SELECTED PAPERS
from the 1991 and 1992
GEORGE ROGERS CLARK
TRANS-APPALACHIAN FRONTIER
HISTORY CONFERENCES

Edited by
Robert J. Holden

Vincennes, Indiana
1994
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Dear Reader:

This fifth volume of selected papers from the George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences marks a significant milestone in the conference’s history. Bound between the covers of this volume are selected papers from the 1991 and 1992 conferences which represent the ninth and tenth years of these annual meetings.

During these 10 years, 80 papers have been presented on a wide range of subjects relating to the frontier of the Trans-Appalachian area. An important aspect of this accomplishment is the publication of the conference papers. Superbly edited, these research efforts have become a permanent record for reference, while also providing enjoyable reading.

It is with great pleasure that the National Park Service has been able to help make these published papers available. This would not have been possible without the support and assistance of Vincennes University and the cooperative relationship which has existed between the two organizations throughout the years. I look forward to this continued relationship during the years ahead.

To you, the reader, may you find this volume informative and enjoyable reading.

Sincerely,

James Holcomb
Superintendent
Dear Reader:

The history and heritage of the region between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River are valuable resources to our nation. To make those assets more widely known, Vincennes University and the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park jointly have sponsored the George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conference. This book includes selected papers which were presented at the 1991 and 1992 conferences. These papers are being published now so that the scholarly conference information may be shared.

I believe the reader will find the information valuable and interesting. This quality inquiry into the Trans-Appalachian period of history provides insight and interpretation of major events which occurred on the “American frontier.”

The George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conference has been conducted at Vincennes University for a number of years. VU students, community people, presenters, and guests comprise an enthusiastic audience eager to learn more about the early history of the United States. The conference, conducted during early October on the Vincennes University campus, is well attended. Everyone is invited to join in this special conference and to take a walk back in history to a time when heroic deeds and sacrifices helped shape the history of this section of the United States.

I wish you the best as you enjoy this publication. I hope you will join others who are interested in the intriguing history of the central part of our country by attending future George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences.

Sincerely,

Phillip M. Summers
President
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PREFACE

In the beginning of human existence, the entire world was a wilderness. As islands of civilization slowly grew in various parts of the globe, the wilderness gradually began to recede. This process greatly accelerated after 1500 with the exploration and the subsequent settlement of the Americas, Africa and Australia by the Europeans, whose own continent had been a wilderness not many centuries earlier.

The European struggle for supremacy throughout the wilderness of the North American continent would develop into a three-pronged attack. From the north, came the French. Out of the south, arose the Spanish. And in the east, there loomed the English. All three European powers viewed the vast area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River as an important prize in their race for empire.

This strategically located Trans-Appalachian frontier would attract another contender during the last quarter of the 18th century. Although a neophyte among nations, the newly created United States stepped into the frontier contest while waging a revolution for its own independence.

Strong opposition to the moves being made by all four of these nations came from among the region's large numbers of Indian tribes. For them, the wilderness was not something to be pushed back or to be conquered. This North American heartland was a homeland they were determined to defend.

As we know, the settlers of the United States eventually were successful in this struggle. These rugged pioneers had evolved into an egalitarian, individualistic and footloose society; they also possessed an ability to survive upon a subsistence economy of agriculture, livestock raising and hunting. To these traits was added
a skill in warfare that made their victory inevitable once they had arrived in sufficient numbers. The ultimate triumph of the United States throughout this region made possible the expansion of that new nation to the Pacific Ocean.

A central figure in the struggle for empire was George Rogers Clark. Born in Virginia in 1752, Clark had migrated into the Trans-Appalachian area prior to the outbreak of hostilities between the 13 colonies and England. By 1779, after successfully wrestling Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Vincennes from British control, Clark became the acknowledged American leader throughout the West. At no time during the Revolution did anyone else appear who could have filled his role on the frontier. Without Clark's leadership, there seems little doubt that the entire Trans-Appalachian region would have been lost to the British before the conflict's end, thus possibly creating an entirely different outcome to the war and subsequently to world history.

The annual George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conference was inaugurated in 1983. It was designed to encourage research into this important field of study and to serve as a focal point for presentation of that research. Although papers on the subject often have been delivered at other meetings, there existed no regularly scheduled conference devoted solely to this particular frontier. The importance of both Clark and the settlement of Vincennes in the early history of the Trans-Appalachian region make this historic city along the Wabash River – the site of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park – a perfect setting for such a gathering.

