Chattanooga, Ten-
nessee) where he had tremendous influence over the Cherokee there who would continue to fight the Americans until the 1790s. After the American Revolution, some Americans believed that the only way they could win over the Cherokee was to win over McDonald first. But McDonald, influenced by the trading firm of Panton, Leslie and Company (originally composed only of Scots), became the first and only Spanish agent among the Cherokee.26 And it was with Spanish aid that the Cherokee continued to fight the Americans until 1794. In 1816 the United States government purchased 160 acres from McDonald at Chickamauga. Upon this tract of land was established the famous Brainerd Mission School for Cherokees destined to become a showplace of Native American learning.27

In addition to his direct personal influence with the Cherokee, McDonald perhaps had an even greater influence through his Cherokee offspring. His Cherokee daughter married a Scottish trader by the name of Daniel Ross. Ross was born in Southerlandshire, Scotland, about 1760 and was brought to Baltimore shortly afterwards. Orphaned by the end of the Revolution, Ross turned to the frontier for his living and by 1785 began trading with the Chickasaw out of Tennessee. The Cherokee asked Ross to establish trade with them. He responded by setting up a trading post at Settico in Lookout Mountain Valley which was reminiscent of his Scottish Highland home. Within a year he married Mollie, the daughter of John McDonald and Anna Shorey. Mollie and Daniel had a child who is perhaps the best known Cherokee in that tribe’s history. He, of course, was John Ross, chief of the Cherokee for almost 50 years, and who led the majority of the Cherokee in their opposition to removal.28

Another Scot who was among the Cherokee in an official capacity was Lachlan McIntosh who was born in Raits in Badenoch, Scotland, in 1727.29 In the winter of 1735, McIntosh’s father led his family and nearly 200 highlanders to settle and to
defend Georgia's southern frontier. In 1748 McIntosh moved from Georgia to Charleston, South Carolina, where he began a prominent military career. Scottish Governor James Glen of South Carolina appointed McIntosh to be the first commander of Fort Prince George, the first European fort built in Cherokee country. McIntosh remained in that capacity until 1759. As commander of Fort Prince George, McIntosh conducted frequent council meetings and maintained an "open door" policy with the Cherokee. He was liked so well by the Cherokee that some historians have suggested that McIntosh might have been able to prevent the Cherokee War had he remained in his post at Fort Prince George.30

Another Lachlan McIntosh, and one often confused with the first, was also a Darien settler. He was appointed colonel of a Georgia battalion in 1776 and soon was commissioned a brigadier general. In 1777 he fought a duel with Button Gwinnett, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Following the American Revolution, McIntosh was elected a delegate to the Continental Congress and was named one of the four congressional commissioners to treat with the southern Indians in 1785-1786. In November 1785, McIntosh was instrumental in negotiating the Treaty of Hopewell, the first treaty between the Cherokee and the newly formed United States government. Twelve years later Governor John Sevier of Tennessee appointed him to negotiate the Treaty of Tellico with the Cherokee (1798). Although he resigned that commission, he is remembered as a skillful handler of both diplomatic and military relations with the Cherokee. He always treated the Indians kindly and ultimately won their respect and confidence.31

John McIntosh, possibly the mixed blood grandson or cousin of Lachlan, was appointed in 1809 to the Cherokee National Committee to manage Cherokee affairs. In 1813 he fought for Andrew Jackson and led a company of Cherokee
warriors against the Creek. Simultaneously his mixed blood cousin and Creek Chief William McIntosh also supported Jackson against the Red Stick or traditional Creek.

The first white invader and conqueror of the Cherokee since DeSoto was Archibald Montgomery (1726-1796), a Scot born in Argyshire, Scotland, and who eventually was named 11th Earl of Eglinton. In 1756 at the beginning of the Seven Years’ War in Europe, Montgomery raised a regiment of 1,465 Highland Scots whom he took to America in 1757. The following year his regiment served as an advance expedition to Fort Duquesne. In 1760 Montgomery and his regiment of Highland Scots (numbering more than 1,300) were sent to end the Cherokee War which had erupted in the South. After destroying several Indian towns and villages as well as bringing smallpox, Montgomery was stopped just south of Etchoe – about 14 miles south of present-day Franklin, North Carolina. Montgomery believed he had defeated the Cherokee sufficiently for them to sue for peace, so he retreated to Charleston and embarked on his next assignment. Montgomery did not know the Cherokee that well. They continued to fight and even captured Fort Loudoun. One of the officers in Montgomery’s regiment, James Grant (1720-1806) was assigned the task of leading another expedition against the Cherokee. Grant was born in Ballindalloch and had fought in the battles of Culloden and Fontenoy. In 1757, Grant and Montgomery came to America together. After the failure of Montgomery’s expedition, Grant was appointed to lead approximately 2,400 men, of whom approximately 20 per cent were Highland Scots, against the Cherokee. Grant was the first white invader to penetrate the Middle Towns of the Cherokee, destroying numerous towns and inflicting a defeat on the Cherokee at a point near Montgomery’s defeat. Grant’s expedition was so destructive that the Cherokee quickly sued for peace ending the Cherokee War.

One of the lieutenants in the Grant expedition was Andrew
Williamson (1730-1786) who was also a Scot and who had come to America as a child. He supplied forts and army expeditions and in 1760 served in the Grant expedition. By 1765 he was an established planter with his plantation called Whitehall located about six miles west of present-day Ninety Six, South Carolina.  

Williamson was instrumental on at least one occasion in supplying the English with Cherokee clay which had been used in making the first porcelain in America and later was used in making jasper by Josiah Wedgwood. In 1776, during the American Revolution, the Americans planned a three-pronged attack from North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia against the Cherokee. Williamson led the forces from South Carolina and the following year signed a treaty which resulted in the loss of more than 6,000 square miles by the Cherokee in North and South Carolina.

Griffith Rutherford (1731-1800) led the North Carolina prong of the attack against the Cherokee. Rutherford was born in Ireland about 1731 and came to America eight years later. He settled in Rowan County, North Carolina, about 1753. Rutherford served in both colonial assemblies and provincial congresses. In 1753 he was appointed captain in the North Carolina militia and by 1776 achieved the rank of brigadier general. Rutherford led approximately 2,500 men into Cherokee territory where he destroyed 36 towns in the Middle Settlements before he was joined by Williamson’s forces (of 1,800) to attack other Cherokee settlements. This three-pronged attack resulted in the Cherokee being too devastated to make any further concerted action against the Americans. Fear of similar devastation kept other southern Indians from playing more than a minor role in the American Revolution.

So Scots made up significant numbers of the forces invading Cherokee territory and Scots or Irish seemed to have led the majority of invasions, especially the most devastating ones in the
second half of the 18th century. The history of the Scots, Irish and Cherokee crossed paths for a variety of reasons. Many Scots came to the English colonies for political reasons after the failure of the Jacobite rebellions. Scotland lost more of her sons and daughters by high rents and changing agricultural methods. The New World attracted these lost souls by holding out the prospect of economic gain. The Scottish clan system declined due to social and economic change and the failure of the Jacobite rebellions accelerated this decline. The clan culture was a warrior one and the British Army offered a familiar alternative by enlisting thousands of highlanders.

Scots became involved with all the tribes along the frontier perhaps because the frontier could employ their Old World talents in war. Many Scots who came to the New World were more sympathetic to Indian ideas and ideals. In many ways, the Scots also were the group best able to empathize with Native Americans. Scots saw similarities between themselves and Indian society. Indians followed a clan system. Both Scots and Indians had a tremendous sense of identity with nature and the environment. Neither viewed land ownership as individual. The Gaelic language as well as Native American tongues were spoken and not written until relatively recently. Both languages were rich in imagery. No wonder there was a close association between Scots and Indians.

This close association between the Scots and the Indians had both a negative and positive impact on the Cherokee. Scots and Irish generally treated the tribe fairly in business affairs. Many intermarried with the Cherokee and their progeny are part of the modern Cherokee population. As indicated, many of the great Cherokee leaders of the 19th century (most notably John Ross with a Scottish father and Scottish grandfather and Major Ridge with a Scottish grandfather) were of Scottish ancestry. But intermarriage also had some negative results. Mixed blood
leaders were the ones more prone to acculturation and the adoption of white man's ways. The rapid acculturation by the Cherokee in the early 19th century shocked Georgians who were already impatiently awaiting the United States government's extinguishment of Indian claims to land in their state. Consequently the Georgians, assured of presidential sympathy, passed a number of oppressive laws effectively ending Cherokee control over their tribal lands in Georgia.¹⁴ These laws in turn sped up the demand for removal. Acculturation also had a negative impact on the status of Cherokee women. In traditional Cherokee society, women had an equal voice in council meetings and were powerful due in part to the Cherokee matrilineal kinship system. With acculturation, women were relegated to an inferior status with no right to vote and with little control over land and family. Cherokee women became "as subserviant, oppressed and powerless as their white sisters." ¹⁵

Many Scots and Irish, notably Ludovic Grant, George Chicken, James Adair, John Stuart and James Grant, left records, either official or unofficial, which are invaluable in reconstructing Cherokee history and culture of the 18th century. But these same Scots, as well as their English colleagues, helped contribute to the destruction of the very Cherokee culture they were recording. The demand for deerskins brought change to the traditional precontact harmony with nature in which the Indians killed only what they needed. Commercial hunting also brought a decline in traditional prehunting rituals.¹⁶ By the end of the 18th century, perhaps long before, the Cherokee seriously had depleted the abundant game that once had existed on their land.¹⁷ With their resources becoming exhausted, the Cherokee gradually replaced them with white man's meat, especially swine and chicken. They eventually turned to farming, an action which threw women out of what had been their traditional role as well as one of their primary responsibilities.¹⁸
Traders and Invaders, Assimilators and Destroyers: 
The Scots and Irish Among the Cherokee

One of the items most demanded by the Cherokee from Scot, Irish and other traders was guns. The guns swapped with the Indians were known as “trade guns.” They were lighter and preferred by the Indians who wanted a weapon easy to carry. However, they broke down quicker and had a larger bore, requiring special shot. The use of these “trade guns” made certain the dependency of the Indians on the white man. Guns were extremely important for the Cherokee. Guns certainly facilitated the hunt and, together with the acquisition of white man’s horses, extended rather rapidly the Cherokee hunting range.50 Equally important, the Cherokee needed guns because their Creek enemies had guns. If the Cherokee did not have guns, they would be at a decided military disadvantage. The Cherokee had a choice of killing deer as a means of buying guns to defend themselves or else the tribe could face being killed or being enslaved.51 In the early 18th century the Cherokee traders on more than one occasion encouraged the Cherokee to wage war for slaves and to fight on the English side against the French or Spanish. The Cherokee were important as a barrier against the French or Spanish and they tried to use this rivalry to their own advantage. They allied themselves with the English in return for trade goods. The French and Indian War ended the French threat. Unfortunately it also ended the importance of the Cherokee as a barrier. By the end of the American Revolution when the British were driven out, the Cherokee and other Indians lost their last realistic opportunity to play one side against the other. The Cherokees then had to play the losing game of treating with the more powerful new Americans who steadily were increasing their demands for more land.52

Thus the Scots, Irish, as well as the English increased the frequency and the reasons for war for the Cherokee. Fighting beside and against the white man changed traditional Cherokee tactics. The Cherokee normally fought for revenge or in retali-
ation, usually killing the same number of enemy that the tribe had lost earlier. By 1817 the Cherokee attacked an Osage village in Arkansas while the men were away. The Cherokee actually "killed women and children, stole livestock and property, took about one hundred captives and burned the village," activities unheard of in earlier days. Traditional Cherokee tactics had been replaced by methods that came "to resemble those of the United States Army." The increase in the frequency of war also brought a decline in population and as long as the Indians were fighting one another, the threat of Indians unifying against the white man was lessened.

As early as 1725, the Cherokee reported that they had become dependent on white man’s trade. Trade goods and a "better kind of hatchet," as one historian has put it, helped bring about a decline in traditional crafts of the Cherokee. Trade goods brought by Scot, Irish and other traders also helped destroy Cherokee values of subsistence and equality. Prior to white contact, equality had existed among the Cherokee. "Getting ahead" was a white man’s concept. Of course there were some Cherokee who were better off than others but the difference was never great – that is until the appearance of the white man. Cherokee often obtained goods from traders on credit and these trade debts led to several land cessions in the 18th century and to more cessions in the 19th century.

Cuming and Chicken, as well as other Scots and English, also interfered with and helped change the Cherokee political system. A Cherokee chief became chief because of his ability to achieve a consensus of opinion, but often whites such as Cuming and Chicken dealt with certain individuals or towns of their own choosing, thus lending undue importance to those individuals or towns. A new standard was introduced into Cherokee politics – how well one could deal with the white man or how close one was located to white settlements. In fact, trader locations and the
establishment of factories brought about a change in the settlement patterns of the Cherokee.  

Besides death through increased warfare, white man’s diseases (especially smallpox) had a devastating effect on the Indians. The white man had been exposed to these diseases for centuries and had built up an immune system against them. Cherokee and other Native Americans did not have this immune system and whole villages were wiped out when exposed to these diseases. In 1738, a smallpox epidemic destroyed approximately one-half of the total Cherokee population. In 1760, an invading army led by the Scot Archibald Montgomery brought another epidemic of smallpox. Normally the Cherokee went to their medicine men for cures, but the medicine men had no power against these new diseases. As a result, the power of this figure declined. Often medicine men believed the failure lay in their ritual paraphernalia. Believing the paraphernalia had lost their power, the medicine men threw the apparatus into a fire. White man’s diseases brought by Scots and others were especially harsh on the elderly. With the unexpected death of their ancients, much Cherokee history and oral tradition were lost.

The impact of the Scots and Irish on the Cherokee was tremendous. Although not accomplished unilaterally, the Scots and Irish did help record and preserve Cherokee culture; but they also helped destroy traditional beliefs and societal status; they affected population sizes, changed settlement patterns and altered traditional roles for Cherokee men and women. The Cherokee survive today in spite of the white man. They are rebuilding and rediscovering their heritage and traditions. The positive and negative effects of Scot and Irish contact have both helped and yet also have hindered the Cherokee’s search for their traditional heritage.
NOTES


5. DAB, V, p. 150; Crabtree, North Carolina Governors, p. 52.


11. Cherokee descendants of Adair usually have the name Martin or Mays. Williams, ed., Adair's History of the American Indians, p. xix.


Traders and Invaders, Assimilators and Destroyers: 
The Scots and Irish Among the Cherokee

18. The date given in the DAB as 1700 is inaccurate. See John Richard Alden, John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1944), pp. 159-161.

19. John P. Brown, Old Frontiers: The Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of their Removal to the West, 1838 (Kingsport, Tenn.: Southern Publishers, 1938), p. 67; Alden, John Stuart, says the boy’s hair was blond, p. 169.


22. Alden, John Stuart, 213n.

23. John Stuart to Earl of Dartmouth (8 January 1773) in PRO CO 5/74/35; also see map outlining acreage given to Alexander Cameron in PRO MPG 338. A copy of this map is in the Anderson and Lewis Cherokee Collection, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N.C.


35. General Jeffrey Amhearst to Governor Lyttleton (26 February 1760) in PRO CO5/57/320; Alden, John Stuart, p. 112; Corkran, Cherokee Frontier, pp. 208-212.


38. DAB, X, pp. 296-297; McDowell, Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754-1756, p. 447.

Selected Papers from the Seventh and Eighth George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences


40. DAB, X, pp. 296-297; McDowell, Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754-1756, p. 447.


43. There was no great exodus from the Highlands after the Jacobite rebellions. Only about 800 Jacobite prisoners were transported after the “Forty-Five.” Hamilton-Edwards, *In Search of Scottish Ancestry*, p. 151.


59. Williams, Adair's History of the American Indians, p. 245.
Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition: 
Munition Supplies at George Rogers Clark’s 
Fort Jefferson, 
1780-1781

Kenneth C. Carstens
Murray State University

ABSTRACT

The kind, amount and distribution of arms and munitions between 1780 and 1781 at George Rogers Clark’s Fort Jefferson are examined in this paper. As the economic and redistribution center for Clark’s Illinois Battalion, Fort Jefferson received and supplied other key military sites with large quantities of arms and munitions in order to support Virginia’s efforts to secure the West.

Introduction:

Unlike the popular 1941 phrase uttered by Chaplain Howell M. Forgy (“Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.”),¹ few people have heard about George Rogers Clark’s Fort Jefferson. Clark’s name is associated more closely with his campaigns at Kaskaskia and Vincennes,² than it is with Fort Jefferson. Yet, Clark – in conjunction with Patrick Henry – planned the construction of Fort Jefferson in 1777 and set into motion a series of events that would lead to the acquisition of the Northwest Territory by the United States.³

Previous studies by J. G. Randall,⁴ James Alton James⁵ and Light T. Cummins⁶ have presented overviews of Clark’s line-of-supply logistics. This paper shall do so, too, but shall be more particularistic in scope, examining ONLY munition supplies and armament of Clark’s Fort Jefferson for the years 1780 to 1781. The research in this paper represents the first attempt to
reconstruct the actual numbers of munitions and armaments for one of Clark’s Illinois Battalion forts. How many muskets and pieces of artillery did Clark’s troops have at Fort Jefferson? How much powder and lead were they issued? How much did they expend? And, how much did they distribute to other Illinois Battalion forts? This study provides some specific insights into Clark’s military supplies at Fort Jefferson that have not been addressed previously by other researchers. Furthermore, this paper gives the student of Clark, a glimpse into one aspect of Clark’s logistical considerations: the actual amount of Fort Jefferson’s munitions which were used by Clark’s Illinois Regiment. From these data, one may better generalize the extent to which Clark’s Illinois forces were outfitted during the war in the West and, therefore, provide for a better assessment of the military characteristics of the Illinois Battalion in general.7

Historical Background:

Fort Jefferson was a military garrison and civilian community constructed near the Mouth of the Ohio River in April 1780.8 As a settlement, Fort Jefferson represented Virginia’s attempt physically to claim her western boundary and to maintain her political and economic interests in the West. Although more easterly located settlements at Harrodsburg and Boonesborough previously had existed within Virginia’s West, neither had been initiated at the request of the Virginia government. Fort Jefferson was, for all practical purposes, a fortification and a community planned and sanctioned by the executive branch of Virginia’s government.9

When Clark left the Falls of the Ohio River (Louisville) in April 1780 to travel to the Mouth of the Ohio to build Fort Jefferson,10 he reportedly took with him, “perhaps 120 men...well Cloathed (sic) except in the article of Linens.”11 This quote has
been interpreted previously by Kathryn M. Fraser as representing the total number of persons present at Clark’s Fort Jefferson. Recent studies have demonstrated that many more individuals were present at the fort. It also has been demonstrated that the population density for Fort Jefferson varied greatly, from as few as 100, to a maximum of 565 persons. Within that population range were members of the Illinois Battalion – representing several companies, the Clarksville Militia, numerous civilians (including many families) and several Indian ally groups, especially the Kaskaskia Indians.