This volume from the 1991 and 1992 conferences contains papers covering a wide variety of frontier subjects including warfare, religion, Indians, frontiersmen and traders. J. Martin West's "George Rogers Clark and the Shawnee Expedition of 1780" illuminates a lesser-known episode in Clark's career. Larry L. Nelson's "Cultural

Many individuals have given invaluable assistance with the 1991 and 1992 history conferences and with the preparation of these selected papers. I wish to express my appreciation to Superintendent James Holcomb, Terri Utt, Pat Wilkerson, Richard Day and Pamela A. Nolan of the National Park Service and to President Phillip M. Summers, Robert R. Stevens, E. J. Fabyan, Douglas Power, Ken J. Whitkanack, Harold Turner and Barbara A. Kunkler of Vincennes University.

Robert J. Holden
Historian and Conference Coordinator
George Rogers Clark National Historical Park
Vincennes, Indiana
April 1994
Selected Papers from the Ninth and Tenth George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences
George Rogers Clark and the Shawnee Expedition of 1780

J. Martin West
Fort Ligonier Association

During the summer of 1780, Colonel George Rogers Clark of Virginia organized and led an expedition against the Shawnee towns north of the Ohio River. The ensuing engagement fought at the Pickaway settlements August 8 was, in terms of numbers involved, the largest such action to occur west of the Allegheny Mountains during the War of Independence. This operation was a culmination of the bitter cultural conflict that had developed between the invasive American settlers of Kentucky and the Shawnee people of what is today west-central Ohio. Historically, the Shawnee were an unusually splintered and migratory society, apparently never centralized into one community. By the mid-1770s many of them had moved to the secluded valleys of the Great and Little Miami rivers where they represented four divisions: Chalaakaatha, Mekoche, Kispoko, and Pekowi. Chillicothe (Chalaakaatha) was established on the Little Miami and was settled by the Chalaakaatha division. Twelve miles northwest along the Mad River were placed the Pickaway (Pekowi) settlements occupied by the Pekowi, Kispoko, and Mekoche groups. As the decade wore on, other villages were planted farther north.¹

These settlements were located beyond the Ohio River, but the traditional Shawnee hunting grounds, which included most of modern Kentucky, were filling with colonial pioneers starting in 1774. That year also witnessed the defeat of the Shawnee by Virginians during Dunmore’s War. At the onset of the American Revolution, the Shawnee bravely attempted to maintain neutrality through the efforts of Keigleighque (Cornstalk), the principal leader.
Mounting acts of settler aggression climaxed with Keigleighque’s assassination while he was on a peace mission. This outrage, along with British instigation and encouragement, destroyed any hopes of nonintervention and impelled the Shawnee to take up the hatchet in earnest by late 1777.²

Shawnee population during the second half of the eighteenth century was estimated to be several thousand of whom 300 to 500 were counted as potential combatants. No more than a few hundred ever were known to have been fielded at one time and virtually all of the armed clashes that occurred saw their strength at drastically lower levels. Wilderness tactics normally did not demand the participation of many native fighting men, because even when outnumbered they remained formidable and frustrating antagonists. In victory, the result could be the annihilation of an opponent and, even in an uncommon defeat, the enemy usually suffered greater losses while most of the warriors escaped to fight again.³

If the Shawnee could not be vanquished easily in major engagements, their marauding against trespassers, who encroached upon inviolable lands, was practically impossible to suppress. This manner of warfare was known as la petite guerre, the “war of posts,” and was characterized by the employment of small parties, swiftness, mobility, and destruction, while having the effect of harrowing an opponent, both soldiers and civilians alike. By 1779 this problem induced John Bowman, Kentucky County militia colonel, to take aim at Chillicothe, 65 miles north of the Ohio. His troops rendezvoused May 27 at the mouth of the Licking River, blazed a path north along the Little Miami, and waylaid Chillicothe on the night of June 1. About 40 partially armed adults and boys repulsed Bowman’s 296 men by taking refuge in the town council house. Lacking artillery, the Kentuckians were constrained to withdraw. While unsuccessful, this stroke did result in the partial burning of the settlement and in a warning that the Shawnee villages
were no longer remote sanctuaries.  

When informed of Bowman’s raid, the commander of Virginia state forces in the West, Colonel George Rogers Clark, was censorious of the incursion. A charismatic and sometimes ruthless leader, Clark had wrested the French settlements throughout the Illinois country and at Vincennes from the Crown during the summer of 1778. His recapture of Vincennes February 25, 1779, and his taking of Henry Hamilton, who was the lieutenant governor of Detroit as well as the superintendent of Indian affairs, were tremendous blows to the British cause. The “back door” finally was open to Detroit via the Wabash River and Lake Erie, a route that evaded the more belligerent tribes farther east such as the Shawnee, Delaware, Wyandot, and Mingo (Ohio Iroquois). With limited resources available, Clark was cognizant of the futility of confronting these Ohio peoples on their own ground. To counter them demanded a grueling anti-partisan mission in which triumphs were elusive and indecisive, but reverses were disastrous. Irruptions, such as Bowman’s, mainly served to exacerbate and to intensify border hostilities.