Among the major activities at Fort Jefferson between 1780 and 1781 that generated documentation about armament and munitions supplies were six military engagements (including two battles at the fort), the outfitting of numerous hunting parties and the issuance and redistribution of various supplies directed to and received from other posts. And, although it has been assumed that Clark’s forces left the Falls of the Ohio fully-equipped militarily, no specific documentation to that effect ever has been reported. However, records from Fort Jefferson indicate that a full range of supplies must have been brought from the Falls of the Ohio to the Mouth of the Ohio in April 1780, in order for Fort Jefferson to exist. Supplementary shipments of other goods were received at Fort Jefferson from Spanish-held New Orleans in December 1780, and January 1781. Additional supplies were received at Fort Jefferson from Vincennes, Kaskaskia and Louisville throughout 1780 and 1781. And, although the supplements were primarily liquid (i.e., tafia), Fort Patrick Henry at Vincennes and Fort Clark at Kaskaskia frequently received substantial quantities of munitions in return. The origin of those supplies came not from Fort Pitt or elsewhere in the East, but from New Orleans by way of Fort Jefferson.
Munition Supplies at Fort Jefferson:

The two most significant munition supply items at Fort Jefferson were gunpowder and lead. As illustrated in Table 1, more than 3,200 pounds of gunpowder and 3,600 pounds of lead were shipped to Fort Jefferson. These 6,800 pounds of munitions originated in New Orleans through the supervision of Oliver Pollock. Although 6,800 pounds may seem like a large quantity of munitions, it is not; especially when taken into account the individual issues given to each soldier, the allotment made to the artillery and the amounts redistributed to other posts from Fort Jefferson.

As an example, almost one-third of the total gunpowder issued (1,001 of 3,235 pounds) went to the militia and state troops at Fort Jefferson. The other approximate two-thirds (2,105 pounds) was redistributed from Fort Jefferson to Fort Clark at Kaskaskia and Fort Patrick Henry at Vincennes. Likewise, only 37% of the lead received at Fort Jefferson was issued to the soldiery at that post; the remaining amount of lead was sent to Kaskaskia and Vincennes. It should be noted that the totals from lead issued and distributed do not, when taken together, equal the amount of lead received (Table 1). Therefore, it could be suggested that the Fort Jefferson garrison must have arrived with full or partial munition stores. If they did not, then either an error in bookkeeping had occurred or the Fort Jefferson record is incomplete and receipts for “received amounts” are underrepresented in the records that remain.

Similarly, even the difference between the total amount of gunpowder received and the total issued (Table 1: Issued at Fort Jefferson plus distributed to other posts from Fort Jefferson) is amazingly low (only an approximate 129 pounds). It’s doubtful that a quartermaster intentionally would issue stores of munitions that could place a fortification in jeopardy. However, it is

[ 24 ]
possible that a shortage of gunpowder existed at Fort Jefferson. Yet, the large quantities of gunpowder shipped to other posts from Fort Jefferson suggests otherwise. Therefore, it is presumed that full or partial stores must have been brought with the personnel when they established Fort Jefferson in April 1780, even though no inventory of those stores has been located.

These observations become increasingly important when the number of individuals present at the fort is taken into account. A "standard issue" of powder and lead per individual is not defined clearly within the voucher records at Fort Jefferson. However, a ratio allotment of one-to-two is generally apparent; that is, one pound of powder usually was issued for every two pounds of lead. One pound of gunpowder permits the manufacture of 24 to 30 musket cartridges. Although these small numbers hardly seem to impact the 1,001 pounds of gunpowder issued at Fort Jefferson, their numerical significance becomes substantially greater when the total number of issues is taken into account. The following description of the military population at Fort Jefferson will demonstrate this point.

At its maximum, Fort Jefferson contained nine companies of infantry totaling 182 men, along with one company of dragoons totaling 34 men, 46 men of the Clarksville Militia and 24 miscellaneous military personnel. In addition to these 286 men, this post also contained a company of artillery. As illustrated by Table 2, the artillery complement at Fort Jefferson was considerable, consisting of five swivels (possibly one-pounders); a two-pounder swivel; a four-pounder (possibly a light four-pounder brass fieldpiece); and a six-pounder iron cannon.

If calculations are made for the amount of gunpowder consumed per shot for each of the above artillery pieces (figured at the charging rate of one-fourth of the shot’s weight for each item), a single simultaneous shot fired from the six swivels and
two cannon would consume 4.25 pounds of gunpowder. In addition, a single shot fired from each of the 286 muskets, calculated at 0.04 pounds per cartridge, would require 11.44 pounds of gunpowder. Collectively, a single volley of artillery and musketry would use 15.69 pounds of powder. That being the case, only an estimated 64 volleys could be fired at Fort Jefferson before 1,001 pounds of gunpowder would be exhausted.

A figure as low as 64 volleys probably indicates a biased underrepresentation of the actual amount of gunpowder at Clark's fort. If that is true, such would further strengthen the argument that Clark's forces arrived at Fort Jefferson with partial to full munition stores.

Other Armament:

The kind of arms carried by Clark’s Illinois Battalion has been a matter of contention among historians and historical reenactors for quite some time. Did they use the Committee of Safety musket? The French Charleville? The Spanish fusil? What about the British Brown Bess? And, what about the rifle? Were they used? If so, to what degree? Lastly, did Clark’s troops carry swords?

Several of these questions can be addressed by information contained within the voucher records from Fort Jefferson for the period of 1780 to 1781. (It is important to emphasize that the Fort Jefferson documents pertain to this period ONLY, because Clark’s line of supply varied greatly. Generalizations that retrofit Fort Jefferson data to previous Clark campaigns are greatly discouraged.)

It is hoped that sufficient data has been presented to demonstrate that Clark’s troops were at least partially equipped with munitions and arms when they settled Fort Jefferson. By December 1780, they received an additional supplementary shipment of
120 muskets from New Orleans. These muskets came complete with 120 bayonets, 422 bayonet belts, 261 cartridge boxes with belts and one “Spanish musket and bayonet” (Table 2). In addition, they received four fusils, nine carbines and eight rifles. Both the fusils and the carbines are, generally speaking, lightweight shorter muskets designed primarily for use by the artillery, light infantry or cavalry. All three unit types were present at Fort Jefferson and references made to these various “specialized” musket forms indicate that Clark’s forces for 1780-1781 were not only equipped, but were equipped properly. (It should be noted that although the dragoons or cavalry had the right kind of gun, there were no horses to be issued. As a result, the “Light Horse” units served instead as Light Infantry.)

Rifles, although present at Fort Jefferson, were not distributed widely. They were, however, extensively used for procuring meat for the garrison. Even a broken rifle from Vincennes carried a $500-hard-money price tag at Fort Jefferson. After such a rifle was fixed by the post armorer, the Clarksville sheriff confiscated the rifle for use by the civilian community.

Last but not least, a grand total of 100 swords — of unknown type — was received from Spanish New Orleans. Captain Robert George, the fort commandant at Fort Jefferson, was the first to receive a sword from the allotment. The remaining 99 swords were not issued until January 1781.

In conclusion, it is clear that the soldiery at Clark’s Fort Jefferson were armed quite well with cannon, swivels and musketry. It is not clear if Clark’s soldiers had enough gunpowder to use the armament effectively. Research with the archives from the Falls of the Ohio, Kaskaskia and Vincennes sites should determine whether or not Clark’s forces brought munition supplies with them. If they did bring munition supplies, then Fort Jefferson must have been more than adequately supplied, having
received additional supplies from New Orleans. If they did not bring munition supplies in April 1780, then the munition supplies received from New Orleans at Fort Jefferson were precariously low.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gunpowder</th>
<th>Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Received at Fort Jefferson</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>3,235</td>
<td>3,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3,235</td>
<td>3,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issued at Fort Jefferson</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>681.75</td>
<td>1,009.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>319.50</td>
<td>321.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,001.25</td>
<td>1,331.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distributed to other posts from Fort Jefferson</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>1,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2,105</td>
<td>2,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *128.75 pounds remaining
**-159 pounds (an apparent deficit)

Table 1: Pounds of Gunpowder and Lead Received, Issued, and Distributed at Fort Jefferson, 1780-1781
TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Armament</th>
<th>Received 1780</th>
<th>Issued 1780</th>
<th>Issued 1781</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muskets</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayonets with belts</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish musket with bayonet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusil</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbines</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifles</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flints</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>294*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartridge boxes with belts</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large Armament</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swivels</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-pounder (swivel)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-pounder (cannon)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six-pounder (cannon)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yards of flannel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *only 2% (6) issued to the Indians
**77% (480) issued to the Indians
***approximately 11% (11) issued to Indians

Table 2: Armament and Munitions Received and Issued at Fort Jefferson, 1780-1781
NOTES


10. Ibid.: 417-418.

11. Ibid.: 422.

18. VSA, Boxes 48-50.
19. Ibid.
21. VSA, Boxes 12, 13, 17, 20, 50.
24. VSA, Box 12.
25. VSA, Box 15.
Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition:
Munition Supplies at George Rogers Clark's Fort Jefferson, 1780-1781
At the deserted northwest end of Buntin Street, in the city of Vincennes, Ind., a weather-beaten historical sign marks the site of Fort Knox I. Forgotten amidst the accounts of Fort Sackville, Fort Knox II and Fort Knox III, as well as the exploits of George Rogers Clark, the Fort Knox I historical marker stands like a lonely sentinel in a barren wasteland. Its message states:

FORT KNOX. FIRST SITE.
Built in 1787 by Major John F. Hamtramck under command of General Josiah Harmar. United States Army’s most western outpost for several years.
Named for General Henry Knox, first Secretary of War.

In 1787 Vincennes existed in a political vacuum. The British government, which replaced the French, had been expelled by the victory of George Rogers Clark. Virginia then created the county of Illinois by the Act of 1778, which was renewed in 1779 for one year and in 1780 for two years. On January 2, 1781, Virginia ceded that area to the United States. When the act establishing the county expired on January 5, 1782, it was not renewed and the county ceased to exist. The United States, however, did not accept the cession until 1784 and Congress made no provision for a government until July 13, 1787, when the Ordinance of 1787 was enacted.¹

Focused on this political vacuum were several conflicting forces:
1. Illegal “Tomahawk Claims.” Frontiersmen from Ken-
tucky, Virginia and Pennsylvania, eager for the rich lands north and west of the Ohio River, established land claims by making blazes on trees marking their boundaries. The United States, however, could ill afford to lose the economic value of its land resources to usurpation by squatters. Moreover, the squatters, oblivious to the Indian problem, were in effect invading Indian lands by crossing the Ohio before the land claims finally had been settled by treaty. This played into the hands of British strategists by arousing the Indians to retaliation and created the danger of an Indian war, which the United States likewise could not afford.

2. British Influence and the Neutral Indian Barrier State. Although the British agreed, by the Treaty of 1783, to relinquish their forts along the Canadian border, they were reluctant to lose strategic control of the Great Lakes waterways and the profitable fur trade of the Old Northwest. Despite repeated requests, they maintained control of the forts at Michilimackinac, Detroit, Niagara, Oswego, Oswegatchie, Point Au Fer and Dutchman’s Point. These forts, together with Fort Erie on the Canadian side, had protected Canada during the Revolution and had enabled the British, with their Indian allies, to make deep penetrations into the interior, harassing settlements beyond the Ohio River.

In 1783 the British formed the North West Company which became a leader in the fur trade. Profit in the fur trade was based on a three-year cycle from the time furs were acquired in America, shipped to England for reprocessing and then sold on the European market. Thus economics required a long-term presence in the Northwest and the new company became a major factor in resurrecting the idea of a neutral Indian barrier state that had permeated British strategic thought in America since 1755. Originally conceived as a buffer between French
and British interests, it easily was transformed into the concept of a buffer between Canada and the United States with its southern boundary along the Ohio. The significance of this ultimate British goal is apparent from the March 17, 1792, correspondence of William Grenville, secretary of state for foreign affairs, to George Hammond, British minister to the United States. In his letter, Grenville discussed the negotiations to secure:

... to the different Indian Nations along the British American Frontiers, their Lands and hunting Grounds, as an independent Country, with respect to which, both His Majesty and the United States shall withdraw all Claims or Possessions, whatever, shall agree never to establish any forts within the Boundaries to be expressed ... and shall bind themselves to each other not to acquire ... by purchase or otherwise, from the Indians any Lands or settlements within the said Boundaries.

Likewise, correspondence between the lieutenant governors of Upper and Lower Canada on April 1, 1793, reported a general meeting of Joseph Brant with the Indian tribes at Sandusky in which “The independence of the Indians is his primary object: ....” Thus, it is clear from later events, that in 1787 the concept of an Indian barrier state stretching from Canada to the Ohio River was a viable British strategy and a present danger to United States interests. The immediate effect, however, was increased agitation of the Indians by British agents followed by attacks and depredations all along the Ohio frontier.

3. Spanish Influence. Spanish interests in 1787 extended from Florida, and the contested Yazoo strip, along the Gulf of Mexico to the vast Louisiana Territory west of the Mississippi. The Spanish, threatened by a veritable horde of American settlers who no longer were restrained by Britain, did not have an army capable of resisting the tide. Thus, Spanish strategy
emerged as a three-pronged affair: – (1) enlist the aid of Southern Indian tribes to resist the settlers; (2) economically strangle the Western movement by controlling the Mississippi; and (3) develop numerous intrigues designed to induce the settlers to become Spanish colonists. To implement this strategy the count of Floridablanca, Spain’s foreign minister, closed the Mississippi to American shipping on June 26, 1784; and several intrigues developed with the goal of luring American settlers to the Spanish side.

4. Revised United States Land Policy. Immediately following the close of the Revolutionary War, the United States took the position that pursuant to the Treaty of Paris in 1783, it had acquired Indian lands by right of conquest from Great Britain. The Indians, as allies of Great Britain, could be expelled under the laws of war. However, the United States could, as an act of forgiveness, permit them to remain and to establish a boundary line between the United States and Indian lands. This system had not worked and the tribes were repudiating the treaties of Fort Stanwix, Fort McIntosh and Fort Finney. Recognizing a war would be too costly, Secretary of War Henry Knox, in August 1787, recommended that the United States adopt the British policy of offering compensation for Indian lands. Congress agreed, appropriating $20,000 for that purpose in October 1787. Thus, a subtle change was taking place, perhaps unrecognized by those on the frontier. Indian lands were no longer there for the taking; they had to be purchased or otherwise obtained, legally and with the Indians’ consent.

All of these forces converged at Vincennes in the year 1786. Approximately 70 families of American squatters had built an agricultural frontier of cabins, cornfields, meadows and orchards in the adjacent lands. They existed in temperamental
conflict with the more easygoing French “habitants,” felt insecure in their land titles, were angry about the Spanish closure of the Mississippi, were disturbed by rumors of British intrigue at Detroit and were contemptuous of the Indians.19

The Indians, particularly the Miami, Piankashaw and the Wabash Tribes, were angry at being left out of the treaty negotiations of 1785 and 1786. With encouragement from the British, they were becoming more aggressive.20 The situation exploded July 15, 1786, when 450 warriors advanced on Vincennes with the intent of massacring the Americans.21 Disaster was averted, due to the efforts of Colonel J.M.P. LeGras and Major Francois Bosseron, both distinguished French citizens with a history of aiding the Americans, especially George Rogers Clark.22 The magnitude of the threat prompted Colonel LeGras and John Small (later sheriff of Knox County) to request assistance from Clark on July 22, 1786.23

Indian attacks along the Ohio and into Kentucky had proliferated in 1785 and 1786.24 In May 1786, Lieutenant Ebenezer Denny recorded that there were alarming accounts of Indian depredations at Vincennes.25 Lieutenant Erkuries Beatty observed in June 1786, that Kentucky was in a virtual state of war.26 The Indians were encouraged and supported by the British through the efforts of such men as Alexander McKee, Simon Girty and Matthew Elliott.27 Captain Tunis, a Delaware chief, advised on July 6, 1786, that the British conducted a council with several chiefs at Niagara and the Shawnee, Pottawatomi, Chippewa and Tawas were preparing to attack Wheeling, Fort Finney and Fort Harmar.28 Judge Robert Patterson reported two people killed and 200 horses stolen in one attack and 30 people killed and 500 horses stolen in another. He asked, “...have they (the Indians) not declared war in their own way to all intents?”29
In this atmosphere of hostility, George Rogers Clark had planned an expedition against the Indians as early as June 1786. Fifteen hundred men would leave the Falls of the Ohio on August 1. On June 25 he had requested the assistance of federal troops and the return of a cannon borrowed by Lieutenant Denny. Clark would receive no help, however, because Secretary of War Knox on June 27 ordered Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Harmar, commander of federal troops, to send two companies of troops to the Falls to repel incursions. Knox, however, prohibited offensive operations. He advised Harmar that an Indian war would be exceedingly embarrassing and should be avoided at all costs. Harmar agreed, and Clark had to settle for return of the cannon.

The requests for help from Colonel LeGras and John Small in July thus reached Clark at a most propitious moment. Recognizing a state of emergency at Vincennes, a condition which Congress and the army would not resolve, Governor Patrick Henry exercised Virginia’s right under the sixth Article of Confederation to authorize the field officers in Kentucky to concert some system for their own defense. Pursuant to this authority and being supported by opinions from Harry Innes, attorney general, and from George Muter and Caleb Wallace, who were judges for the district, Clark and Benjamin Logan organized an expedition against the Indians. This expedition, however, was not sanctioned by the United States. On September 16, they departed the Falls. Clark with 1,100 men headed for Vincennes, while Logan with 900 men marched east to Lime­stone. Logan descended on the Shawnee, burned seven towns, killed 10 or 12 warriors and returned with 36 prisoners. Unfortunately, Logan’s men killed the Shawnee Chief King Molunthy, whose slaying Harmar described in a letter to Knox:

Melanthy the Shawnamese King, would not fly, but displayed the thirteen stripes and held out the articles of the Miami treaty, but
all in vain, he was shot down by one of the party, although he was their prisoner. I am sorry this disgraceful affair should have happened, as Melanthy had always been represented as a friend to the United States.

The result was that Logan’s attack was deplored as cowardly and he was “much blamed” by the people of Kentucky for Molumthy’s murder. This blame would later work to Clark’s detriment.

While Clark’s expedition did divert the Indians from Logan and did contribute to his success, the endeavor otherwise was a failure. Confronted by growing numbers of Indians, his men were on the verge of mutiny and he was forced to return to Vincennes, where he remained under the ostensible authority of Virginia. In the spring of 1787, he enlisted men and impressed supplies. To his credit, Clark ousted from control of Kaskaskia John Dodge, who was in league with British traders. Unfortunately, he also convened a military court which confiscated property of Spanish subjects, whom the court determined were trading in American territory without permission. The logic was simple – if Americans could not trade down the Mississippi, the Spanish would not be tolerated in American waters. Meanwhile his men were staking out “tomahawk claims.”

The wrath of Congress and the condemnation of the Virginia Assembly fell upon Clark. The gravity of the situation is reflected in the report to Congress from the secretary for foreign affairs: “... the period is not far distant when the United States must decide either to wage War with Spain, or settle all differences with her by Treaty,...” The governor of Virginia ordered that the offenders be punished. Secretary Knox reported that the “... usurpation of public lands by a body of armed men highly deserves the attention of Congress.”

On April 24, 1787, Congress adopted the resolution proposed by Knox.

[41]
Resolved 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 proclamations and authority of the United States, and that he employ the whole or such part of the force under his command as he shall judge necessary to effect the object.

What began as a measure of self-defense suddenly had been elevated to a cause celebre. The sovereignty of the United States was challenged and had to be maintained. The officer charged with this task was Lieutenant Colonel Harmar. He was the senior officer in the existing regular army, consisting of 700 men, commanded by himself, two majors and eight captains.\(^{44}\) Harmar marched to Vincennes with six companies, leaving the Falls on July 11, 1787. Simultaneously Major John F. Hamtramck gathered a three-month supply for 300 men, then actually took 100 men by boat down the Ohio and up the Wabash River.\(^{45}\) Because of low water, Hamtramck had to leave a large portion of the supplies at the Mouth of the Wabash, while his men carried what they could on their backs. Harmar dispatched Lieutenant John Armstrong and 45 men to retrieve those supplies. A soldier and a Frenchman were killed and another captured when their canoe dropped behind and was ambushed by the Indians. When Harmar learned that a war party of 40 Piankashaw waited to ambush them upon their return, he dispatched Hamtramck and 58 men to reinforce Armstrong. This action caused the Piankashaw to disperse.\(^{46}\) After this incident, Harmar’s troops had no further hostile encounters with the Indians.

The primary purpose of Harmar’s expedition was the dislodgement of Clark. However, Clark had left in May, leaving Captain Valentine Thomas Dalton in command and Dalton’s
men had disbanded before Harmar received his orders.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, the real problem was the power vacuum which, if not filled by the United States, certainly would have been filled by some force, such as the armies of Clark or Dodge; the malcontents and separatists along the frontier; or, more importantly, the British.

Harmar had prepared carefully for his entrance into Vincennes in communications with Colonel LeGras and Major Bosseron.\textsuperscript{48} His arrival on July 17 was expected and his six companies of troops were well disciplined and made a "handsome parade."\textsuperscript{49} He met with the Indians who became convinced that the troops, not the squatters, were the true Americans. To demonstrate their friendship they presented Harmar with a calumet on July 28.\textsuperscript{50} To the amazement of the inhabitants, he posted the resolve of Congress prohibiting intruders on public lands.\textsuperscript{51} Utilizing the services of Bartholomew Tardiveau as guide and interpreter, he visited Kaskaskia, Cahokia and the American settlements at La Belle Fontaine and Grand Ruisseau. He visited Lieutenant Colonel Henri Peyroux de la Coudrienne and the Spanish garrison, consisting of eight or 10 regulars, located at Ste. Genevieve across the river from Kaskaskia. In addition he saw Francisco Cruzat, who commanded 20 Spanish soldiers at St. Louis, which was across the river from Cahokia.\textsuperscript{52} On his return to Vincennes 120 Piankashaw and Wea arrived and saluted by firing volleys into the air. Harmar returned the salute firing volleys by several platoons. The appearance and discipline of his troops impressed the Indians. Harmar informed them it was the wish of Congress to live in peace, but added, that if they persisted in hostilities "... a body of troops would sweep them off the face of the earth."\textsuperscript{53}

By October 1, 1787, the intruders on public land had disappeared quietly; the unauthorized military forces of Clark and Dodge had dispersed; promises of peace had been ex-
changed with the Indians; the Spanish were assured the United States had no hostile intentions; cordial relations were maintained with the French inhabitants; and the show of force at Vincennes blocked the British from making any attempt to venture down the Wabash from Detroit. In this regard, Major Robert Matthews advised General Frederick Haldimand on August 3, 1787, that Lieutenant Colonel Harmar, "a very clever man," had arrived at Post Vincennes with 500 troops. Matthews suspected that Harmar, with two other armies from the Muskingum River and from Wheeling, might attempt to establish a post at the Miami Towns (site of present Fort Wayne).  

Hamtramck later reported that Matthews instructed Joseph Brant that the Indians should not make war on the other side of the Ohio, but had the right to defend their lands against the Americans.  

His mission completed, Harmar departed. He reported to Knox:

Accordingly, Major Hamtramck commands there. His command consists of Captain (John) Smith’s company, fifty-five, and part of (Captain William) Ferguson’s company, forty; total ninety-five. I have ordered him to fortify himself, and to regulate the militia, who are to join him in case of hostilities.

Major Hamtramck was an experienced fort builder. Commissioned a captain November 21, 1776, he had the responsibility every year for establishing winter quarters. In the winter of 1785-86, he rebuilt Fort McIntosh from its ruins, and in the winter of 1786-87, he built the first Fort Steuben. Thus, with a practiced eye he supervised construction of a fort that, when completed, formed a square 70 feet on a side. Pickets, forming the outer wall, were constructed of 14-foot timbers, rising 11 feet above ground. The fort, capable of housing three companies, was equipped with four small brass cannons and included
cannon platforms, sunken magazine, officers barracks, a blacksmith shop, sally port and blockhouses on its four corners.\textsuperscript{61}

Construction of the fort was hampered by the scarcity of timber and by the prevalence of sickness, described as intermittent fever (malaria). This illness both reduced the number of men fit for duty to as few as 33 and also struck Hamtramck.\textsuperscript{62} Notwithstanding these difficulties, Hamtramck reported in April 1788, that his “piquets” were up and he was no longer worried about his ability to withstand an Indian attack.\textsuperscript{63} He did think he should have more open ground around the fort, at least 200 yards, and he requested a flag, which he said, the Indians “much istime” (esteemed).\textsuperscript{64} The fort was completed in August 1788, and was named Fort Knox, in honor of the secretary of war. The name came about by order of Lieutenant Colonel Harmar, dated October 13, 1788.\textsuperscript{65}

At the time of his departure Harmar had observed: \textsuperscript{66}

\ldots all these people are entirely unacquainted with what Americans call liberty. Trial by jury, etc., they are strangers to. A commandant with a few troops to give them orders is the best form of government for them; it is what they have been accustomed to.

Major Hamtramck would be that commandant until relieved by Captain Thomas Pasteur in February 1793. His duties were facilitated by the fact that he occupied a ready-made and respected position in the social structure at Vincennes. As Harmar correctly observed, the people were accustomed to following the orders of a military commander. Major Hamtramck proved to be an able commander. He maintained a semblance of government where there had been chaos. To this end he dissolved the old courts and promulgated a code of laws which, though primitive, was approved by the townspeople, as well as by Harmar and by Governor Arthur St. Clair. The code certainly reflected an appreciation for due process.\textsuperscript{67}
During the first three years of his tenure, Hamtramck wrote at least 35 letters to Harmar. These letters are replete with information about British activities and troop strengths at Detroit; British and Indian activities in preparation for the Treaty at Fort Harmar; Indian dispositions, strengths and plans for threatened attacks; Spanish troop strengths and the movement of settlers to the Spanish side, particularly to the settlement started by George Morgan at New Madrid; and the activities of civilians such as Patrick Brown, John Melbeck, Lewis Wetzel, Thomas Dalton and John Sullivan. In three years Hamtramck’s forces suffered 29 casualties, 19 of whom were killed, which amounted to a casualty rate of almost 30% during three years. The soldiers suffered from repeated shortages of supplies. Hamtramck had to deal with fraudulent contractors and he and his men were engaged in a constant fight with malaria. In practically every letter he pleaded for help with the civil administration and reiterated the need for the governor and the judges to assume control. Finally in the spring of 1790, Governor St. Clair journeyed to the Illinois country and, although he did not visit Vincennes because of Indian troubles, he left Territorial Secretary Winthrop Sargent in charge. He directed Sargent to go to Vincennes, erect a county and make necessary civil and military arrangements.

In the three-year period from 1787 to 1790, Fort Knox, under Hamtramck, provided the base for establishing a government and created stability where there had been chaos and anarchy. It served to dampen British ardor; maintain peaceful relations with the Spanish; provide essential intelligence about the British, Indians and Spanish; maintain order; provide a code of laws for Vincennes; and curtail unlawful land claims. At a time when control of the American West still was undeter-
mined, Fort Knox presented a foothold for the United States in its westward expansion.

NOTES


4. The treaties of Fort Stanwix, October 12, 1784; Fort McIntosh, January 21, 1785; and Fort Finney, January 31, 1786, did not settle the problem. See Billington, Westward Expansion, pp. 206-207. In the spring of 1787 the Indians, under the leadership of Joseph Brant, conducted a council at Sandusky in which they agreed that the boundary should be the Ohio River. David Duncan to Josiah Harmar, June 17, 1787, Draper Manuscript Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., 1W299-300 (microfilm). This followed a meeting near Detroit in December 1786, attended by the Six Nations, Huron, Ottawa, Miami, Shawnee, Chippewa, Cherokee, Delaware, Potawatomi and the Wabash tribes, all of whom agreed upon the same boundary. See William Leslie Stone, Life of Joseph Brant - Thayendanagea, 2 vols., (New York: A.V. Blake, 1838), 2:264-265.

5. On June 27, 1786, Secretary of War Henry Knox told Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Harmar that an Indian war would be exceedingly embarrassing and should be avoided at all costs. Knox to Harmar, June 27, 1786, Draper Mss., 1W133. Harmar agreed saying, "...under the present embarrassed state of finances, as you justly observe,..." an Indian war "...must be avoided, if possible, consistent with the dignity of the United States." Harmar to Knox, Fort Pitt, July 12, 1786, ibid., 1W170.

6. By letter dated March 19, 1784, Governor of New York George Clinton

16. Ibid.
17. See note 4, supra.
18. Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years.


28. Captain Tunis to Harmar, July 6, 1786, Draper Mss., 1W156.

29. Letter from Judge Robert Patterson, Lexington, July 12, 1786, Draper Mss., 1W142.

30. Clark to John Plasgrave Wyllys, Louisville, June 25,1786, Draper Mss., 1W140. Clark mistakenly addressed this letter to Major Wyllys who was en route to Pittsburgh for his court-martial, leaving Captain Walter Finney in command.

31. Knox to Harmar, June 27, 1786, Draper Mss., 1W133. Harmar to Knox, Fort Pitt, July 12, 1786, ibid., 1W170.

32. Finney to Harmar, Fort Finney, July 22, 1786, Draper Mss., 1W139.
34. Finney to Harmar, Rapids of the Ohio, October 31, 1786, Draper Mss., 1W243. Account of Lewis Wetzel, Ibid., 1W263.
42. Ibid. p. 213.
43. J.C.C. 33, p. 222
46. Ibid.
47. Harmar to Knox, Fort Harmar, May 14, 1787, St. Clair Papers 2, p. 21.
51. Harmar to Knox, Post Vincennes, August 7, 1787, Outpost, pp. 34-40, at 36-37; St. Clair Papers 2, p. 28.
52. Harmar to Knox, Fort Harmar, November 24, 1787, Outpost, pp. 46-58; St. Clair Papers 2, pp. 30-35. Denny’s Journal, pp. 308-312.
53. Ibid.
55. Hamtramck to Harmar, Post Vincennes, June 1, 1788, Outpost, p. 58.
56. Harmar to Knox, Fort Harmar, November 24, 1787, Outpost, pp. 53-54; St.
57. Military Service Records for Hamtramck’s Company in the 5th New York Regiment of Foot and the 2d New York Regiment for the years 1776-1783 consisted of muster rolls, pay rolls, rank rolls, returns and other records available from the National Archives, Washington, D.C. These show that Hamtramck was commissioned a captain on November 21, 1776, and went into winter quarters at Schoharie, (1778-79); Morristown, (1779-80); Schenectady, (1780-81); Pompton, (1781-82); and New Windsor, (1782-83).

58. Hamtramck to Nicholas Fish, Fort McIntosh, December 4, 1785, typescript copies of the military correspondence of Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas Fish, 1785-1786, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., p. 71.

59. Hamtramck to Harmar, Fort two and one-half miles above Mingo, December 1786, Draper Mss., 1W265-266. According to Lieutenant Beatty the fort was 47 miles below Fort McIntosh and 23 miles above Wheeling. Beatty’s Diary, p. 382.

60. J.C.C. 34, p. 583.


62. Hamtramck to Harmar, Post Vincennes, November 3, 1787, Outpost, pp. 44-46. Same to same, July 14, 1788, Ibid., p. 90. Hamtramck repeatedly speaks of intermittent fever, and recommended one pound of bark per man. Ibid., p. 179. The bark, called Peruvian bark or Cinchona bark contains quinine and first was recognized as a remedy for remitting fever in Holland about 1643. The symptoms described by Hamtramck were discussed with Dr. George LeBeau, a licensed physician in Wichita Falls, Texas, who concluded the disease was in fact malaria.

63. Hamtramck to Harmar, Post Vincennes, April 13, 1788, Outpost, p. 69.

64. Hamtramck to Harmar, Post Vincennes, April 13, 1788, Ibid., pp. 72-73.

65. Harmar to Hamtramck, Fort Harmar, October 13, 1788, Outpost, pp. 136-138 at 138.

66. Harmar to Knox, Fort Harmar, November 24, 1787, Outpost, pp. 46-58 at 51; St. Clair Papers 2, p. 32.


68. See generally Outpost, pp. 58-276.

The History of Fort Washington at Cincinnati, Ohio: A Case Study

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Fort Washington at Cincinnati, Ohio, was one of the more important frontier fortifications of its day. For more than a dozen years, from 1789 to 1804, it served as “the Pentagon, the capitol, and the White House of the West.”¹ From its southeastern blockhouse, Arthur St. Clair transacted his official duties as governor of the Northwest Territory. Through its gates marched the regulars and militia who would subdue the Ohio country and would open it to settlement. It was a structure of such “superior excellence,” that Josiah Harmar “thought proper to honor it with the name Fort Washington.”²

The series of events culminating in the fort’s construction began, not in Ohio, but rather in Trenton, New Jersey. There, on November 26, 1787, Judge John Cleves Symmes issued “To the Respectable Public” a pamphlet advertising the rich lands between the two Miami rivers in the Ohio country,³ which he and his partners had for sale. The speculators quickly sold two large tracts of land along the Ohio River to outside interests, but Symmes was not content just to speculate idly on the territory’s future. This former Continental congressman and New Jersey Supreme Court justice turned pioneer. In January 1789, Symmes and 60 settlers established the settlement of North Bend on the Great Miami River.⁴

Two other groups of settlers already had preceded Symmes into the area. The first group was led by Benjamin Stites, an early explorer of the region who also had been Symmes’ original source of information concerning the Ohio country. On Novem-
ber 18, 1788, Stites established Columbia, about one mile due west of the Little Miami River. A little more than a month later, 22 settlers led by Mathias Denman and Colonel John Patterson landed at the foot of present-day Sycamore Street in Cincinnati. On December 28, 1788, they established the settlement of Losantiville.

The future of these three tiny settlements, and even that of most of the Northwest Territory, was still in doubt in 1789. The treaties signed by Native Americans at Fort Stanwix in 1784, Fort McIntosh in 1785, and Fort Finney in 1786, technically had opened southern Ohio to white settlement. But the Indians who had signed these agreements had been bribed or had been intimidated into doing so and many of the signees were minor chiefs who had no real tribal authority. At Fort Stanwix, for example, the Iroquois ceded land belonging not to the Six Nations, but rather to the Shawnee. The tribes actually living in the region had no intention of relinquishing their lands so easily.

Because of the Indian threat, all three of the tiny settlements had blockhouses for protection by the spring of 1789. At Columbia, Stites built and garrisoned his own small fort. Losantiville apparently relied on a blockhouse built by George Rogers Clark in 1780. Judge Symmes’ hamlet at North Bend originally was protected by a blockhouse garrisoned by Ensign Francis Luce and by 18 regulars. The latter soon were reduced by fevers, two desertions and one death to leave a total of only 12 effectives. Symmes had made arrangements in advance for army protection, but Luce’s negligible detachment was not what he had in mind.

After several entreaties to Philadelphia, Symmes finally was sent the requested protection. On August 9, 1789, brevet Brigadier General Josiah Harmar dispatched a full company under Captain David Strong from Fort Harmar at Marietta, Ohio,
to North Bend. That company was followed two days later by Harmar’s second-in-command, Major John Doughty. Doughty, who had constructed Fort Harmar in 1785, was sent “for the purpose of selecting the site of a fort intended to protect the settlement on the Symmes purchase.”

Doughty arrived in the Miami country on August 16 and, by August 21, he had dispatched a report back upriver to Harmar. The major stated that he had spent three days in reconnaissance of the region between the two Miamis. He carefully weighed the advantages offered by various localities, such as safety from flood, a fresh supply of water and a healthy environment for the garrison. He finally chose a spot “opposite the Licking river, high and healthy, abounding in never failing springs.”

Doughty’s site for the fort was about 550 feet back from the Ohio River, near the present-day intersection of Third and Broadway in Cincinnati. The forest surrounding the site was composed of maple, ash, walnut, oak, sycamore, poplar, and hickory trees, thus providing Doughty with onsite building materials. It was also a strategic location, being only seven miles from Columbia and 15 miles from North Bend.

A local and totally unsubstantiated legend credits Ensign Luce with choosing the fort’s location. A farmer from North Bend was jealous of the attention the young ensign was giving his wife, so the farmer moved his family to Losantiville. Luce’s orders only were to garrison a blockhouse in the area. To be near the farmer’s wife, he chose the one in Losantiville. When Doughty arrived he also agreed it was a superior location to North Bend, but for a different reason; it was a better location for protecting the more populous Kentucky settlements. Ensign Luce was stationed in the area and easily could have been in Losantiville when Doughty arrived. Luce, being more familiar with the terrain than was his superior officer, might have shown
Doughty some possible sites. But Doughty never alluded to any suggestions by Luce, never mentioned the “blackeyed farmer’s wife” nor even referred to Clark’s blockhouse.¹⁴

Doughty designed the fort, but its future quartermaster, Lieutenant John Pratt, and newly arrived Captain William Ferguson supervised the actual construction. It was a job well done and both men were praised for their efforts in a special report from General Harmar to Secretary of War Henry Knox.¹⁵

First, the ground on the site was cleared of all underbrush and every tree was cut down for several hundred yards. Next, the blockhouses, or bastions in military parlance, were erected. The faces were parallel to the curtain, or sidewalls, and projected about half their width beyond the curtain. This allowed for raking the curtain with cannon or small arms fire; scaling the walls was next to impossible. The blockhouses were two stories high with the upper story projecting over the lower. In addition, musket holes were cut into the floor for firing downward. Square in shape and about 20 feet wide on each side, the blockhouses were built of heavy hewn logs laid horizontally and notched together at the corners.¹⁶

The entire fort originally was square in shape. The barracks and storehouses formed the curtain’s middle wall with the open spaces covered by a log palisade. This was a typical arrangement for many Kentucky “stations” or outposts throughout the region.¹⁷ The logs of the palisade were about 20 feet in length and placed upright in a four-foot deep trench, forming a 16-foot high wall around the fort.

Each side of the fort was approximately 180 feet between blockhouses. The south barracks, containing the main gate, were divided into six rooms, three of which were on each side of the gate. A triangular extension was added to the western side of the fort in 1791, with a fifth blockhouse at its tip. The new section
contained the artificer's yard with its blacksmith's, armorer's, carpenter's and wheelwright's shops. A sixth and final extension was added late in 1791 to the northern side and it, too, was triangular. Built to house the wounded from Harmar's disastrous campaign, it became Cincinnati's first hospital.

There was a flagstaff in the center yard and at least one well. The entire 15-acre military reservation was enclosed by a white picket fence. The fort was whitewashed at first, but when serious campaigning ended after 1795, the fort was painted red.