Detroit was both the economic focal point of the important fur trade and a storehouse for expeditions and forays south of the Great Lakes. Here the British Indian Department had a major base for dispensing trade goods and military aid to the Native Americans. From this embarkation point la petite guerre was declared against the backcountry of Kentucky, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Clark was unyielding in the opinion that a successful Detroit campaign could mean a cessation of the contest on the trans-Allegheny frontier. After retaking Vincennes he had expected Bowman and others to reinforce his troops at that post for a push up the Wabash, rather than having them expend manpower and supplies on independent sorties. The Detroit opportunity for 1779 was lost.

During early 1780, the governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson,
offered Clark two alternate plans of action for the coming spring and summer. The governor was unsure about the first, a Detroit project, because he deemed the defenses there to be too strong for the small arms Clark might bring to bear against that inaccessible post. Then too, Jefferson speculated, would the fall of Detroit genuinely end the border war, since a surrogate channel of communication from Montreal to the Great Lakes/Ohio Valley by way of the Ottawa River in Canada still would be available. The second proposition, an expedition against the Shawnee and other Ohio country inhabitants, seemed a more realistic goal. The principal author of the Declaration of Independence desired the outright “extermination” of the Ohio tribes or, failing that, mandated their removal beyond the Great Lakes or the Illinois River. As Jefferson emphasized to Clark, “The same world will scarcely do for them and us.”

Also appealing for a Shawnee expedition were the people of Kentucky. On March 10, 1780, the residents of Boonesborough petitioned Clark: “We are fully persuaded that nothing less than a Vigorous expedition against the Shawanee Towns will Put an end to their Depradations, or secure the Peace and safety of these Settlements.” They implored him to sanction a call to arms by the militia and, remembering Bowman’s difficulties, explained the necessity of taking along cannon. On March 13 the citizens of Bryan’s Station and of Lexington wrote in a similar vein. The colonel was disturbed by and was sympathetic to these entreaties, but remained convinced Detroit was the only worthwhile objective. His response April 4 explained that he was “...hartily sorry for the great loss of Blood and property Sustained by the Kentuckians,” but at the same time argued that their proposal “...would be so far from giving us Peace that it would only Agravate the war by destroying an Expedition already planed [against Detroit]...which will give them an Amediate and Permanient Peace with the
George Rogers Clark and the Shawnee Expedition of 1780

Savages.” Clark considered such retaliatory schemes not only damaging to his Detroit plans, but also as fundamental wastes of time. However, the pressures on him from Jefferson, from the Kentuckians, and from others were intense. If events did upset a Detroit campaign, then some action by Clark against the Shawnee might be unavoidable.⁸

During the spring, rumors reached Kentucky that the British at Detroit were in the process of massing a large body of Native Americans, to be aided by regulars and militia. Accompanied by artillery, this force was presumed ready to enter Kentucky by June. Major Arent Schuyler De Peyster, commandant at Detroit, had ordered this inroad south. He believed that the Kentuckians soon would pose a threat to the Ohio peoples and to both the posts of Detroit and even that of remote Michilimackinac. De Peyster recognized the indigenous population never would relinquish Kentucky peaceably and “…in fact, it is our interest not to let the Virginians, Marylanders & Pensylvanians get possession there, lest in a short time they become formidable to this Post [Detroit].”⁹

The British had drafted a sweeping plan anticipating a succession of wide-ranging offensive movements, extending throughout the vast expanse that lay between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi River. Their audacious strategy involved the seizures of Fort Pitt and of Fort Cumberland, as well as of the Vincennes and Illinois posts. It proposed taking Clark’s headquarters at the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville) and emptying Kentucky of the unwanted immigrants. Also contemplated was the capture of Spanish settlements on the Mississippi (Spain had entered the war as a cobelligerent against Britain in 1779), thereby preventing needed resources from reaching the rebellious colonies by way of St. Louis and New Orleans. But a combination of inadequate supply and transport facilities, primitive commissariat, and enormous distances prevented the implementation of such an ambitious proposal and it
collapsed in nearly every phase.\textsuperscript{10}