Kentucky flatboats, 40 or 50 of them, were used as lumber for doors, roofs and floors. Designed for a one-way trip down the Ohio, the boats could be purchased for as cheaply as $1 to $2 a boat, once the trip had been made. The troops provided all the necessary labor including quarrying the needed limestone. The government was only billed for the flatboats, nails, glass and wagon hire.

Almost all of the frontier forts were of a similar design, rectangular with a blockhouse at each corner. What made Fort Washington different was its large size; it covered more than a modern city block and could accommodate nearly 1,500 men. That, plus the excellent workmanship involved in its construction and such luxuries as plastered walls, finished floors and glass windows, all made for rare commodities in other contemporary wooden forts.

General Harmar officially took command of the still unfinished fort and 300-man garrison on December 29, 1789. Among the contingent was military surgeon Dr. Richard Allison. He was the only doctor for the fort as well as for 11 families and 22 single men in Losantiville. He was joined in 1793 by an assistant, Dr. Joseph Strong.

Governor Arthur St. Clair visited the fort January 2, 1790. Though he stayed for only three days, his visit was more than just
a routine courtesy call. The steady westward advance of settlement had left his present headquarters at Fort Harmar too far east to govern effectively the vast Northwest Territory. Starting at Fort Pitt, a line of fortifications had crept westward cutting off the Ohio River to hostile tribes and helping to secure Kentucky and western Pennsylvania. Each new stockade, Fort McIntosh, Fort Henry and Fort Harmar, was a step farther into Indian country. With Fort Nelson at Louisville securing the Falls of the Ohio, the tenuous line was completed. St. Clair and Harmar both wanted to stab deeper into the wilderness, to destroy the hostile, threatening villages and to burn the Indians’ crops. To accomplish this, they envisioned a new line of forts, this line extending north towards the Indians’ bases of power along the Wabash and Maumee rivers. Fort Washington, the largest, newest and most powerful fort in the territory, became St. Clair’s capitol and the fulcrum from which this new line of forts would grow.  

The tall Scottish born St. Clair was quite pleased with the fort and agreed with Harmar that Fort Washington was an appropriate name. The name of the town was another matter. St. Clair had found the name, Losantiville, which was a jumble of French and Latin meaning “Town opposite the Licking River,” far too distasteful a name for any capital of his. On January 4, 1790, he officially rechristened the town, Cincinnati, in honor of the Society of the Cincinnati, of which he was a member.  

The Shawnee, Maumee, Miami and Delaware Indians had plans of their own. In an attempt to drive the latest intruders off their lands, they launched a series of reprisal raids in the spring of 1790. Kenton’s Station, a small post up the Ohio, was attacked and more than a dozen settlers were killed. Shawnee attacked and plundered a small convoy of riverboats on the Great Miami. On more than one occasion hostiles even stole horses tethered to Fort Washington’s gates.
The History of Fort Washington at Cincinnati, Ohio:  
A Case Study

The fort itself never was in any real danger of attack; the fort’s cannon and the hostiles’ lack of necessary patience for a prolonged siege ruled out any attack. Instead, the fort became the staging ground for three major campaigns against the hostile tribes. Two of these campaigns, however, ended in disaster. On October 21, 1790, General Josiah Harmar led more than 600 men into an ambush near present-day Fort Wayne, Indiana. He lost more than 182 men.\(^{29}\)

Harmar’s humiliating defeat was soon eclipsed. In early October 1791, General Arthur St. Clair led another expedition out of Fort Washington. During this expedition, St. Clair simultaneously continued in his capacity as governor. More than 3,000 men followed him into the wilderness, but because of disease, desertions and St. Clair’s penchant for building forts, his force soon was reduced to about 1,500 regulars and militia. During the early morning hours of November 4, 1791, the governor’s makeshift camp was surprised by thousands of braves. This attack led to the worst defeat ever suffered by American forces at the hands of Native Americans. St. Clair lost 37 officers and 593 men, the survivors straggling back in panic to Fort Washington. It was reported that Christmas in Cincinnati was “a gloomy affair” that year. Most of the outlying settlements had been abandoned, so it probably was a crowded holiday in town as well.\(^{30}\)

The last major campaign to originate from the fort was, however, a victorious one. Washington finally had found a competent Indian fighter in Major General Anthony “Mad Anthony” Wayne. Wayne took command of the fort in early 1793 and by winter he was ready to lead his forces against the enemy. After months of successful campaigning, he defeated the combined tribes on August 20, 1794, at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. This victory led to the Treaty of Greeneville, which
effectively ended Indian resistance in the Ohio country.\textsuperscript{31}

Though its days as an important staging area for campaigns was ended with this treaty, the fort still was an important administrative center and contained a large garrison. Neither Cincinnati nor Fort Washington appealed much to Wayne. He complained that the town was dirty and that his attempts at instilling discipline into his men were being undermined constantly by “wenches” who were selling whiskey to his soldiers. Drunkenness, typical of many a frontier post, apparently was a major problem. A gallon of whiskey was cheap and was easily obtainable. It sold for only seven shillings, the equivalent of about 91¢.\textsuperscript{32} Until the end of 1793, whiskey was issued daily to the men as part of their rations, with an extra half-pint given to them on Christmas and on the Fourth of July. General James Wilkinson even increased it by half for the entire month of January 1793, because of the severe cold. As punishment for quarreling and “shocking his brother soldiers,” Private Henry Melory’s ration was stopped for a week which was a common penalty for minor offenses.\textsuperscript{33} Drunkenness was punished by a loss of one’s whiskey ration for up to two months. In some cases, when it led to insolence to an officer, to disobedience of orders or to sleeping on guard duty, the loss was accompanied by a maximum of 50 lashes given in the presence of the offender’s company. In 1797, Wilkinson added public intoxication to the list of offenses and no man was to be caught drunk outside of the 15-acre military reservation.\textsuperscript{34}

Drunkenness was not confined to the ranks. Captains McPherson and John Pratt both were court-martialed on July 20, 1792, for “drunkenness and character unsuited to an officer.” McPherson resigned, but John Pratt had the ignominious privilege of being tried and cashiered out of the army from the fort which he had helped to build.\textsuperscript{35} Many of the fort’s officers,
including Harmar, had well-deserved reputations as hard drinkers. There were some, like David Strong or William Henry Harrison, who were noted for their moderation, but they appear to have been in the minority.

Aside from drinking, there was little else to do for amusement. Despite Wayne’s complaint that the town was full of “wenches,” the men far outnumbered the women. Those men literate enough to read had to wait until November 1793, for the first local newspaper, The Centinel of the Northwest Territory, to begin publishing. There were few books at first and month-old eastern newspapers were popular items. For the garrison’s more religious members, the first church in Cincinnati did not open until 1792.

Hunting and fishing in the area were extremely good. In a letter to General Thomas Mifflin, Harmar described buffalo, turkey and venison in abundance. One-hundred-pound catfish stories, he added, “are by no means exaggerated.” The only problem was scarce ammunition. Government issued lead shot was inventoried closely and unaccounted ball cost 13¢ per shot, an amount which was deducted from the soldier’s pay. Sentries, when discharging their muskets at the end of a shift, fired at a specially designed target, so the lead could be reclaimed. The best shot, incidentally, was awarded a quart of whiskey. 

Gambling always was popular, but tended to lead to fights. In 1797, Wilkinson was forced to ban dice and cards from the barracks due to violence over gambling debts. He did allow the soldiers to keep their backgammon boards, this being considered a more gentlemanly game. By 1802 friendly wagers could be placed over a game of pool, but only by the officers. Cincinnati’s solitary billiards table was in their quarters.

The officers stationed at the fort were a varied lot, ranging from incompetents to a future president. Thomas Irwin, a wag-
oner who served during St. Clair’s campaign, claimed that “The officers on that campaign was as good as any that ever carried a gun.” Most were Revolutionary War veterans and seasoned Indian fighters and they acquitted themselves well in combat. Few, apparently, were well liked by their men, but many were respected. Major Ferguson’s entire command died with him at St. Clair’s defeat while others broke and ran despite their officers’ commands.

Several of the officers who served at the fort later entered politics. Major David Ziegler became Cincinnati’s first mayor in 1802. Captain Ebenezer Denny retired to Pittsburgh and later served as that town’s mayor. Many of the officers remained in the area after they retired from military life. Dr. Allison retired and opened a civilian practice in Cincinnati. Captain Harrison went on to become president in 1841. He married Anna Symmes, the judge’s daughter, and built a large estate at North Bend. Harmar, Pratt, Strong and Ferguson, among others, all bought houses in Cincinnati and Ensign Cornelius Sedam retired and began the settlement of Sedamsville.

Others survived their tour of duty at Fort Washington only to be killed later in battle. Ensign Asa Hartshorne, one of the fort’s original garrison, was killed during Wayne’s 1794 campaign. Colonel John Hardin, while under a flag of truce, was killed and scalped in May 1792. Others enjoyed more tranquil fates. Major Doughty, the fort’s architect, retired in 1800 to pursue his main interest in life, raising peaches.

But not everyone shared wagoner Irwin’s good appraisal of the officers. General Wilkinson considered them “peddlars, others drunkards, and nearly all of them fools.” Like Wilkinson, some of them were insufferable egotists. Adjutant General Winthrop Sargent was a cold, arrogant man who considered himself superior to the pioneer types around him. He was
despised by the rank and file. Colonel Darke was extremely outspoken and criticized his fellow officers repeatedly. Ziegler was considered obstinate and Captain Mahlon Ford had a violent temper. In June 1790, he beat Colonel Oldham on the fort’s parade ground. David Strong, a decent man and a good officer, was illiterate. He barely was able to write his own name and had to have a subordinate read his dispatches to him. Wives and families of officers could live on post, but after 1797, Wilkinson banned mistresses from the officers’ quarters because of repeated problems and quarrels.

A lieutenant colonel could live quite well on his $60-per-month pay in 1790. Even the lowest officer, the ensign, made $18 a month. Top pay for a sergeant was only $10. Privates netted only $2 a month and were lucky to get that at times. Secretary of War Henry Knox, in 1791, authorized St. Clair to disburse up to $5,000 to his ill-fated army, but most of the soldiers never were paid. St. Clair feared they just would buy whiskey with it. By March 1793, many of the troops at Fort Washington had not received any pay since the previous August. The men also were entitled to and, after 1794, usually received free food and soap. The army also supplied socks, one new uniform and four pairs of shoes per year.

Life at the post was extremely hard and boring for most of the enlisted men and no edition of The Centinel was complete without the notices of desertions. One notice, which ran from November 3, 1793, to March 1, 1794, listed eight deserters, including a 15-year-old boy. Another on the list, Private John Johnson, apparently was caught. Within a week he had deserted again for the fifth time. Each of the eight deserters carried a $20 reward for recapture. If caught, the offender faced a maximum flogging of 100 lashes, curtailment of all privileges and a sentence to heavy labor. Peter Freeman was not even this lucky.
His attempt to desert to the British cost him his life on April 20, 1793, despite his wife’s pleas to Wilkinson.\textsuperscript{48}

Fort Washington, which was designed to house more than 1,500 men, by 1802 contained only half a company, about 35 men. With the advance of the frontier westward, Fort Washington soon faced the same fate as Fort Harmar; it was too far east to be an effective military or administrative post. Besides, Cincinnati was a boom town and needed to expand. The fort was in the way. Lots had sold for only a dollar apiece when the fort was built. By the turn of the century, these same lots sold for $250. The post sat on some prime real estate. In 1807, John Mansfield surveyed the military reservation at the request of the federal government and staked out 15 lots. By then, most of the structures has been torn down, the palisades being bought and sold as firewood by John Miller. March 17, 1808, was a public holiday in Cincinnati, as the land the fort had occupied was sold at auction. Within a few years, no visible trace of this once mighty and important outpost remained, except the now flourishing town of Cincinnati.\textsuperscript{49}
NOTES

5. Ibid., pp. 45-46.
9. George Rogers Clark’s blockhouse reportedly was standing as late as 1787, though numerous witnesses failed to mention it. Several veterans of Clark’s 1780 expedition placed the blockhouse’s location at present-day Third and Broadway or roughly at the same site as Fort Washington. See Ford, History of Cincinnati, pp. 20-24; and Charles Theodore Greve, Centennial History of Cincinnati, (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1904), p. 162.
12. Ibid., p. 12.
14. The main source of the Francis Luce story was Judge Jacob Burnet, who arrived in Cincinnati in 1796 and who had heard the story from some older residents. See Jacob Burnet, Notes on the Early Settlement of the Northwest Territory, (Cincinnati: Derby, Bradley and Co., 1847), p. 55.
17. Scamyhorn and Steinle, Stockade in the Wilderness, p. 15.
19. Ibid., pp. 351-353.


33. Jacob Slough, “Orderly Book of Captain Slough’s Company From 1 March to 18 August, 1793,” Unpublished manuscript, Cincinnati Historical Society, no page number given, entry for March 1, 1793.


37. *The Centinel of the Northwest Territory*, #1, November 3, 1793, and #4, November 30, 1793.


45. Ibid. and Simmons, "Orderly Book For Fort Washington and Fort Hamilton," p. 143.

46. Jacobs, Beginning of the U. S. Army, pp. 77-78.

47. The Centinel of the Northwest Territory, #1, November 3, 1793, #5, November 30, 1793, and #19, March 1, 1794.


Selected Papers from the Seventh and Eighth George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Fronter History Conferences
Custermania guarantees that a personal library could and often is
filled with published material on Lieutenant Colonel George Arm­
strong Custer’s defeat at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. For sheer
magnitude of disaster, however, Custer can’t hold a candle to Arthur
St. Clair. St. Clair lost almost three times the number of soldiers who
died in 1876. Edward Braddock lost less personnel in his famous
defeat on the Monongahela. Major General St. Clair’s debacle No­
vember 4, 1791, in western Ohio, remains, in St. Clair’s undeniably
true words, “as unfortunate an action as almost any that has been
fought.” About half the army had been killed and a large number had
been wounded. His army’s losses in that three-hour period “exceeded
the total killed in the battles of Long Island and Camden, the two most
sanguinary contests of the Revolution.”¹

Nevertheless, all this interesting military trivia has not
popularized St. Clair’s battle.² Surely, it’s not because the United
States lost - Custer also lost. Moreover, a number of survivors
have given us harrowing accounts of the event. The battle lacks
interest even for most military historians because the leadership
drama is nonexistent. While there are other relevant reasons for
St. Clair’s slide into oblivion, this leadership reason can offer
some insight into a major confusion about Indian military
sophistication. On one side, there was a commander whose only
stroke of brilliance was a cleverly executed bayonet charge to
exit the battlefield. On the other side, there was uncertainty over
the identity of the commander; uncertainty even whether some­
one really commanded overall.

Normally, the battle in which St. Clair’s army almost was
annihilated simply is named for him. That’s patently unfair since
there is plenty of ineptitude, cowardice and venality to go around. The tone of St. Clair’s expedition was set at the begin­ning of the army’s march, when Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Harmar (himself a pitied soldier twice defeated in battle with the Indians) counseled his friend Lieutenant Ebenezer Denny: “You must go on the campaign; some will escape, and you may be among the number.”  

What an unlucky officer, but prescient prophet! The expedition’s supplies were insufficient and shoddy. Officers bickered publicly, sulked in their tents and an officer (apparently piqued at St. Clair’s treatment of him) refused to pass on essential information. Early intelligence on the strength of the Indian forces never really was attempted, much less gathered. The army, in Denny’s words, was “perfectly ignorant” of the enemy’s forces. That Captain Richard Sparks and a party of 20 friendly Chickasaw Indians could leave camp on October 29, 1791, to gather information and still could miss the enemy altogether is almost incredible.  

St. Clair, in fact, received so little intelligence that historians have failed to follow the common practice of naming the battle after the location since St. Clair did not know upon which river he was beaten.  

The soldiers were allowed to go to sleep before fortifying their camp. In combat, the cannons were aimed too high to do any damage. The militia fled at the start of the battle, caused confusion among the regular soldiers, spent most of the time milling about the camp or rifling officers’ possessions, took the lead in running back to Fort Jefferson at the time of retreat and, in some cases, later boasted about impossibly high numbers of Indians they personally had shot. Indeed, the remnants of the army were noteworthy in being able to cover a marathon distance to that fort by nightfall. Finally, it should be noted that a special place of Federalist dishonor was saved for the apparently absurd denouement when Congress later found that “the failure of the last
expedition can in no respect be imputed to his [St. Clair's] conduct.” The defeated general continued for the next 10 years to serve as governor of the Northwest Territory. An author of a description of the battle has, then, an embarrassing amount of material to use for describing the errors, cowardice and incompetence of St. Clair’s army before, during and after its disgraceful performance.

Instead of dwelling on these commonplace facts of the battle, pretend for a moment that St. Clair had won. Many battles, remember, have been won despite the incompetence of the officers and the greed of the supply corps. In the case of a St. Clair victory, the historian would have explained the outcome by emphasizing certain undeniably true aspects of that historical battle. The president, it would have been noted, explicitly had warned St. Clair of his greatest danger: “...in three words, beware of surprise;...again and again, General, beware of surprise.” St. Clair’s movement into Indian territory precluded his rushing into the type of ambushes so effectively sprung on Harmar’s forces. St. Clair left the Indians no choice, but to gamble with the initiative or to lose the territory. In addition, President George Washington carefully had pinpointed that St. Clair only had to attend to the well-known ways in which Indians fought. “You know,” said Washington, “how the Indians fight us.”

Secondly, the Indians had been thrown off guard by a series of preliminary military excursions into Indian territory. Charles Scott and James Wilkinson had led 750 Kentuckians against certain Miami towns in Indiana. Then, Wilkinson led another 500 Kentuckians into that same region. These attacks, combined with Harmar’s 1790 destruction of the extensive cornfields of the numerous Miami towns led to such famine conditions that a warrior of the peace party received no answer to his
charge that “you almost eat your own dung this summer [1792] for reason of war.”

Thirdly, only courageous and proven Revolutionary War officers had been chosen. Any number of observers noted Major General St. Clair’s battlefield coolness and self-possession. Having served at Ticonderoga, Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine and Yorktown, was there any reason to be surprised that he again proved himself “conspicuously courageous?” Trained by encounters with Britain’s famous Red Lines, Revolutionary soldiers like Richard Butler (noted for his valor commanding a portion of the famous Pennsylvania Line), Jonathan Snowden, Thomas Patterson, William Piatt, (all formerly commissioned officers of the New Jersey Continental Line), and Zebulon Pike of the Continental Army, obviously would have seen to it that Indian valor and foolhardiness would be destroyed by the disciplined valor of the bayonet charge.

St. Clair, of course, hardly needed to be reminded by Secretary of War Henry Knox of this particular battlefield technique. Army officers were steeped in the lessons learned from Colonel Henry Bouquet’s extraordinarily effective destruction of the Indians at Bushy Run in 1763. In a marching formation reminiscent of the theory expounded in William Smith’s popularization of Bouquet’s ideas, St. Clair had eliminated surprise which traditionally was the Indian’s most effective weapon. At the campsite, a large number of sentries were placed well in front of the bivouacking army to prevent a surprise attack. In addition, St. Clair on the eve of the battle - and following Bouquet’s example - secured control of the high ground. As Denny, St. Clair’s aide-de-camp, later wrote: “I was much pleased with [the high, dry ground].” A year later on February 1, 1792, Winthrop Sargent (a revolutionary soldier who had been St. Clair’s adjutant general in 1791) looked again
at the “very handsome piece of rising ground” and again was struck by the idea that it was “so defensible against regular troops that I believe any military man...would have unhesitatingly pitched upon it.”