The one partial accomplishment, the Kentucky project, was undertaken by Captain Henry Bird. He was ably assisted by a captain in the Indian Department, Loyalist Alexander McKee, who had strong cultural and kindred ties with the Shawnee. A skilled regular officer and partisan leader, Bird had supervised the construction of Fort Lernoult at Detroit. By June 1, an army of 850, primarily warriors from the Great Lakes and the Ohio country along with regulars and Loyalist militia, was descending upon Kentucky. Bird sought a \textit{coup de main} before Clark could return from a fort-building assignment on the Mississippi River. The Virginian’s presence, explained Bird to De Peyster, “...will add considerably to their [the Kentuckians’] numbers, and to their confidence. Therefore the Rebels should be attacked before his arrival....” Bird cautioned, “...if this plan is not followed, it will be owing to the Indians who may adopt others.”\textsuperscript{11}

Equipped with two fieldpieces to batter down log stockades, Bird was anxious to assail Louisville. Even so, his allies did not relish storming an armed garrison and, by wheeling toward the Falls of the Ohio, they feared imperiling their own towns to counterattacks by the Kentuckians. The warriors demanded an ascent up the Licking River to beset the more vulnerable civilian settlements, beginning with Ruddle’s and Martin’s stations, where the hated interlopers might be expelled from their hunting grounds. With the probability of sizable defections, the Briton had no choice but to proceed against the two small posts. Facing a confrontation with cannon, the two stations had no protection and fell effortlessly. The inhabitants became prisoners of war and many were subjected to extreme cruelty by the Great Lakes tribesmen. At this point, Bird suddenly terminated the expedition. He was distressed with his failure to restrain part of his native force (many of whom now wanted to move on to Lexington). His command was exhausted
and was low on provisions with so many captives to feed. He also fretted that the rivers might fall if he delayed too long, so with more than 350 prisoners, he floated back down the Licking and recrossed the Ohio. From there, he traveled up the Great Miami as far as it was navigable, hid the ordnance, and arrived at Detroit August 4.\textsuperscript{12}

Clark, erecting Fort Jefferson on the Mississippi, was apprised of Bird’s invasion. After helping to blunt the enemy offensive in that outlying region, he immediately summoned “...what men he could well spare...” to row up the Ohio to Louisville, while he and two companions proceeded cross-country through Kentucky to organize a defense. The trio arrived at Wilson’s Station near Harrodsburg, just after the debacles at Ruddle’s and Martin’s forts. Events now forced Clark’s reluctant hand. Bird was gone, but the Virginian realized that the settlers’ faith in their ability to protect themselves was shaken badly and that something had to be done forthwith to restore their failed confidence. He also had received new instructions from Jefferson. The governor’s letter of March 19 canceled the Detroit campaign and bade Clark to chastise the Shawnee before the end of summer. Another directive of April 19 from the Virginia executive office specified the raising of the militia to quell “Savage Insolence and Cruelties,” to which Clark was to give all assistance possible. Bowing to the inevitable, he authorized the launching of a punitive expedition against Chillicothe and Pickaway. In response, an army began congregating at the mouth of the Licking River with July 31 as the date by which all of the companies were to be mustered. This force had been created through the enterprise of Clark, who dictated a massive mobilization of Kentucky militia. He prescribed a levy of four of every five men; closed, at bayonet point, the land office in Wilson’s Station; and placed pickets at Crab Orchard on the Wilderness Road to block the eastern escape route for deserters. Many of the conscripts cast
lots to see who would go or who would stay, and the remaining able-bodied males put together a skeleton cadre to serve as a home guard.13

The total campaign enrollment was 998. The expedition was a Virginia-financed project with its commander being Clark, a man who would reach only his twenty-eighth birthday in a few months. His immediate subordinate was militia Colonel Benjamin Logan, who would lead one wing of the force down the Licking. Additional Kentucky elements comprising the other wing which would accompany Clark from Louisville were James Harrod’s Battalion and two small units under the commands of John Floyd and William Linn. Part of Clark’s Illinois State Regiment, including 26 artillerists, also participated. Captain Benjamin Roberts was in charge of about 50 men detached from Major Thomas Slaughter’s Corps of Virginia state regulars; disciplined and trained, they represented the most valuable component in Clark’s command. Accompanying them was a brass six-pounder fieldpiece taken at Vincennes during 1779. This cannon was placed under the care of Lieutenant Richard Harrison, who had brought this ordnance in a keelboat. With this weapon Clark could breach wooden palisades without resorting to time-consuming siege operations or to the risky business of a direct assault or “storm.”14