Since the area was limited, St. Clair improvised a solution which included a thoughtful way of handling the problem of undisciplined militia. The sharpshooting but undisciplined frontiersmen were placed in such a way that the regulars could operate even if the frontiersmen fled or ran pell-mell around the field following their “treeing” technique. To avoid such flight or unexpected maneuvering, St. Clair had advanced them in an easily defended position where “for about 400 yards to their front the woods were more or less open, offering little cover for hostile approach.” Additionally, army units on both sides strengthened the frontiersmen’s resolve. Benjamin Van Cleve’s Journal makes it clear that soldiers, such as himself, had high morale and were quite confident that they easily would defeat the assembled Indians. Another Bouquet truism formed the basis of St. Clair’s battlefield performance - drive the Indians ahead with the bayonet. As an unexpected bonus, the gout-stricken commander moved around the field metamorphosed by the battle into a younger, healthier officer seemingly blessed by Mars, the Roman god of war, with personal battlefield immortality. Finally, Congress, in investigating the less successful aspects of the battle, candidly blamed itself (not the officers or the soldiers) for failures. In short, if the Indians had not won, the historian would have pictured brave men under the guidance of veteran leaders, both working for honest politicians.

All the above statements are historically true, but St. Clair’s army, nevertheless, was utterly destroyed. Why? Competence and courage alone do not guarantee victory. National resolve, insightful generalship and the enemy’s soldierly qualities also
must be considered. In terms of the latter point, Indian soldiers, their officers and the political units they served would have had to accomplish a larger number of correct moves. St. Clair realized this. He told his congressional investigators that the absence during the battle of Major John Francis Hamtramck and his elite First Regimental Army unit (who had been sent to round up deserters) could not serve as an explanation for his defeat. If that group had been present on the battlefield, St. Clair unexpectedly stated, the outcome would have been the same, except there would have been more casualties!

Three questions briefly must be explored. Perhaps of most interest to historians - although apparently never to St. Clair nor to his officers - is the question of how the attack on St. Clair evolved. How did the plan of attack become finalized and accepted? Who, in short, commanded the Indians?

Secondly, military historians would insist on the actual battlefield details that defeated St. Clair’s forces. No matter how good the general’s plan, the army must be able to carry out the details of the plan.

Thirdly, what gave backbone and staying power to the Indian soldiers during the long period before the battle as well as during the battle itself? What generally distinguished this victorious Indian large-scale battle was the political atmosphere of cooperation between disparate forces. What must be considered, then, is how Indian military expertise was channeled into a coherent plan by a general staff whose mandate flowed from the political will of the people they represented.

The least important of these three questions seeks to know who was the George Washington who crushed Charles Cornwallis or perhaps the James Wolfe who died annihilating the Marquis Louis Joseph de Montcalm? Based on a battlefield figure in a British uniform, some writers have theorized that the
commander in chief was British. This visual image is too flimsy a piece of evidence for such a view. An author, for example, needs to look for a British leader (or white Indian such as Simon Girty) only when subscribing to one or more of the following errors. "The Indian had no feeling for grand strategy, was a sketchy tactician, and was nothing more than a primitive warrior." Other writers - more by indirection or neglect than by clear choice - imply that the evidence does not show that there was, in reality, a supreme commander among St. Clair's Indian foes. These authors portray several leaders whose level of staff integration amounts to no more than Indians agreeing upon which part of the battlefield their unit would fight. Although revealing a surprising ignorance of the details of the battle itself, this rather inane working assumption rests, though, on an understandable incomprehension of Indian military leadership rules. Even though many authors consider the title unrealistic, perhaps for reasons just given, they have identified a number of Indian candidates for the title of generalissimo.

What were known as "the Western tribes" possessed two famous war chiefs who certainly played key roles in St. Clair's defeat. In this area of the country, many assume for several good reasons that Little Turtle was in overall command. The Miami Indians were unusual in that they did have a hierarchical tradition of a supreme leader and Little Turtle indeed had an enviable military record. He fought on his home ground. He did not seem to have been in real charge at Fallen Timbers where Indian leadership appeared so pathetic. His authoritarian Miami ways, however, would have been terribly annoying to most Indians who were used to an entirely different style of leadership. Chief Blue Jacket also received the nod from some authorities. If he had been white it would not have been held against him, but that he was Shawnee would have been a problem in 1791. Hendrick
Aupaumut's 1792 account of the meeting of the tribes of the Ohio and Great Lakes areas makes it abundantly clear that the Shawnee were considered dangerously hot-tempered and over-anxious for war. Canadian authors urge, on the other hand, the candidacy of Chief Joseph Brant who certainly was not anxious for a devastating conflict. Aupaumut's account reflects Algonquian displeasure of Iroquoian treaties with Americans and, more importantly, with the Indian experience of the entire historic period. This account shows why that choice of Brant is doubtful. Whatever claptrap the Five Nations articulated to Europeans and colonials, Algonquian Indians always considered these Iroquoian Indians as potential enemies.

Finally, some minor authors, who collected oral tales, suggested one of the “Seven Nations of Canada,” a “Messasago chief,” as the architect of victory. Unfortunately for this choice, the rather large amount of published Ojibwa tradition does not mention such a general. The Missisauga were part of the large Ojibwa/Chippewa Nation which in turn was allied with the Potawatomi and Ottawa in the Three Fires Confederation. Thus, this choice of a “Messasago chief” would have been politically astute. The Chippewa also carried the immense prestige of having defeated the Five Nations Iroquois and of having driven them out of Ontario. Simultaneously they were doing the same to the Dakotas in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Therefore, the choice of a “Messasago chief” would have made military sense. Significantly the Chippewa later refused to come and fight in the 1794 campaign against Major General Anthony Wayne. This constitutes as good a reason as any to explain the confused battlefield tactics of the Indians at Fallen Timbers when compared to those tactics used at the defeat of St. Clair.

It hardly can be decided in a single paragraph who exactly was the supreme Indian authority. Instead, it should be argued
that this question is misdirected. Concern should not be given
unduly to seeking one name because a supreme Indian leader­
ship would have had to have operated in a consensual context
quite different from the usual Western military one. A more
interesting and utterly important reason for arguing the case for
the Missisauaga would be that a chief from one of the “back
nations” instinctively would have known about the subtleties of
consensual decision making. Many past attempts to justify a
name for overall commander were misdirected, first of all, in a
rather obvious sort of way. Even in the West it is a familiar fact
that the Pattons of the army often are commanded by army
politicians like Eisenhower. Some of the bitterest interchanges
in Aupaumut’s account were concerned with the question of the
relationship between the war chiefs and the village sachems in
the various tribes. The Shawnee and Miami both were accused
of letting the war chiefs decide the important national questions.
The Iroquoian and the Canadian Algonquian war chiefs agreed
that this violated the ancient ways of operating.\(^\text{24}\)

The name of the overall leader would be a great deal less
known than names of popular battlefield heroes because overall
Indian leadership was based on an entirely different set of
principles than those of Europe. This would be pointed out to
Canadian Governor Louis de Buade, Count of Palluau and
Frontenac. In 1695, Chingouabe, chief of the Ojibwa, analyzed
for Frontenac the Indian view of civic obedience:\(^\text{25}\)

Father! it is not the same with us, as with you. When you
command, all the French obey you and go to war. But I shall not
be heeded and obeyed by my nation in like manner.

From statements such as this, many historians have as­
sumed that the Indians, in fact, possessed little sense of obedi­
ence and would be quite undependable in military operations. On
the other hand - and this must be emphasized - at the time
Chingouabe spoke the above words, the Ojibwa were in the
process of throwing the Five Nation Iroquois out of Canada after a well-executed, large-scale and extended military campaign. This apparent dichotomy between an Indian rhetoric of total civic freedom and documented military success is one fact that should be kept in mind when looking at the defeat suffered by St. Clair’s forces. Leadership, at least in military matters, did happen somehow. The anthropologist, Frederick O. Gearing, described this non-Indian type of leadership for the contemporary Fox Indians at the meetings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.26

The men would gather, most within a half hour of the appointed time, stand about, gradually sit down in twos and threes chatting or joking. Some time later Bill would, in a voice almost inaudible, make a casual allusion to the subject matter that had made the meeting necessary....The matter might be taken up, if not, then after some while an allusion would fall a second time from Bill’s lips. Once the matter was taken up, Bill would say no more unless some question of fact were asked of him. Ultimately a group sentiment would be felt to have crystallized (the cue was when those who had objections ceased to express them) at which point Bill would say: “It’s decided, then....” And if there were minor loopholes in the judgment, he would mention them, systematically gathering up loose ends so as to make the decided course feasible.

This course of action embodies, Gearing said, the techniques for achieving consensus in a “society where, in almost all contexts, any move to direct another, to boss, was considered an aggressive affront.”27

In other words, in 1791, at least two important things happened when the principal war chiefs met under the silent Indian (whoever he was) who acted as the “Great Chief” before the battle with St. Clair’s forces. Gradually a number of Indians disagreed with the way plans were being formulated. They exercised, then, the position always open to Indians - they left. The departure of dissenters was the only way Indians could get
Who Defeated St. Clair?

that total consensus they needed. Since factionalism continued to be such an important element in Indian difficulties in adjusting to European and American encroachments,\textsuperscript{28} then 1791 is noteworthy in that so many Indians accepted the same political goals and battlefield plan. At some point the "Great Chief" rose and, with no voices dissenting, outlined the plan that had evolved. This evolution occurred as a result of the give-and-take of vigorous interchanges between the head warriors of the quite diverse tribes who constituted the forces who had to oppose St. Clair. An unusual third event may have happened. The great warrior in charge may have left the battlefield performance to minor leaders. The Chippewa certainly operated quite regularly in this fashion.\textsuperscript{29} This allows every subcommander to feel (and say) that his unit's exploits made the most important contribution to the victory. On this level, the old Gilbert and Sullivan refrain is true - "You're right and I'm right." This entire process may look to modern man as similar to the proverbial committee getting a camel while designing the horse. The process may seem to unite the jerry-built.

Nevertheless, and for at least two reasons, the final plan would be followed faithfully the next day. For one thing, the plan was sure to include general elements upon which all Indians agreed. Against St. Clair, for example, were seen the following generally accepted techniques: the charge; the targeting of officers; the crescent-shaped battlefield movement; the avoidance of bayonet attacks; the surrounding of would-be bayoneters; and the "treeing" advance.

While the battlefield elements were well-known, the November 1791, configuration was unique. The battle, for example, started with the Indians' totally effective wild rush against the militia, an action which eliminated the latter for the rest of the battle. All-in-all, Indian experience proved that less deaths
happened in rushing militia than in trying to outshoot them. Against St. Clair’s militia, however, the grand rush was preceded by five minutes or so of full-throated Indian cries. Thus, there absolutely was neither any ambushing nor surprising. The Indians announced their presence and then suddenly charged which served as a carefully orchestrated “shock” maneuver.

Stage two, and again a common technique, was to mingle with those fleeing so as to get inside the camp. The technique would be used, for example, again by the Chippewa in 1794 at Fort Recovery. In both cases it failed, but with St. Clair’s forces the Indians moved into phase three - the encirclement of the camp within a couple of minutes. Considering the need to wipe out nearly 200 sentries in six outposts, the difficulty of running through the underbrush and the distance to be traveled, the time for encirclement was markedly rapid. Clearly, all the Indians knew the game plan.

At that point, though, the battle - like all battles - was put into the hands of the soldiers and their immediate officers. The concentration of Indian fire from the two tips of the dominant half-moon formations was aimed at the soldiers manning the cannons. This strategy showed that the Indian soldiers had been instructed on this point. Generally the smaller units followed traditional techniques: use the treeing method of advance; shoot especially at leaders and run before the bayonet charge, but just enough to be able to turn and destroy the bayoneters or instead to run behind them and break through to the camp. The white Indian, Stephen Riddle, who fought against Harmar, St. Clair and Anthony Wayne, made it clear that Indian warriors performed all these maneuvers under the eyes of superiors. “Amongst the Indians they have Defferent grades of chiefs,” explained Riddle and “some is captain of 50 some of 100, etc.”

Avoidance of units in St. Clair’s army, who were “advantageously posted
and acquainted with this kind of war;"3\textsuperscript{1} may have been simply rank and file Indian appreciation for their adversaries. It also may have resulted from a basic half-moon attack on the other side with the Indians committing just enough of their personnel to keep these soldiers (perhaps whom they previously had singled out as dangerous) in place and thus out of the main fire fight. Moreover, Bouquet at Bushy Run had taught the Indians that they must keep their eyes on all units for otherwise they unexpectedly might appear in the rear.

These techniques worked, ultimately, because the individual Indian soldier performed exceedingly well on a battlefield. The important frontiersman, John Cleves Symmes, correctly analyzed both the weakness of many of the soldiers in St. Clair’s command and the high quality of many of their adversaries:3\textsuperscript{2}

Such men [rabble recruits] may do very well in armies and garrisons where their duty is merely mechanical, but it requires another sort of men to contend against Indians with success. It must be considered that every Indian is in fact a general in his way, and must be opposed by a combatant equally skilled in all their cunning and artifice. Sure I am that one hundred Marlboroughs could not fight fifty Indians in the woods with success.

Another reason, one not sufficiently stressed in most studies of American Indian war, for assuming that the plan would be attempted faithfully rests in the complex kinship structure which undergirded all Indian political reality. Aupaumut’s account of his trip among the Western Indians, during which he carried a message from Washington, has been ridiculed as being as ineffective as his mission. Nevertheless, his rambling account of meetings piled upon meetings, all of which start with great emphasis on the putative familiar relationship of one tribe to another, freeze for further generations the world in which the Ohio Indians lived. Before the various tribal war “heros” met, the numerous tribes conferred in three councils - the heros, the
sachems and combined meetings of heroes and sachems. Then the various confederations of Indians met to work out their differences. Indian movement to war in the 1790s was a complex process in which consensus had to be achieved among tribes, traditional confederation members, sometimes enemies and even among traditional enemies. Nothing would be more nonsensical than to suppose that such an intricate political process would eventuate in a military foray where every tribal division (if not every individual) would do as they personally thought best. No greater fact could be shown than those relationships of “brother, younger/older brothers, uncles, grandchildren, grandfather.” Unfortunately there were few Aupaumuts. Indeed, as the years of the 18th century rolled on, Europeans and colonial societies came to understand less of central Indian politics. The following diagram\(^3\) of a successful African tribe’s workable political world probably reflects a similar mind-set for the Indians who opposed St. Clair. It must be emphasized that societies around the world have operated in a militarily effective way in such a context where reciprocal kin relations replace the hierarchical approach of the Western military apparatus. In the interlocking kin relationships, Indians found the rationale and rules for participating in the most important aspects of the most deadly known activity - waging war.

When Iroquois from the Five Nations, the Algonquians’ Seven Nations from Canada and the Western Nations of the Ohio Valley joined together on the morning of November 4, 1791, they were united politically and militarily. Not surprisingly, they won.
Who Defeated St. Clair?
NOTES


2. Some studies of the U.S. military establishment ignore all Indian engagements. For example, The Military in America (editor, Peter Karsten, N.Y., 1980) does not devote even one of its 42 articles exclusively to Indian war. Major General Anthony Wayne’s victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794 receives a one-line mention.


5. Usually the Indians are heavily criticized as unprofessional for not pursuing the army back to the fort. However, Wayne’s victorious legion at Fallen Timbers pursued the Indians considerably less. See, From Greenville to Fallen Timbers, Dwight L. Smith, ed., (Indianapolis, 1952), p. 295.


10. Warren W. Hassler, With Shield and Sword (Ames, Iowa, 1982), p. 55. All generals, it seems, have caustic critics on their staffs. If Anthony Wayne had lost at Fallen Timbers, then historians would have emphasized the author of the unknown journalist of the pro-Wilkinson faction who claimed before the battle that “we continue perfectly ignorant of the C. in Cs plan for the Campaign and are at a loss for the principles on which he acts - the protection of providence may save him - nothing else can.” From Greenville to Fallen Timbers, (editor, Dwight L. Smith) (Indianapolis, 1952), pp. 284-85.


13. The fact that the Kentucky militia fought well in Harmar’s campaign has been
defended recently in “General Josiah Harmar’s Campaign Reconsidered: How the Americans Lost the Battle of Kekionga,” Indiana Magazine of History 83 (1987), p. 54. As for the term, treeing, at its simples, it meant (in the words of Benjamin Van Cleve), “I generally put one knee to the ground & with a rest from behind a tree waited the appearance of an Indian’s head from behind a tree or when one ran to change his position.” This simple technique worked quite well for entrenched Virginians at the Battle of Point Pleasant in 1774. However, if one only hid behind a tree, a more determined enemy could seize the initiative. Successful large-scale Indian fighting often required movement, so that (as Van Cleve stated of the second encounter of Indians against Colonel Josiah Harmar’s forces in 1790) the combatants might spread over several miles as they ran from tree to tree in an effort to outflank the opponent. Cf. Benjamin Van Cleve, “Memoirs,” Quarterly Publications of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, XVII, (1922), pp. 18, 25.


17. Jon M. White, Everyday Life of the North American Indian (N.Y., 1979), p. 115. For the older view that Indians were “virtually without discipline” and “did not have the social organization needed to plan and execute operations of a more complicated nature, such as group maneuvers or frontal assault” see, John K. Mahan, “Anglo-American Methods of Indian Warfare, 1676-1794,” Mississippi Valley Historical Review 45 (1958-59), pp. 257, 259. H. H. Turney-High, Primitive War: Its Practice and Concepts, (Columbia, S.C., 1949), also insisted that inchoate levels of social organization prevented American Indians from either comprehending or using organizational principles.


19. For example, this view was based on the statements of Little Turtle’s son-in-law in C. F. Volney, A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America. (New York, 1968 reprint), II, pp. 356-7. For a recent national writer see Wiley Sword, President Washington’s Indian War, p. 175.

20. For example, Chief Blue Jacket was given consideration by George Ash, a white Indian among the Shawnee. He had taken part in the battle. John Frost, Thrilling Adventures Among the Indians, (Philadelphia, 1854), p. 433.


22. For example, James B. Finley, Life Among the Indians, (Cincinnati, n.d.), p. 62. This missionary claimed 70 years’ experience among the Indians and his account of certain Indian traditions has an authentic (Algonquian) ring. Finley,
however, argued that the British taught the Missisauga the arts of war.

23. From Greenville to Fallen Timbers, p. 296.


26. Frederick O. Gearing, The Face of the Fox, (Chicago, 1971), pp. 56-7. Gearing built on the insights of Walter Miller who had studied how the Fox Indians had been able for 75 years to run so effectively a large annual four-day public powwow.

27. Seventy years after St. Clair's defeat, a perceptive visitor among the Lake Superior Ojibwa observed of the "great chiefs" that "the right men concealed themselves, and are worse clothed, than the others." J.G. Kohl, Kitchi-Gami (London, 1860), p. 66.