A clash already had occurred several days before the rendezvous. As Clark’s segment advanced up from Louisville, a 30-man militia detail under the command of the brash Captain Hugh McGeary had opted to hunt brazenly along the north bank of the Ohio. Several miles above the mouth of the Kentucky River, McGeary stumbled into a large, recently vacated camp. Unnerved, he hurriedly looked for haven on the opposite shore, but suddenly was pounced upon by a band of 16 or 17 warriors. The detachment was mauled severely before its members reached safety. More than 500 guns were discharged as covering fire from the Kentucky side
while McGeary escaped. His party had suffered 10 casualties including two dead and two of the most seriously injured had to be sent back to Louisville. No tribesmen were believed lost. As a result of this skirmish, all hunting, fowling, and foraging were curtailed north of the river, thereby obliging the soldiery to consume extra rations. The six remaining wounded men could accompany the main force only to the Licking where protective shelter had to be built for them.\textsuperscript{15}

Because the army was under constant surveillance and because of the possibility that a deserter, John Clairiy, might have defected to the British, Clark vitally was concerned about time. The ex-comrades of Clairiy conjectured that he had fled to North Carolina, but upon reaching the Licking they found his horse and a fresh campsite. They knew he would alert the targeted enemy villages as he made his way to Detroit. The Kentuckians understood that they had to arrive at those towns and had to engage in battle before they were abandoned or, more ominously, the Shawnee, with British and other native reinforcements, might make an attempt to ambush Clark along the line of march. The one method known to defeat the Northern Woodland peoples was the destruction of their crops and villages, thus coercing them into a defensive stand, something at which they rarely excelled. Surprise was the warriors' primary offensive maneuver and if the Kentuckians were vigilant and were disciplined, they stood a chance for success against the tribesmen.\textsuperscript{16}

At the mouth of the Licking early August 1, the newly marshalled army rowed across the Ohio. Clark had decided to raise a small stockade to house the invalids and the supplies as well as to provide a temporary base. The little fort (on the future site of Cincinnati) was ready for use by nightfall. About two dozen men (garrison and invalids) and a portion of the provisions, excess baggage, and all the boats were left in the care of Thomas Vickroy, temporary army commissary. He had orders to maintain the post
The militiamen had furnished their own victuals until the gathering at the Ohio. From there they expected Clark to issue foodstuffs at state expense for the duration of the campaign, but upon setting out from Louisville, the entire store was only 300 bushels of corn and 1,500 pounds of flour. While the stockade was under construction, a corn-laden boat, destined for Louisville, passed the site. Clark impressed the vessel and cargo, but even with this supplement the share averaged just six quarts of maize, two pounds of flour, and a gill (one quarter pint) of salt per individual. Logan’s division had brought a number of horses. Every six-man mess was allotted one animal to carry rations, blankets, an axe, and a quart kettle, but there was an insufficient number of horses for the entire armed body.

On August 2, the command was ready to move north. As had been feared, the Shawnee had aided Clairy in reaching Detroit where he had reported to the British. The turncoat revealed the invasion route — Bowman’s path along the Little Miami River — as well as precise data about Clark’s numbers, supplies, and artillery. With what personnel had been left at the fort, the Long Knives (the sobriquet bestowed upon the Virginians by the Shawnee) aggregated 970 men arrayed in two divisions. The front division was under Clark’s command; in the center came the cannon, packhorses, and a sturdy baggage wagon; and Logan’s division brought up the rear. Clark deployed the rank and file into four lines about 40 yards apart with flankers placed approximately the same distance on each side from the right and from the left lines, just in sight of each other. A vanguard and rearguard were detached and were enjoined to remain in view of the main body. This marching formation was concocted for ready shifting into the best evolution against surprise attack — a hollow square.

Clark gambled that by moving his army rapidly the Shawnee
would be caught unawares, but the presence of cannon and rolling stock meant a deliberate pace since a road had to be cut and had to be bridged for 70 miles. Though the troops were marched strenuously, their gait remained slow while the roadway was being opened. Four horses were required to pull the fieldpiece and the teams had to be changed twice a day. Nothing noteworthy occurred until the fifth, when the troops were within five miles of rebuilt Chillicothe. Clark’s spies returned from reconnaissance and recounted that the community was in the process of abandonment. The soldiers immediately broke into a run, reaching Chillicothe at noon and finding “...the Indians had all gone & burnt their own town. Some pots were found over the fires, boiling green corn & snaps. The troops found a great relief in green roasting ears & string (snap) beans. That afternoon was spent in feasting....” The council house and a fort had been ignited by the Shawnee. Clark decreed that everything else still standing in the vacated town, as well as several hundred well-tended acres of green corn and great amounts of other vegetables, be reduced to ashes.20

Twelve miles away stood the Pickaway settlements where the Shawnee had determined to make a stand. Clark took up the advance at about 4 p.m. on the seventh, but the army progressed barely a mile before it was halted by a violent thunderstorm which lasted all night. At dawn the men were formed into a hollow square and were instructed to test their dampened flintlocks by alternate company firing. The rolling rumble of musketry caused many of the horses to bolt, but soon they were collected in the nearby cornfields, five or six acres of which had been reserved for future use. The advance north was recommenced.21

“The general conduct of the Indians on our march, and many other corroborating circumstances,” Clark reported two weeks later to Jefferson, “proved their design of leading us on to their own ground and time of action.” At 2:30 during the afternoon of August
8, the Americans arrived in sight of the village complex. A spy, James Guthrie, had reconnoitered Pickaway during the storm and had returned at daybreak with intelligence of enemy preparations.\textsuperscript{22}

The soldiers waded knee- and waist-deep through the waters of the Mad River one-half mile below these strongly fortified settlements which incorporated three villages that extended upstream intermittently for approximately three miles. A half-mile wide prairie, which was located before a low line of ridges, intervened between the heart of the community and Clark’s fording point. On the Virginian’s left (west) the ground was thickly timbered, broken only by cornfields, fences, coverts, and light fortifications. To his front, behind the prairie, Clark faced the same conditions. To the east, a loop in the Mad brought it adjacent to virtually impenetrable limestone cliffs. Clark had the opportunity for a tactical evaluation while “...viewing the situation and motion of the enemy, near their works.” As devised, his classic battle plan called for envelopment of the community and its population from the front, flanks, and rear. If such a disposition was successful it could be an unconditional blow to the normally elusive foe.\textsuperscript{23}

Waiting for the Kentuckians were the Shawnee, along with reinforcements from the Mingo, Wyandot, and Delaware. That morning a potent force of 300 men under arms had been assembled. As always, they felt the necessity for undergoing purification rites, including fasting to ready themselves psychologically for combat. A Shawnee scouting party was making a report just at the moment the intruders entered the edge of the settlements. Because of this surprise event, many of the startled, unprepared warriors broke off and did not come at once into the engagement. The remaining elements appear to have been led into battle by Silverheels, brother of the late Keigleighque, and also by two Indian Department interpreters, the Loyalists James and George Girty.\textsuperscript{24}

Just as Clark’s vanguard forded, the defenders, hastily
concealed in the high prairie growth, let erupt a fusillade of gunfire. The colonel promptly riposted by bidding Logan to pivot his 300-man division east up the Mad for the purpose of securing a position to the rear of the settlements and to pinch off a retreat. Simon Kenton, a captive there during 1778, was assigned as pilot. The other sections of troops under the commands of Linn, Floyd, and Harrod splashed over the shallows and veered west while Clark, overseeing the regulars and artillery, crossed and pressed the attack directly against the center to complete the encirclement.25

The action, having been opened by the Native Americans on their right, soon ranged all along the line “...with a savage fierceness on both sides.” Exchanging fire at long-range, both attacker and defender attempted to outflank one another. The superiority of American numbers and of group formation tactics, in combination with Shawnee overconfidence and/or inept generalship (according to Clark), resulted in the villagers being outflanked two or three different times. Pushed from hill to hill in a circuitous manner for a mile-and-a-half, the tribesmen were compelled to withdraw to their strongholds which were dominated by a newly built triangular stockade and blockhouse.26

Hostilities ceased for approximately 30 minutes as the brass six-pounder was brought up and was prepared for a cannonade. This weapon, shielded by a hollow square, was discharged 12 to 15 times at the stockade, each roundshot shattering the timbers wherever it struck. As their bulwarks literally collapsed around them, the Shawnee sallied from the fort and from nearby cabins and were joined by others who had lingered in the woods. Observing this unexpected movement, Clark called for a cease-fire and for two white flags to be hoisted for a parley. Driven by desperation, the warriors had exposed themselves in the European fashion by rushing forth in conventional line of battle against the six-pounder. They frightened the panicky gunners away from the cannon into the
square, but the assailants were too few (possibly just 70) actually to seize it. At 40 paces the white flags were dropped and Clark’s infantry delivered a mass volley which broke the enemy line. A second general discharge dispersed the remnants and the survivors escaped through the cornfields. The fieldpiece then was turned against the cabins which quickly were demolished. By nightfall, Clark boasted, “...the enemy were totally routed.”