Who Defeated St. Clair?
Middle Tennessee, that section of the state which lies between the Cumberland Plateau on the east and the Tennessee River on the west, was settled first by Europeans in 1780. Within 60 years, the region had become the most populous in Tennessee. What was the social world of the region and how did it develop? In this paper, the term "social world" will not refer to the cultural or performing arts, but instead to the basics of daily life. An example from 1832 shows how two groups evaluated everyday Middle Tennessee society. One group, the residents, held the views of insiders, while the second group, people who never had been to the region, judged the social world from the outside. Both sets of opinions emerged when one resident, "Tuckahoe," became incensed over an Englishman’s unfounded criticism of the local university’s curriculum. He fired off a letter to a Nashville newspaper. His correspondence attacked the Englishman’s low opinion of Middle Tennessee.

It is our misfortune to live west of the mountains, where, it is taken for granted, ignorance and barbarism are destined to hold universal and perpetual sway. Pray, Mr. Editor, do tell the Philadelphians and Bostonians and Londoners, that we are not all "gander pullers," nor "gougers," nor "regulators," nor "half-horse and half-alligators." – That some of us geologize, and botanize, and read Greek, and talk French, and write poetry, and spout political economy. - That we receive, by every mail, loads of Scotch, English, French, and Eastern periodicals, of all sorts and upon all manners of subjects - scientific, literary, political, religious, miscellaneous.

Lest it be thought that all the benefits of a frontier existence had vanished under the weight of this accumulated erudition,
“Tuckahoe” noted that “should the philosopher take the matter of this communication in dudgeon, and threaten to call me out, just give him a charitable hint that I am a capital rifle shot, and can snuff a candle at a hundred yards distance equal to any of the fancy in old Kentucky.” A similar disparity occurred between an outsider’s expectations and with the local situation when a Kentucky businessman visited Nashville for the first time. “I need not attempt to describe to you,” he wrote to a Nashville newspaper in 1832, “all the surprise which I felt at the first sight of your beautiful city, and the many interesting objects which meet the stranger’s eye at every turn. We, in Kentucky, have been so long in the habit of regarding Tennessee as a kind of semi-barbarous, illiterate, outlandish region, that I could scarcely credit the testimony of my senses....”

When a people who “read Greek, talk French, and write poetry” are characterized as “semi-barbarous” and “illiterate,” a discrepancy exists that needs to be explained. Two approaches are possible. The first examines the opinions of the outsiders, looking at those “Philadelphians and Bostonians and Londoners” in depth. The second approach studies conditions in Middle Tennessee to see just how developed its social world had become. In pursuing the second approach, this paper will focus on one possible explanation for the social development of the area: economic growth which, when aided by an extensive transportation network, allowed Middle Tennessee (and Nashville in particular) to prosper rapidly. This network encompassed so large an area that a knowledge of and interaction with distant regions helped integrate Middle Tennessee into the broader American culture. What is surprising is how, given these connections, outsiders could be so misinformed about the region.

The evolution of Middle Tennessee, from a handful of rude fortified stations into the state’s economic and demographic
The Social World of Middle Tennessee, 1780-1840

center, can be typified in the growth and life of Nashville. Founded in 1780 on the banks of the Cumberland River, Nashville in 1785 had but "two houses which, in true, merit the name; the rest are only huts that formerly served as a sort of fortification against Indian attacks." A dozen years later, the town housed "about sixty or eighty families," their log and frame houses scattered throughout the entire townsite. By 1802, seven or eight brick houses had risen among the 120 or so other houses surrounding Nashville. The Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury paid his second visit to Nashville in 1808. He felt that "this town has greatly improved in eight years. There are several valuable houses built, an elegant court house, and a college." Nashville’s population, about 1,100 at this time, grew to 3,463 in 1823; to 5,566 in 1830; and to approximately 7,000 in 1834. The number of brick homes alone had swollen to 300, with 80 brick and 15 wood frame stores, 20 brick warehouses, 50 brick and 25 frame offices and 100 workshops. "I have never seen a town of the same size," proclaimed Robert Baird, "which contains as few mean houses and as little that offends the eye. It is a remarkably beautiful place. It contains more elegant mansions and pleasant seats in and around it, than any other town of equal size in the United States." George Featherstonhaugh, the subject of "Tuckahoe’s" heated attack in 1832, visited Nashville in 1834 and proclaimed it "the centre of civilization of the western country."

Nashville attained this remarkable growth and development in large part from its strong agricultural economy. Although the land was fertile, the earliest farms covered relatively few acres. The danger of Indian attack, the lack of time for extensive cultivation and the constant relocation of the settlers all limited farm size. During the 1780s, corn was the most important and often the only crop. These harvests expanded
dramatically after 1795, when peace with the Indians was obtained. Farmers developed fewer acres of cotton, but with the introduction of the cotton gin in 1799 cotton became the main cash crop and, rather quickly, it also became big business. Lewis Cecil Gray estimated that one million pounds of cotton were produced on Middle Tennessee farms in 1801. Production jumped to three million pounds in 1811, 20 million in 1821 and finally reached 50 million pounds in 1833. Middle Tennessee farmers also continued to diversify their crops, raising flax, hemp, tobacco, oats, wheat and a variety of fruit trees. These Cumberland farms also were dotted with animals. Small herds of 50 to 100 cattle, providing milk, beef, butter and leather, were fairly common. With increased corn cultivation in the 1790s, hogs quickly became ubiquitous. The pages of stock mark registrations in the county court records attests to the widespread ownership of both species of animals.

The rapid growth of the Cumberland region was made possible by the quick prosperity available to individual farmers. By supporting the cotton culture, the fertile land provided the settler with a key component for success. Francois Michaux in 1802 best described the process. “There is scarcely a single emigrant but what begins to plant his estate with [cotton] the third year after his settling in the country.” Michaux calculated that a family of four or five may “cultivate four acres with the greatest ease, independent of the Indian wheat necessary for their subsistence.” If 350 pounds of cotton were grown per acre, “which is very moderate according to the extreme fertility of the soil,” the family would have 1,400 pounds of cotton at the end of the season. A price of $18 per hundred weight, “the lowest price to which it had fallen...when I was in the country,” would have resulted in a gross of $250; after deducting $40 for expenses, the family would have had a net profit of $212. “This light sketch
demonstrates with what facility a poor family may acquire speedily, in West Tennessee, a certain degree of independence, particularly after having been settled five or six years, as they procure the means of purchasing one or two negroes, and of annually increasing their number."

As long as land was plentiful, the economic future seemed bright.

Nor was this land expensive at the turn of the 19th century. "The price of the best land," according to Michaux, "does not yet exceed five dollars per acre in the environs of Nashville, and thirty or forty miles from the town they are not even worth three dollars." At that price, a person could purchase "a plantation completely formed, composed of two to three hundred acres, of which fifteen to twenty are cleared, and a log-house." For those who could not afford to buy the land, renting was a far more viable option than it would be a century later. Tenants generally cleared and enclosed eight or nine acres, built a log house and paid a rent of about 10 bushels of Indian wheat per acre. With the speculators "very happy to get tenants for their land, as it induces others to come and settle in the environs," relations between owners and tenants seemed compatible and profitable.

The combination of fertile land and population growth led to prodigious agricultural development, which was commented upon by travelers and residents alike. Anne Newport Royall passed through the Nashville region in 1817. "[I]t is an open plain of uninterrupted good land; and the farmers raise corn, tobacco and pumpkins in great abundance. They rear great numbers of hogs and horses, and have a great many distilleries in operation. In this way they convert their surplus produce into cash." Emigrants to the area, even as late as 1829, were not disappointed with their situation. "I have every fine prospect of a crop," wrote Alex Colyar from Franklin County, south of Nashville, "and I do believe that there is a better encouragement
here for a farmer to be industrious than any place I ever saw[.]
[P]roduce sels here for cash[;] there is great deal of cotton raised her...[W]e are very well satisfied with our move.”

Despite this agricultural abundance, however, the settlers were not self-sufficient. Items such as lead and salt needed to be imported. Abraham Steiner and Frederick C. DeSchweinitz once lodged with Michael Schneider, “who is a blacksmith, has a good business, but he is obliged to pay 1 shilling the pound for iron which is brought in from Kentucky on the river.” The wheat crop also could not meet local demand. Daniel and William Constable noted in 1807 that, “considerable quantities of flour are brought here [Nashville] from the countries on the Ohio and sells here now for ten dollars the barrel, being three dollars more than the price at New Orleans when we were there.” Other services, such as the milling of grain, also were scarce sometimes and had to be sought out by the residents. “There are but few springs that flow the year round,” reported Steiner and Schweinitz, “and still fewer water-mills that can grind throughout the year. Nearly everywhere they are idle half the year; consequently, the people use horse-mills that are to be found everywhere in the country.” The court records show only a handful of water gristmills being established during the first decade of settlement. Perhaps horse mill operators, who do not appear in the records, were not required to register with the court.

By not being self-sufficient, Middle Tennessee depended on trade with other regions. The marriage of agriculture and commerce, as the editor of a Nashville newspaper claimed in 1801, would lead to the attainment of “ease, happiness, and independence.... [W]e possess peculiar advantage in the fertility of a soil, which requires nothing more than the hand of industry, to reward the toil of the husbandman.” From hard work would come agricultural surpluses and “this superabundant produce
will teach the necessity of exportation, and from this source alone can we reasonably expect a diminution of the public grievances." From the beginning, trade played an important role in the local economy. Lewis Brantz noted in 1785 the export of furs from Middle Tennessee. "Furs are the sole production of this region, with which the people supply their wants. The traders who supply them with merchandise are mostly Frenchmen, either from Illinois, or the Post Vincennes." Those from Illinois obtained goods from Michilimackinac and liquor from New Orleans, "while the St. Vincennes people purchase their articles of traffic (which are generally of a substantial character) from Detroit...." By the end of the 1780s, farmers in Middle Tennessee finally had generated a sufficient agricultural surplus to ship goods by flatboat down the Mississippi to New Orleans. The first trip, led by William Martin and others in the winter of 1789-90, was the start of many such commercial ventures that tied Middle Tennessee's economy into a vast transportation network.

By the turn of the century Nashville enjoyed land and water trade routes which extended in two general directions. The first route linked Middle Tennessee with Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore and other cities to the northeast. Michaux counted in Nashville "fifteen to twenty shops, which are supplied from Philadelphia and Baltimore, but they did not seem so well stocked as those at Lexington and the articles, though dearer, are of an inferior quality. The cause of their being so dear may be in some measure attributed to the expense of carriage, which is much greater on account of the amazing distance the boats destined for Tennessee have to go up the Ohio." Philadelphia lay more than 1,500 miles away. About 80 percent of that distance could be traveled by water. Yet Steiner and Schweinitz thought this type of trade route enabled prices to be kept lower. "The

[ 95 ]
merchants receive their goods from Pittsburg, whence they are taken down the Ohio and trans-shipped up the Cumberland River. The easy freightage by water is cause for the fact that European goods, the long distance from the seaports notwithstanding, are to be had here at cheap rates." What was expensive to one person may have seemed affordable to another. But all agreed that products from as far away as the East Coast were available in Nashville.

Trade along this route also moved in the reverse direction from the interior to the East Coast. When Michaux was visiting Nashville in 1802, "they made the first attempt to send cottons by the Ohio to Pittsburgh, in order to be thence conveyed to the remote parts of Pennsylvania." Five years later, Fortescue Cuming noted the success of this venture. "[W]e met two large keel boats loaded with cotton in bales, from Nashville in Tennessee bound to Pittsburgh, out twenty-six days. They had nine men each - one steering, six poling, and two resting." As a result, proclaimed Michaux, "the remotest parts of the western states [are] united by commercial interests of which cotton is the basis, and the Ohio the tie of communication, the results of which must give a high degree of prosperity to this part of Tennessee...."

Nashville also traded heavily on the second major route with New Orleans to the south. Farms in surrounding counties sent their goods to Nashville, where they were loaded onto flatboats. Cotton quickly superseded corn as the principal export crop. This primarily was due to cotton’s ability to be stored in bales and to be shipped undamaged during the 1,200-mile trip to New Orleans. At that port, the cotton then was placed aboard ships bound for New York, Philadelphia and Europe. When the Louisiana Purchase insured that New Orleans would remain an open port, Middle Tennessee sent even larger amounts of material downriver. At the same time, merchants from New Orleans
began to arrive in Nashville with increasing frequency. Although many returned to Nashville on foot via the Natchez Trace, those bringing goods came in keelboats. In the first decade of the 19th century, a round-trip journey lasted six months, although the fastest keelboats cut that time in half.\textsuperscript{29} Even with faster boats, though, the distance between Nashville and New Orleans did cause problems for the farmers.

Some cotton growers were lured to the Natchez region in Mississippi because it was 500 miles closer to New Orleans. Nashville boosters, attempting to keep farmers in Middle Tennessee, vigorously countered by arguing that “it is with pleasure we state Capt. Caffery, with a public spirit peculiar to himself proposes carrying any species of produce to New Orleans for the moderate price of one dollar per hundred which is the price (I understand) from the Natches.”\textsuperscript{30} But even offers such as these did not solve all the problems caused by distance. Since none but the largest planters could ship their own products downriver, farmers who hired the likes of Captain Caffery ran the risk of the boats sinking, of being swindled by the shippers, or of being cheated by commission merchants in New Orleans. Even as late as 1819, a visitor saw conditions where “produce is surrendered to enterprising men, as they are called, on the rivers, but who frequently prove to be thieves; for if the boat is stove in, or markets are bad or dull, there are no returns, you hear no more of either produce or the boatmen....To go yourself to market is impossible, for while selling one crop, you would lose the time for raising another.”\textsuperscript{31} As a result, farmers had to sell their crops at a heavy discount to middlemen in Nashville. Cotton, which brought 14 or 15 cents per pound in New Orleans in 1810, garnered only eight cents in Nashville.\textsuperscript{32} But technological advances during the 1820s helped Middle Tennessee farmers. Steamboats first appeared in Nashville in the spring of 1818 and
soon round-trip excursions, which lasted five months for the biggest barges in 1815, were shortened to 30 days. Steamship traffic became so regular that schedules of arrivals and departures were printed routinely in Nashville newspapers. By the 1830s, steamboat technology had advanced to the point that the fastest New Orleans-to-Nashville trip took only five days and 18 hours.\textsuperscript{33}

No such technology was yet available to compress distances over land. With the railroad still decades away, a traveler on horseback might cover 30 miles a day, as Francis Asbury often did. This arduous method of travel, however, generally was the only way to reach many places in Middle Tennessee. The first roads connected the fortified stations. Nashville was joined to Mansco’s (or Mansker’s) Station, which in turn was linked to Maulding’s Station and to Heatonsburg. During the next eight years, nearly 50 more roads were cleared in Davidson County alone. The roads pointed in every direction, for the destinations (usually settlements, rivers, mills and ferries) were scattered throughout the county. Fourteen ferries, almost all of which crossed the Cumberland at a juncture with another river, were established during this period. The court seemed to approve quite readily the various requests to operate ferries. These ready approvals hint at the importance placed upon ferries.\textsuperscript{34} Inadequate and insufficient ferries would have crippled the county road system.

For a sketch of the road system beyond the boundaries of Davidson County, a study must be made of the intricate network of Indian trails. Many of the first routes taken by the settlers, and subsequently made into roads, originally were Indian trails.\textsuperscript{35} One such path ran eastward from Nashville to Knoxville (and then northeast through the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia). The first settlers avoided this dangerous trail, but with the spread of
forts and settlements, Indian attacks became less frequent. After the first party passed through in late 1787, the route was improved so rapidly that 15 years later, Francois Michaux found the road “as broad and commodious as those in the environs of Philadelphia, in consequence of the amazing number of emigrants that travel through it to go and settle in the western country.” Even though the road was “very rugged” in places, seldom was anyone lost: “Little boards painted black and nailed upon the trees every three miles, indicate to travellers the distance they have to go.”

Whereas the road to Knoxville was Nashville’s main connection to the east, the Natchez Trace served as the principal land route to New Orleans. Francis Baily rode from Natchez in 1797 and his experiences of physical hardship and personal danger were typical of those early days. On the night of July 29, 1797, Baily wrote that “we lay ourselves down in a dry ditch, without making any fire, fearful lest we might be discovered by any Indians near the place. I never was so fatigued as with this day’s journey. We had traveled from sunrise till near three hours after sunset, with very little food, and over a rough country: so that when we came to lay down we were so overcome with fatigue as to be indifferent whether we reposed in safety or not.” They were so exhausted that even hearing “the howling of wolves, bears, and other wild animals around us; and several times the noise of their feet among the dry leaves on the ground, prowling about in search of prey, and fast approaching near the spot where we lay” could not rouse them off their blankets. In addition to these dangers, travelers frequently were involved in accidents. George Featherstonhaugh related one particular incident from 1834.  

[We] met a stage-coach from the west with a passenger severely cut in the face. He informed us that in the morning the driver had fallen asleep on his seat, and dropping from it upon the ground, the wheels had gone over his head and killed him on the spot,
upon which the horses galloped off, and at a turn of the road ran
the vehicle against a stump, and broke the stage to pieces: he was
thrown against some trees, and narrowly escaped with his life.
These accidents frequently happen, for, with few exceptions, the
drivers are a reckless, unmanageable race of fellows, that drink
hard, and care nothing even what happens to themselves.

The roads, at least, had a better chance of improvement.
Michaux noted that on the Natchez Trace, the federal govern­
ment had “just opened a road, which is on the point of being
finished, and will be one of the finest in the United States, both
on account of its breadth and the solidity of the bridges con­
structed over the small rivers that cut through it.” Upon comple­
tion, if Michaux’s prediction was right, Middle Tennessee would
be tied into a transportation network of astonishing scope. “Thus
we may henceforth, on crossing the western country, go in a
carriage from Boston to New Orleans, a distance of more than
two thousand miles.”

The postal service in particular spun many strands in this
web of roads that connected Middle Tennessee to the rest of the
country. Twelve post offices that lasted at least two years were
established in Davidson County by 1836. First and clearly
foremost was the office at Nashville. As the county’s only post
office for 20 years, it undoubtedly handled more mail than all the
other Davidson County post offices combined. By 1820, the
Nashville post office had generated $2,000 in receipts, which
placed it among the 20 largest offices in the nation. Three years
later, Nashville was designated as one of 48 “distributing of­
fices” in the country where postmasters were “required to open
all mails which are directed to the State in which their offices are
situated, and give the proper direction to each letter.” The closest
distributing offices to Nashville were Cumberland Gap, Abing­
don in Virginia and Asheville in North Carolina. All three were
at least several hundred miles away. Nashville, then, served not
only Davidson County, but also an area of more than 100,000 square miles.\textsuperscript{40}

By the 1830s, the postmaster general could cite many improvements in Nashville’s long distance routes. In each case, Middle Tennessee was integrated ever more firmly into the complex net of national communications. In 1832, Frankfort and Lexington in Kentucky were connected to Nashville in thrice-weekly-four-horse coaches, which completed the run half a day faster than before. Louisville sent daily four-horse post coaches and the mail arrived in less than two days. Mail also left daily from Washington, D.C., and reached Nashville one week later, a savings of four days compared to the previous arrangement. The western route to Memphis was improved to thrice-weekly service in four-horse coaches. Finally, thrice-weekly post coaches between Columbia, Tennessee, and Huntsville, Alabama, unified the region south of Nashville, completing the “intercourse in coaches from the seat of Government in Alabama, to Nashville, Tennessee, and to the States north of Tennessee.”\textsuperscript{41} Even a decade earlier, the route from Nashville through Natchez to New Orleans was seen as vital for more than just postal service.\textsuperscript{42}

This route must be continued, whatever other route is established, as it is the main route of communication between Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, and continues upon it from thence to New Orleans. Between the towns and inhabitants on those lands and the States above mentioned, there is a great trade carried on; and it is deserving of the frequent and rapid establishment of posts which is now in operation. It is also the great route of communication from all places to the northward of Richmond, in Virginia, to Natchez, New Orleans, & c.