This encounter was not the conclusive victory Clark coveted after all, since most of the villagers eluded capture. The right wing of his army never came into the action. He asserted in his battle narrative that the confrontation would have been “decisive” if Logan’s contingent “...had not been rendered useless for some time by an uncommon chain of rocks [the limestone cliffs], that they could not pass, by which means part of the enemy escaped through the ground they were ordered to occupy.”

That evening the Long Knives camped in and around the wrecked fort. Nearly half of the soldiers were on duty and no countersign was given. Standing orders were to shoot at every noise. Next morning a French captive related that the townspeople had been preparing for Clark’s advance for 10 days. They had been fortifying their structures, moving families and possessions, and spying on the advance of the invaders. The Frenchman divulged where “plunder” was cached which, when found, was to be taken back along with 40 horses to the Licking where these spoils were to be divided equally among the men.

An accurate assessment of casualties is difficult to ascertain. The Shawnee admitted to only six slain, three wounded, and two taken prisoner (and subsequently murdered). They alleged to find 48 enemy dead including two colonels. Clark enumerated losses of 14 dispatched and 13 seriously injured. He estimated the total killed and total wounded of his adversaries to be three times his, but only 12 to 14 bodies were located, the others he surmised having been
carried off during the night. The American deceased were buried under the cabins, which then were put to the torch to camouflage this hasty interment.\textsuperscript{30}

August 9 saw the unflinching application of a scorched earth policy. As at Chillicothe, the soldiers were amazed and were impressed by the vast planted fields of maize, beans, squash, pumpkins, and “Irish” potatoes which were so vital to this thriving community. The Shawnee had produced a level of cooperative agriculture manifestly superior to that in Kentucky. The cultivation spread more than five miles away and a full day was taken to destroy it. The devastation on this expedition was prodigious; 800 acres of corn (minimum 24,000 bushels), immense quantities of vegetables, and two entire communities (four villages) were laid waste. The Chillicothe and Pickaway settlements were irreplaceable granaries where the residents planted crops that would sustain them through the winter months and would empower them to carry \textit{la petite guerre} into Kentucky. Even some Loyalists and British troops had taken part in the tillage in order to support war parties from Detroit.\textsuperscript{31}

Both sides committed atrocities. Several elderly Pickaway dwellers, including a father tending his mortally wounded son, were found in the cornfields August 9 and casually were executed. A woman prisoner was dealt a death blow “...by ripping up her Belly & otherwise mangling her.” In order to obtain scalps and to loot, the Kentuckians ransacked sacred burial grounds. On the other hand, during the fighting the Shawnee had seized militia Captain Lewis Hickman and several others who (along with all the male prisoners who had deserted from Bird’s column and had been recaptured) were burned at the stake specifically at the razed settlements. The Shawnee also found the fresh graves, exhumed the remains and scalped them.\textsuperscript{32}

With one enemy defeated, the question arises as to why Clark
then did not risk a bold stroke against Detroit to meet the other opponent. The answer simply is that this makeshift army of militiamen never was intended for such operations and was utterly incapable of anything except a limited punishing strike against the indigenous inhabitants. Detroit lay more than 200 miles to the north and the only passage was overland, straight through a roadless forest occupied by the most alienated of the Ohio tribes. Aware that Clark possessed only light ordnance, De Peyster had no trepidation for his post, although he had a false report that Clark might winter at the decimated towns. A British officer noted that Fort Lernoult had a garrison of 390 men-at-arms and that 100 troops could "...defend it against any number in Mr. Clark's power to shew [De Peyster]". Royal officials respected the Virginian's penchant for daring and prowess, but they concluded that Fort Lernoult was of such strength that it only could be reduced by a regular and formal investment with heavy artillery. Clark did weigh the potentialities of mounting a drive east in order to desolate part of the Delaware country and then to return by way of Fort Pitt, "...but the excessive heat and weak diet..." convinced him to give up even this plan. Although acres of roasting ears stood nearby, the green corn was too cumbersome to pack by horse or to carry on foot. The wounded were a further hindrance, so the invaders began to retrace the route back to the Ohio, leaving the night of August 9.33

The return march basically was uneventful. The injured who were able to ride did so; the rest were carried on individual litters between two horses. After halting one day at Chillicothe to finish its devastation and to cut the remaining corn, the troops continued on the road south. Ironically, with all the ravaging of crops, there was a great shortage of provisions. Also, another Kentuckian became numbered among the dead when he accidentally was shot by a sentinel. The Long Knives reached the Ohio on August 14, the fourteenth and last day Vickroy remained at Clark's small stockade.
The fort was abandoned and the soldiery was dispersed with the militia companies making their own way home; some of them all but starving in the process. Clark and the regulars boated back to Louisville, having covered a total of 480 miles during 31 days.\textsuperscript{34}