Nashville was joined first, to the entire lower Mississippi Valley; second, to “the whole valley of Shenandoah with all the towns in the interior of Pennsylvania and the western regions of New York;” and third, to the East Coast. Thus the Post Office Department linked Middle Tennessee to every part of antebellum America.\textsuperscript{43}
How big, then, was the social world of Middle Tennessee? For the first settlers, besieged in their forts by constant Indian attacks, the world probably was stiflingly close. But even within the first decade of settlement, land and water transportation opened the Old Southwest. After the first 50 years of settlement, the residents were in touch, both by commerce and by communication, to the entire country. Many factors undoubtedly influenced Middle Tennessee’s development during this period, but surely transportation, of both economic goods and of the mails, played an important role in encouraging a growing culture. And just like “Tuckahoe” in 1832, this prospering culture also received “by every mail, loads of Scotch, English, French, and Eastern periodicals, of all sorts and upon all manners of subjects.”
NOTES

2. Nashville Republican and State Gazette, 13 January 1832, p. 3.
11. Arnow, Flowering on the Cumberland, pp. 248-249; Abrahman Steiner and Frederick C. De Schweinitz, “Report of the Journey...to the Cherokees and the Cumberland Settlements (1799)”; in Williams, Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, p. 516. Steiner and Schweinitz saw little wheat grown, “partly because good mills are rare; partly because so much of it is consumed by worms.” On page 512 they discuss how the first peach pits and apple seeds entered the region. Hereafter cited as Steiner and Schweinitz, “Report of the Journey.”
12. Arnow, Flowering on the Cumberland, p. 222; Davidson County, County Court Minutes, Book A, 1783-1791, microfilmed by the Tennessee State Library and Archives, reel 1,597, pp. 8, 19-21, 38, 41, 52, and 66-67 for 1783 to 1785 alone. Yet Steiner and Schweinitz, Report of the Journey,” p. 516, claim that “in the raising of cattle, likewise, little progress has been made” by 1799.
Selected Papers from the Seventh and Eighth George Rogers Clark
Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences

present-day Middle Tennessee.

14. Michaux, "Travels to the West," p. 279. When possible, the original spelling
will be retained and the patronizing "sic" will be omitted.

15. Anne Newport Royall, *Letters From Alabama*, 1817-1822 (reprinted, Uni-

16. Alex Colyar to James Sevier, 30 June 1829, in Washington County Court
Records, Box 75:2 "Circuit Court 1820 Civil/Criminal," Archives of Appalachia, East
Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee.


ville As Seen By Travellers, 1801-1821," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, ser. 2,


20. Davidson County Court Minutes, Book A, pp. 3, 107, 203, 404, and 413.


27. Fortescue Cuming, "Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country..." in
Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, vol. 4, p. 97.

28. Michaux, "Travels to the West," pp. 252-53. The residents of Middle
Tennessee also benefited because the products of Ohio and Kentuck, which "not of
a nature to meet with a great sale in the country of the adjoining parts," could not
compete and had to be sent down to New Orleans (p. 253).

29. H. Phillip Bacon, "Nashville's Trade at the Beginning of the Nineteenth
to the West," p. 252.


quotes articles in the *Nashville Review* from 1810.

33. History of Nashville. (Nashville: published for H. W. Crew by the Methodist
Episcopal Church, South, 1890): pp. 302-311.

7 (1902) pp. 125-26; Davidson County Court Minutes, Books A and B, 1783-1797.

35. Compare the maps in William Edward Myer, "Indian Trails of the Southeast,"
42d Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution
Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era, 1760-1790 (Princeton:


37. Baily, “Journal of a Tour,” p. 407. Even the quality of “improved” roads, such as turnpikes, was suspect. About 25 miles east of Nashville, Bishop Francis Asbury in 1815 “came upon the turnpike - a disgrace to the State and to the undertakers, supposing they had any character to lose. It is a swindling of the public out of their money to demand toll on such roads as these.” Asbury, Journal and Letters, vol. 2, p. 795.


42. R. J. Meigs to Montfort Stokes, 27 January 1834, ASP, Post Office, p. 112.

Indian Angst and “Heathenish Practices”:
The Indiana Frontier, 1804-1811

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A spirit of “manifest destiny” prevailed in America and throughout the Old Northwest Territory long before it formally was proclaimed by John O’Sullivan in his Democratic Review in 1845. Governor William Henry Harrison forcefully articulated the concept in an address before the Indiana Territorial Legislature on November 12, 1810. “Is one of the fairest portions of the globe to remain in a state of nature...when it seems destined by the Creator to give support to a large population, and to be the seat of civilization, of science, and of true religion?”1 The answer to the governor’s rhetorical question already was fixed in the minds of his legislators. They knew their fertile western landscape was destined to be peopled by incoming waves of settlers. The population of the territory had increased by more than 435 per cent between 1800 and 1810 – from 5,506 to 24,000. By 1815 the population was more than 62,000.2 King Canute as governor would have been powerless to stop this overwhelming tide.

Inevitably, white migration profoundly disturbed the Indian way, crowding Indian habitat, depleting game and despoiling hunting grounds. It introduced virulent diseases, deadly weapons of war and something even more deadly - firewater. Loss of land, the threat of change, famine and the onslaught of plague prompted unprecedented stress - angst. These anxieties prompted the Shawnee Prophet’s “revitalization movement” which was designed to restore old ways. His revitalization
featured sorcery, fanatical religion and ultimately terrorism and war.

Frontier statistics are difficult to document. Sociology had not been invented yet. Survey teams never appeared in frontier wigwams. One population expert frankly has titled his opening chapters, “Estimating the Unknown.” A noted medical historian simply concluded that, “Far more Indians died of white men’s diseases than ever died from their weapons.” Only estimated casualties are available for the devastating smallpox epidemics of 1715, 1733 and 1752. James Mooney listed the total Miami population at 4,500 in 1660; 3,000 in 1671; and from 4,800 to 6,000 in 1680. Then, counting only warriors, he found as few as 200 in 1736 and 350 in 1812. Little Turtle’s biographer speculated that epidemics and warfare reduced the Miami population from perhaps as many as 10,000 in 1715 to as few as 1,500 in 1780. Handsome Lake’s biographer reported a precipitous 50 percent drop in both Pennsylvania’s and New York’s Iroquois populations from 1775 to 1795. Later epidemics may have been less devastating, but they nevertheless caused an escalating terror. R. David Edmunds reported smallpox among the Wea on the Wabash River and among the Potawatomi on the Kankakee River in 1793-94. Smallpox struck the Vermilion Kickapoo in 1801. Moravians reported it “raging” at Fort Hamilton and Cincinnati in 1805 and they devoutly prayed that it would not strike their Delaware neighbors on the White River.4

Prayer may have warded off smallpox among the Delaware, but not the “bilious fever,” rampant on the Indiana frontier among both whites and Indians. In September 1802, missionaries with unintended irony complained of seeing “nothing but pale faces.” In June 1805, they again reported fever “sweeping away” six victims in one small Delaware village “in rapid succession” after two-day illnesses. This fever was seen as a
deadly virulence which, in turn, caused it to be identified in Indian medical practice as poison - a malady demanding ritualistic sacrifice.\textsuperscript{5}

With plague and disease came hunger. As early as January 1802, White River missionaries recorded that “famine” is “again among the [Delaware] heathen.” They righteously blamed “the curse” of whiskey and resulting laziness. A drought that following June brought about another “general famine” unrelated to whiskey, but one that, nevertheless, raised the price of corn to $1 a peck. Delaware women daily begged for milk from the missionaries. By July even Delaware chieftains came begging. Chief Tetepachsit reported “famine everywhere,” and took his family to the mission for meals. July 1805, once again brought famine and in April 1806, begging became so persistent that the besieged Moravians “were compelled to eat in secret.” The missionary brothers smugly insisted that the Delaware brought famine upon themselves “through their own wickedness,” an unwarranted judgment, though one widely held among settlers. Their anecdotal evidence of hunger, however, is validated by correspondence of Indian agents at the Fort Wayne agency and by Harrison’s reports to the secretary of war.\textsuperscript{6} Famine may have been endemic in a society that relied largely both upon a winter hunt and upon an indifferent agriculture.

The Potawatomi also suffered from periodic hunger and deprivation. Those who appeared at the Indian agency in Fort Wayne in the spring of 1809 were in a “starved condition.” At the treaty there in September, they militantly insisted upon selling land in order to get enhanced federal annuities. Their “poverty and wretchedness,” Harrison reported, “make them extremely desirous of a treaty” since “they wanted their most pressing wants relieved.” Winamac, a Potawatomi chief, claimed his people were in rags.\textsuperscript{7}

From 1806 to 1809 those Indians captivated by the Shawnee
Prophet Tenskwatawa, also known as simply the Prophet, found themselves dependent upon others for supplementary rations. While at Greenville in Ohio, help came from neighboring Shakers. After the Prophet moved to Tippecanoe, assistance came from British agents and traders at Malden and from American agents at Vincennes and Fort Wayne. When the Prophet visited Vincennes in July 1809, Governor Harrison described the Shawnee escort as “the most miserable set of starved wretches” whom he had “ever beheld.” Agent William Wells advised the governor to let them starve, but Harrison refused to believe that such a policy represented “the Philosophy of the President.” So he “fed them and gave them a Small supply of food and ammunition.” Ultimately, the Prophet and his followers had to rely upon the British at Malden. When Buffaloe, a Shawnee, appeared at Malden in June 1808, he “spoke on 4 strings of wampum,” testifying that “we are very much distressed at home for bread, our W & C [women & children] are starving & you told us the King would never allow his Children to starve....the Americans always promise us but they never give....”

Along with the loss of hunting grounds came a loss of European markets for furs. The Napoleonic War, far away over what some Indians called “the Stinking Sea,” disrupted “the most profitable single industry” in North America. It left Indians without their most lucrative market - an incomprehensible catastrophe that made them dependent upon rival British and American agents vying for their support. Canadian agents Matthew Elliott at Malden and Robert Dickson at Prairie du Chien enticed many Indians from the northern lakes to become pawns in battles for hunting grounds far afield from their own - and in the end, they also became pawns in losing battles that contributed further to anxiety and frustration.
Confronted with forces beyond their control - if not with all Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse - the Indians were similar to other frustrated people who resorted to "heathenish practices." Such practices are traditional strategies of the disinherited. To their credit, they made some positive efforts to cope with change and with vicissitudes caused by white migration. They had moved to new turf, often risking war with rival nations to get it. Some tried to accept white culture, even taking up agriculture. They had negotiated treaties, losing land to obtain subsidies, federal protection and white acceptance. But apocalyptic trouble ultimately unhinged warrior self-assurance and threatened tribal control. White firewater proved to be more deadly than firepower from white muskets. Although Harrison persuaded his territorial legislature to prohibit the sale of alcohol to Indians, economic reality and avarice combined to promote bootlegging. Turning corn into whiskey was the most expedient way to market a lucrative cash crop and as settlers increased, the whiskey trade increased; the inevitable result was a frontier awash in alcohol.

One Victorian historian has pontificated about that which all deans of students know: alcohol saps "tribal honor" and strikes down the "valor of men and the virtue of women." One witness concluded that the Shawnee, sodden from "prolonged drunkenness," appeared to be intent "on self destruction." Visitors at Wapakoneta, a Shawnee village in Ohio, were appalled by its "squalor." The diarists at the White River mission described "swarms" of drunken, naked Delaware "with...instruments of murder" roaring about their village. Delaware warriors repudiated their old chiefs. When missionaries complained to Delaware Chief Tetepachsit, he promised to "speak to" offenders, but confessed an inability to protect them, admitting that "bad Indians" had "dismissed their oldest and
greatest Chief and threatened him with death.” When Thomas White Eyes returned from the winter hunt in 1806, he brought a harvest of 20 gallons of whiskey to distribute among his fellow warriors. In the inevitable spree that followed, the mission was terrorized, one warrior was shot to death and another suffered a “hatchet buried in his head.”

Disintegration of tribal authority escalated during the spring of 1805 with the death of Buckongahelas, a once powerful Delaware chieftain who had helped Little Turtle ambush General Arthur St. Clair in 1791. Although the chief had died during the bilious fever epidemic, his devoted followers refused to believe he had died a natural death. A Delaware woman in Woapicamikunk claimed to have had visions that revealed those who were responsible for having dealt in poison. At the next sacrificial festival beginning March 15, 1806, the Woapicamikunk sorcerer would identify the “evil doers” responsible for mysterious plagues, for disappearing hunting grounds and for failure of the old sacrifices. Young warriors assembled the Indians of the White River Valley, among them an elderly chief who testified that old people “no longer have anything to say. The Young people now rule.” Heralding the new regime - and presiding at the grisly rites - was the Shawnee Prophet, who had arrived the opening day. Sustained by ceremonies promoting hysteria, the Prophet pointed an accusing finger at two old Delaware chieftains who allegedly had signed treaties at Greenville, Fort Wayne and Vincennes. Those accused were Tetepachsit and Hackinkpomska.

Caritas and Joshua, Indians baptized by the Moravians, were interrogated and tormented to pry out secret sorceries and to identify other suspects. With this accomplished, they were hatcheted and roasted intermittently. On March 17, two days later, the hapless Tetepachsit was charged with killing “a large
number of Indians.” To terrorize the tiny band of missionaries, young braves dragged the elderly chief 15 miles to the Moravian mission. There in the nearby woods, 10 Indians, with faces blackened to symbolize death, built a roaring fire. Then, Tetepachsit’s son hatcheted his father twice, stripped him of his keepsakes and tossed him “half-alive” on a fire so large that it set the forest ablaze, engulfing the community in “smoke and fumes.” Dramatically exhibiting his father’s keepsakes, the blackened Indian Oedipus threatened, “This comes from him who cast off my mother and his oldest children and took unto himself a young wife.”

Frenzy ran its course. Others went to the flames. “Terrible murders and burnings” were reported on March 27. A “peaceable Indian” was hacked to pieces and burned. Another victim, Chief Billy Patterson, a half-blood Delaware, had witnessed, but had not signed, the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1803. In early April it was Chief Hackinkpomska’s turn to die, but when he was led to the fire, his partisans staged a counterrevolution, spiriting him away without apparent opposition. Six others, including Tetepachsit’s second wife, still remained in custody, but they then were released. Had there been a surfeit of searing fire? Or, as some said, had the bloodstained Shawnee found appeasement in secret gifts of cows, silver and several hundred strings of wampum?

News of the Prophet’s purge traveled on the wind. A prevailing bilious fever at Sandusky prompted the Wyandot to send for the Shawnee sorcerer. Would he please work his wonders there, identifying witches? The Prophet obliged, arriving in May. All chiefs from upper Sandusky town listened to the Shawnee, who “pointed out four witches to be killed that night or tomorrow.” Unlike the White River Delaware, however, Wyandot chieftains “stopped the prophet in his murderous
"design." They insisted that the Shawnee had identified "four of the best women" in the Wyandot nation. For the moment, at least, the witchcraft hysteria quieted. But bilious fever persisted, energizing the Prophet’s campaign against the old chiefs. Even Tarhe, the longtime chief, became "weak and feeble."

The Prophet returned to Greenville where he and his disciples successfully exploited the frustrations, anxieties and poverty of the dispossessed. Many Delaware and Shawnee, however, resented the leadership of an upstart "of no fame and of no good character." His following among nations of the upper lakes rested heavily upon vigorous support of British fur traders. Little Turtle and most Miami chiefs opposed the Prophet’s movement from its beginning, but the Kickapoo joined when their young warriors ousted their chief, Joseph Renard’s son.

Disturbed by the excitement at Woapicamikunk, Governor Harrison urged the Delaware to challenge the Prophet as an "imposter," suggesting that he provide a miracle - a demand that was well-timed to accommodate the Prophet’s propaganda. With the help of subversive white astronomy, the Shawnee proclaimed that he would make the sun stand still June 16, 1806. The Great Spirit obliged with an eclipse, greatly enhancing the Prophet’s credibility.

Four years later, the governors of Ohio and of three frontier territories faced a formidable charismatic movement. Governor William Hull of neighboring Michigan Territory conducted a council at Brownstown on the Detroit River to warn approximately 2,000 Great Lakes Indians of the Prophet’s objective "to destroy the authority of the Old Chiefs and to assume power over all nations," relying upon "the Young Warriors" for support. The Prophet’s immediate response to the governor’s warnings: two Wyandot witches were killed - and
Leatherlips, a Wyandot chief, was forced to dig his own grave in a mafia-style execution.¹⁸

Who was this fearsome Prophet with charismatic appeal to arouse the disenchanted and to waste the old chieftains? In an earlier incarnation he was Lalawethika, “the rattler,” a noisy drunken wastrel who had had an other-worldly experience, a cataleptic episode that simulated death. Reviving before burial, he revealed visions, mysteries of past and future. He proclaimed himself Tenskwatawa, “the open door.” He had seen the horrors of the damned and the ecstasies of those who obeyed the Master of Life. His people must return to the old Indian ways. Ways of white men must be abandoned – their dress, their tools, their domesticated animals, their customs, their whiskey. Those addicted to the accursed firewater would be tortured in flame after death. Chiefs who put pen to treaty paper would be killed. Intermarriage of Indian women with whites was forbidden. The purity of Indian life would end white-induced misery.¹⁹

En route south to enlist the Creek, Choctaw and Chickasaw in the summer of 1810, the Prophet’s elder brother, Tecumseh, stopped at Vincennes to confront Governor Harrison in the latter’s front yard. When Tecumseh reached the Creek town of Tuckhabatchee in Alabama, he presented his sticks, wampum and war hatchet to Chief Big Warrior, but Tecumseh sensed that the chief “did not mean to fight.” In legend, Tecumseh threatened, “You do not believe the Great Spirit has sent me. You shall know. I leave Tuckhabatchee directly, and shall go straight to Detroit. When I arrive there, I will stamp on the ground with my foot and shake down every house in Tuckhabatchee.” The day the Creek “fixed upon as the day” of Tecumseh’s arrival, “every house in Tuckhabatchee was shaken down.”²⁰ Of course, that was the day of the great New Madrid earthquake.
The reality of Tecumseh’s return was less earthshaking. During Tecumseh’s absence Tenskwatawa had ordered his warriors to strike Harrison’s army at Burnett’s Creek, near Tippecanoe. Tenskwatawa invoked incantations designed to keep white bullets from piercing Native American skin. But when the Indians attacked before dawn, the bullets penetrated, Prophetstown was sacked, Tenskwatawa was discredited and his disciples were disillusioned. Tecumseh is said to have upbraided his once charismatic brother for folly, though it cannot be authenticated that he seized the Prophet by the hair.

In a pioneering article in *American Anthropologist*, Anthony F. C. Wallace outlined the characteristics of “revitalization movements” and observed that they “are recurrent features in human history.” In *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, he recorded numerous experiences in the life of the Seneca Prophet, Handsome Lake, that were similar to those of Tenskwatawa. Both had been addicted to alcohol, both had recovered from death-like trances, had seen visions, had communicated with the Master of Life, had warred upon witches and evangelistically had promoted a revitalizing “moral dogma.” Both the Seneca and the Shawnee suffered from angst, hunger, epidemics and loss of land. If the history of revitalization movements teaches anything, it is that to escape “heathenish practices,” more time must be devoted to eliminating the apocalyptic causes of trouble.
NOTES

1. William Henry Harrison's message reported in the Vincennes Western Sun, December 8, 1810.


15. Joseph Badger, A Memoir...Hudson, Ohio, 1851, pp. 145-148. Badger kept a diary while a missionary living with the Wyandot.


Selected Papers from the Seventh and Eighth George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences
The Myth of the Footloose Backwoodsman

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Early settlers in southern Indiana and southern Illinois have been depicted quite commonly as footloose wanderers. Back­woodsmen, it frequently has been asserted, disliked settled society, routine labor and the imposition of formal law. They preferred isolation and inherently were nomadic. These tendencies led them to a life of constant movement from one small holding to the next.

This characterization was created by early 19th century writers who traveled to the frontier and observed backwoods­men. The perceptions of these writers influenced the historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who in turn has influenced certain later scholars. However, it is likely that the image of the peripa­tetic backwoodsman has been founded on a misconception of midwestern frontier life.

Early 19th century settlers in southern Indiana and southern Illinois were predominantly small farmers, or “plain folk,” from the upland areas of Kentucky, North and South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee. After the War of 1812, they migrated to the Old Northwest, frequently moving in large family groups. There they proceeded to clear forests and begin cultivation and stock raising. In the process, they created a new society with a distinctive frontier culture.

The culture created by these settlers was in some respects contradictory. Vociferously proclaiming their independence and individualism, frontiersmen nevertheless relied on extensive networks of kin and neighbors for many kinds of assistance. Such a network provided a system of mutual aid that facilitated
physical survival, created close social ties and enmeshed participants in a tightly woven and intricate web of reciprocity. Neighbors helped each other at cabin-raisings, log rollings, harvests and other tasks too large and difficult to be performed by one family. Such large-scale assistance was supplemented by many smaller acts of aid. To the outsider who listened to the backwoodsman’s extravagant claims of independence, and who saw what seemed to be families living in isolated cabins, social ties seemed weak and fragmentary. In fact, each family was bound tightly into the neighborhood web.³

There are few accounts of this life that were written by backwoodsmen.⁴ Most descriptions of settlers were written by travelers who wished to provide information for potential immigrants or who simply wrote about what seemed an exotic and remote land.⁵ In general, writers rarely penetrated beneath the surface of backwoods culture. As is typical of travel writers, they emphasized the exotic. In their descriptions of backwoodsmen, they stressed what seemed to be a love of solitude which, combined with a psychological predisposition to nomadism, led to a footloose tendency.

The literature of the period contains many allusions to such fecklessness. William Oliver, an Englishman who spent eight months in Illinois, said:

This wandering life possesses such charms for many, that they never remain very many years in one place; but, after having partially improved a farm, and put up some fixings, sell off, hitch the horses to the wagon and, driving their stock along with them, again move to the outskirts of civilization.⁶

He told of a squatter in Illinois who moved because a newcomer had built a cabin three miles away from the squatter’s cabin. This was much too close.⁷

Sir James Alexander was told (by a Tennessean) that farmers in Kentucky wished to keep their roads impassable in order to keep out would-be settlers. Alexander pitied women who were married to:
...incorrigible removers, to men who, after they have “fixed” themselves in a fertile spot...hear from some passersby of fertile tracts in the far-off wilderness in Arkansas or Missouri and, like the Tartars in search of fresh pastures, move off and are no more seen.

These people, he said, “had left a comfortable home for no better reason than that they wanted a wider range, or all for the mere love of moving.”

Alexander’s analogy with Tartars is telling. Metaphors of savagery and barbarism are common in this literature. The French traveler Michel Chevalier compared migrants to “the hosts of Ghengis Khan and Attila.” Quite explicit in this respect is William Faux, who wrote of the backwoodsman, “all his vices and imperfections seem natural; those of the semi-barbarian.” Faux believed that “retrograding and barbarizing is an easy process” on the frontier.

Some writers compared backwoodsmen to Native Americans, and not always favorably. Fortescue Cuming wrote:

> It may not be improper to mention, that the backwoodsman, as the first emigrants from the eastward of the Allegheny Mountains are called, are very similar in their habits and manners to the aborigines, only perhaps more prodigal and more careless of life...Their cabins are not better than Indian wigwams.

Morris Birkbeck, a founder of English Prairie in southern Illinois, said of “the condition of a roving backwoodsman,” that “...they are in a low state of civilization, about half-Indian in their mode of life.” Birkbeck found similarities between backwoodsmen and wild animals, writing that backwoodsmen:

> ...find regulations intolerable and retire, with the wolves, from the regular colonists. They live in great poverty and privation, a degree only short of the savage state of Indians.

Early writers were the first to describe differences among migrants to the frontier as being correlated with their time of arrival. Henry Bradshaw Fearon, writing in 1818, divided
settlements into three groups. First to come was the squatter, who lived by hunting and a little farming and who moved on when he was dissatisfied with his land. Squatters were followed by small farmers, who purchased land and who introduced a modicum of civilization. These in turn were replaced by the wealthy farmer, who completed the civilizing process.\textsuperscript{13} This categorization of settlers generally became accepted and passed from author to author, with some variation. Inevitably, waves of migration were depicted as progressing from savagery to barbarism to civilization.

This classification system bears a remarkable resemblance to late 19th century schemes of human cultural evolution devised by such anthropologists as Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Tylor. It is possible that Frederick Jackson Turner was influenced by or found reinforcement in the ideas of these evolutionary anthropologists when he wrote of “the social evolution” of the frontier.\textsuperscript{14} Turner’s description of waves of migration is very similar to Fearon’s, although Turner’s inspiration was Peck’s New Guide to the West, published in 1837. In his seminal paper on the importance of the frontier to the course of American history, Turner wrote of “the restless, rushing wave of settlement.”

Although he recognized that migration could occur as much from economic push as it could from romantic pull, Turner also believed that there was an innate individualistic, antisocial quality in frontiersmen which impelled them ever onward. The frontier, he said, was characterized by a “restless, nervous energy which was expressed in part by ceaseless migration and rootlessness.” Turner also used metaphors of savagery:

The wilderness masters the colonist...It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to
planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick, he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion.\textsuperscript{15}

Ray Allen Billington, a modern Turnerian, has continued this tradition. Although Billington depicted early writers as “imagemakers” who often misunderstood what they saw, he nevertheless accepted the image-makers’ characterization of the “restless temper” of the backwoods settler:

The wandering instinct was most noticed among backwoodsmen and squatters on the outer edge of the frontier. Among them periodic moving seemed almost a psychological necessity; let a neighbor settle within a few miles, let the sound of an axe disturb the morning stillness, and they were ready to sell their “improvements,” and push more deeply into the wilderness.\textsuperscript{16}

According to Billington, these “perennial movers,” impelled by a restless “compulsion,” lacked any attachment to home. When they came of age, children left home with “no more emotion than birds.”\textsuperscript{17} Billington’s depiction is not dissimilar from earlier comparisons of frontiersmen with wild animals, savage Indians and barbaric Tartars. Like earlier writers, Billington has reduced cultural complexity to psychology.

The single rational motive granted to backwoodsmen by Billington and earlier writers was the “quest for gain.”\textsuperscript{18} That backwoodsmen may have been impelled by rational motives other than the hope of turning a fast profit is not seriously considered.

While it is no doubt true that many backwoodsmen were pulled toward the frontier by the profit motive, it is also true that many could have been pushed, particularly those who were concerned about the futures of their children. A concern for the future of one’s offspring could have caused frequent movement as or more often than irrational restlessness, antisocial tendencies or a senseless optimism that vast wealth lay just over the horizon.

[ 125 ]
An examination of early 19th century wills, Bible records and other documents indicates that such cultural factors as inheritance patterns, such legal factors as widows' rights, such economic factors as wealth and such demographic factors as birth rates and mortality rates, all could contribute to population mobility.

Wills normally are written by persons with high or high-middle incomes, and the writers are not representative of their communities in terms of wealth. On the other hand, it is likely that most, if not all, will-makers share community values regarding the way bequests should be distributed, and they certainly are bound by the same inheritance laws.

The earliest will filed in Posey County, Indiana, was written in 1816, two years after the county was created. Between 1816 and 1850, 91 wills were filed. By Indiana law, a widow was entitled to receive at least one-third of the estate of her deceased husband. This widow's third was considered to be the equivalent of a wife's dowry, plus her contribution to the estate during the lifetime of the marriage. It was intended to sustain her during her lifetime.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of these Posey County wills is the custom of dividing property equally among children. Whether the inheritance was in the form of real property, movable property or cash, the significant fact is that not only was there no system of primogeniture, but that daughters received as much as sons. For example, Thomas Casselbery stipulated in 1826 that his estate be divided equally among his children as they came of age, but that no division be made before all his minor children, including girls, were raised and were educated. In 1844, Joseph Johnson stipulated that all his children were to receive an equal share in his estate, adding, "Make as little use of the law as you can." J. E. Alexander was close to asking the
right question when he wrote, “Has not this continued desire for change of place and scene something to do with the non-existence of the law of primogeniture?”22 The egalitarian ethic, as applied to inheritance and coupled with the widow’s one-third, served to fragment both real and personal property.

It was common to give sons their shares in the form of real estate and farm-related goods, while daughters were likely to receive their shares in the form of cash and household goods. Some wills stipulated that enough land should be sold so that bequests to daughters would be equal to the value of the land inherited by sons.

The fact that daughters inherited equally with sons meant that an estate could have many heirs. The first will to be recorded in Posey County was that of Shubel York. York had 10 heirs, not including his widow. Not all early farmers had as many as 10 children, but where heirs are listed by name, six, seven, eight or more are not uncommon.

Since most early residents of Posey County did not leave wills and since many of those who did omitted a list of heirs, it is useful to have some idea of the number of surviving children that an early settler was likely to have. There are two such sources of information: federal censuses and Bible records.

The 1820 census was the first census to list the number of members in each household. While it is possible that some individual households contained non-relatives, the number of laborers and domestic servants was sparse on the midwestern frontier.23 The majority of men either owned land or were squatters, although some may have supplemented their incomes through occasional wage labor. Most households enumerated in the 1820 and 1830 censuses probably contained only family members.

In 1820, the average household size in Posey County was
In 1830 and 1850, the average household size was eight as shown in one Posey County township, Harmony Township. The 1830 census, the first census that gave the age distribution of household members, indicates an extremely young population for Harmony Township, and a similar distribution can be assumed for the remainder of the county. In many families, some potential heirs had not been born yet. In those few households in Harmony Township headed by persons over 45, it is likely that older children already had married and had moved, thus on the one hand decreasing the size of their parents' household and on the other hand starting households with relatively few members. It is, therefore, possible that potential heirs of the head of a household numbered more than those indicated by census data. In general, census data indicate that settlers had large families and that the size of these families increased with time. In 1820, the average number of heirs was five, but by 1830, the average had increased to six, where it remained in 1850.

Bible records, although in no way constituting a sample, are a useful source of information regarding family size before 1820, particularly since some records give death dates, thus providing information regarding the number of children who might have survived to adulthood. These records also indicate that large families were common. There are 19 published Bible records from Posey County settlers born before 1805 and who, therefore, were adults during much or all of the frontier period. These records are rather remarkable, for they consistently show a pattern of children born nearly every two years during most years of a marriage. For example, Jonathan and Casiah Cox had seven children, born in 1812, 1814, 1816, 1818, 1820, 1822 and 1823. Robert and Patience Montgomery had 11 children, born in 1814, 1815, 1818, 1820, 1822, 1824, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1834 and 1838.
The average number of children in these records is nine. These Bible records may or may not be typical of Posey County families, but they do indicate that a large number of children was not uncommon. The number of children in a family seems to have been limited only by the period of nursing practiced by women and by lowered fertility as those mothers who survived grew older.

Deaths are noted in five of these records. Childhood deaths are surprisingly few. For example, only one Cox child died in infancy. All nine children in the Presley Carr family survived to adulthood. Five of Squire MacDonald’s children died, but 12 survived. Since few Bible records include dates of death, the survival rate indicated by these figures cannot be taken as representative of the community. They are most likely too high, but these Bible records do indicate that many children did survive to adulthood and that settlers had large families.

How much total wealth did heads of households have to pass on to their numerous progeny? Again, all that is available is a rough estimate, but all sources of information indicate that the early settlers had little real or personal wealth.

In this agrarian economy land was the primary source of wealth and records of federal land purchases are an important source of information regarding this wealth. Land entries to be discussed here are those holdings that were entered at the federal land office. They do not include land purchased from individual owners after the initial entry and are, therefore, only an estimate of landholdings. However, early settlers were less likely to buy land from other settlers than they were to purchase unimproved federal land, which was considerably cheaper than cleared land. Federal land sold for $1.50 or $2 per acre, while improved land could fetch as much as $30 or more an acre. Furthermore, federal land could be purchased on credit during a five-year...
For plain-folk farmers with little cash, federal land clearly was the most likely purchase.

There are 1,237 land entries from Posey County. Nineteen hundred and twenty-two individuals purchased 129,726 acres, making an average of 140 acres per purchaser. The smallest holding owned by an individual was 22 acres, while the largest single landholder owned 1,149 acres. Total entries by one person of holdings more than 400 acres were rare; only 12 persons entered a total of 400 or more acres.

While an average of 140 acres per household is only an estimate, most landholdings probably were small, if only because farm labor was scarce as was the cash with which to pay laborers’ wages. In general, a man could not farm land that he and his family were unable to tend on a daily basis. This fact would have kept landholding low. One hundred and forty acres would have been an adequate holding for a family farm, but if it were divided among several sons, and if some land had to be sold to provide cash for daughters, the divided portions could have become too small to support the sons’ families. In this kind of system, new land is necessary if sons are to prosper.

Finally, probate documents are a source of information regarding personal wealth, including money raised from the sale of movable property, from cash on hand and from notes owed to the deceased. The 58 probate cases filed in Posey County before 1850 represent a fairly wide range of wealth, from insolvency to an estate worth $1,680.62. Ten estates were insolvent. Of the remainder, the average cash value of an estate was $511.23, making the average widow’s share $168.70 and leaving an average of $342.52 to be divided among children. Unfortunately, many Posey County probate files do not list the number of heirs, the debts of the deceased or the expenses incurred by the administrators of the estate. It is seldom possible to know the
exact amount that was divided among heirs, so that $342.52 is almost certainly too high a figure. Even so, dividing $342.52 by the average number of children in a household, based on the 1820 census, yields individual portions of $68.50. In one of the few instances in which the amount received by heirs excluding widows is known, each of the eight children of Hezekiah Dukes, who died in 1815, received $34. It seems likely that most heads of households had less personal wealth to bequeath to their offspring than they had land.

Little or moderate personal wealth and/or landholding, combined with a high birthrate, a low death rate, the equal apportionment of shares to children and the widow’s one-third, leaves little for the individual child. One hundred and forty acres, divided among five or more children, leaves pitifully small and uneconomic landholdings. When a good horse cost $35 and a cow cost $10 in the early 19th century, $68.50 was not a great deal of money. That at least some men were concerned for the futures of their children is evident by the fact that they wrote wills in which they took pains to ensure equal portions for all children and that many specified that these children be educated. A man who was concerned about his posterity could better provide for his children’s futures by selling his improved land at a profit and moving west where land was still cheap. There he could expand his holdings and begin again. The alternative was that his children, whether they had an emotional attachment to Posey County or whether they left with “no more emotion than birds,” might have to sell what land they had inherited and move west or else be forced to supplement farm income by wage labor, a poor source of income in the early 1800s. When added to this constant the fact that economic hard times waxed and waned with frequency on the frontier, is it any wonder that the “restless rushing wave” kept moving?
NOTES


4. Exceptions include Davy Crockett's autobiography, The Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, 1833) and Sanford Cox, Recollections of the Early Settlement (Lafayette, Indiana: Courier Stream Book and Job Printing House, 1860). Perhaps the best ethnographer of the period was James Hall who, although a native Philadelphian, wrote a number of perceptive accounts of midwestern backwoods life during the 1820s and 1830s.

5. There also are written accounts by English immigrants, but most of these were written on short acquaintance with the frontier. George Flower's The Errors of Emigrants (London: Cleave, 1841) and his History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois (Chicago: Fergus Printing Company, 1860) are exceptions, as is Rebecca Burland's memoir of life in Illinois, A True Picture of Emigration. Milo Milton Quaife, ed. (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1936 [1848]).


8. Transatlantic Sketches, Comprising Visits to the Most Interesting Scenes in North and South America and the West Indies, With Notes on Negro Slavery and Canadian Emigration (Philadelphia: Key and Biddle, 1833), pp. 264, 267-8.


10. Memorable Days in America: Being a Journal of a Tour of the United States


13. A Narrative of a Journey of 5,000 Miles Through the Eastern and Western States of America: Contained in Eight Reports Addressed to the 39 English Families by whom the Author was Deputed, in June, 1817, to Ascertain Whether Any and What Part of the United States Would be Suitable for Their Residence. With Remarks on Mr. Birkbeck’s “Notes” and “Letters.” (London: Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1818), pp. 221-223.


15. “Significance of the Frontier,” p. 201.


20. Posey County Will Record, Book A, Posey County Courthouse, Mount Vernon, Indiana. By the 1840s, Posey County was no longer a frontier area, but inasmuch as wills of early settlers continued to be filed between 1840 and 1850, the final date for this study is 1850, after which no wills of early settlers appear.

21. Heads of households were usually men. Only five wills were written by women.


23. See, for example, Richard Flower, Letters from Lexington and the Illinois, Containing a Brief Account of the English Settlement in the Latter Territory, and a Refutation of the Misrepresentations of Mr. Cobbett, Reprinted in Edwin Erle Sparks,
ed., The English Settlement in the Illinois: Reprints of Three Rare Tracts on the Illinois Country (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1907 [1819]), pp. 23-28. In 1850, the first year that the census listed the occupations of all adult males, Harmony Township had 88 laborers and 202 farmers. It is likely that there were fewer laborers in the earlier years of the century.

25. Federal Manuscript Census, 1830, 1850.
26. In 1830 in Harmony Township, 63% of the population was under 20, 80% was under 30 and 90% was under 40. In the rural area outside the village of New Harmony, 99% of the population was under 40.
28. Unfortunately, early Posey County death records have been lost. The earliest known death certificates were rescued from a trash bin by Carroll and Gloria Cox. These certificates begin with the 1870s.
30. Birkbeck, Notes, p. 60.
32. George Rapp’s Harmony Society bought an additional 10,970 acres, or 13% of all federal land purchased in Posey County. The Harmony Society was a communal organization with a great deal of wealth. Because inclusion of land purchases by the Harmony Society does not give an accurate picture of average land holdings, they have been omitted here.
33. For a discussion of the problems of land fragmentation through inheritance in a modern community with a similar economy, similar amounts of landholdings and similar values, see Beaver, Rural Community, pp. 64-72. Residents of the North Carolina community described by Beaver are descendants of the same population who sent settlers to Indiana and Illinois.
35. Values of livestock are taken from Posey County probate records.