Shawnee casualties resulting from the expedition were not great, but the ruin of their cornfields and of the other vegetables was a grim matter. Captain McKee anguished that without support from Detroit a famished Shawnee literally could “perish.” On August 22 they indicated their plight to De Peyster, “...our women & children...are left now destitute of shelter in the woods or Food to subsist upon — Our warriors have not now even Ammunition to hunt for, or defend them.” Several days later De Peyster observed that “The wretched Women and Children are beginning to come in for Provisions, as at Niagara.”\textsuperscript{35}

The Shawnee were incensed that even though on several occasions they had begged for help, most recently when they turned in the deserter Clairy to the British, De Peyster still had transferred no troops to them. They were incapable of comprehending why the Detroit garrison had not hastened to their assistance. The policy of fomenting the tribes against the nascent United States ultimately was more dolorous to and exploitive of the former than to anyone else. When the ineluctable retaliation occurred, Crown forces seldom were to be seen, leaving the original people to face their worse enemy alone. Still, the chosen anti-partisan strategy of the new nation — the despoliation of villages and of crops — worked only in the long run to intensify the Native Americans’ enmity toward the settlers and to increase their reliance upon Great Britain. An exorbitant price would be exacted from the Kentuckians in reply to their late incursion. From mid-August to mid-October the number of raids did decline radically, since many of the tribesmen were obliged to spend their time hunting. Yet barely a month after the battle, the Shawnee already were laying plans for revenge, while
they also were spurning the warnings of a Rebel emissary from Fort Pitt. They defiantly reproved, "...our hearts are firm & we can never be conquered...." By late October the warriors, stirred with the opportunity for vengeance and emboldened with the customary gifts, again fell upon Kentucky. Jefferson was informed that a large number of British and native allies was at the recently pillaged towns, preparing new onslaughts south. Every week small parties annoyed the settlements and, instead of slackening with the onset of winter, the forays actually intensified during December.36

The Shawnee and other Ohio country residents could not be subdued because the Americans were incapable of making the commitment of manpower, materiel, and supplies required for a major decisive campaign while concurrently sustaining the burden of the Revolutionary War. This expedition, except for a brief time, clearly had not diminished la petite guerre. While the Shawnee still were "...sick with the blow we received from the Enemy..." during April, 1781, and also were suffering a food deficit as late as July (as confirmed by McKee), the strife during that year was as unrelenting as ever. Just nine months after his Pickaway victory, Clark spoke volumes when he explained to General George Washington, "The Indian war is now more general than Ever, any attempts to appease them Except by the sword would be fruitless."37

To the Kentuckians the 1780 expedition did serve minor objectives. Morale was uplifted for a short time and the precedent of swift retribution was established. The brief comparative peace that lasted for about two months after the battle probably allowed the rate of immigration into Kentucky to accelerate. In addition, Clark's raiders had beheld a heretofore little-known region (to them) of great fertility which spurred settlement there following the signing of the Treaty of Greene Ville in 1795. As for the Shawnee, their resolute and sanguinary resistance to aggression notwithstanding, during the next 15 years they unwillingly migrated north up the
Miami Valley into the Maumee River basin toward Detroit, a contested withdrawal which ultimately led to their disposssession.
NOTES


3. The following estimates of Shawnee warrior strength were made between 1763-1778:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Warriors</th>
<th>Informant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Sir William Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Captain Thomas Hutchins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1778</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>A Detroit Indian Trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1778</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Colonel George Morgan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Henry R. Schoolcraft (comp.), Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1851-1857), III, 559, 561, also VI, 271. Following Dunmore’s War, probably about 1779-1780, Shawnee numbers were depleted further by the voluntary relocation of a large peace faction, mainly drawn from the Pekowi and Kispoko divisions. A new settlement was established in trans-Mississippi Spanish territory (modern Cape Girardeau, Mo.). Galloway, Old Chillicothe: Shawnee and Pioneer History: Conflicts and Romances in the Northwest Territory, 61-62; Callender, “Shawnee,” 631.

4. John Bowman to George Rogers Clark, June 13, 1779, Lyman C. Draper Collection of Manuscripts (Draper MSS.), State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Madison), 49J52; Galloway, Old Chillicothe: Shawnee and Pioneer History: Conflicts and Romances in the Northwest Territory, 59-66. There was an additional mournful consequence for the Shawnee. During the skirmishing at the village council house the Chillicothe headman, Mkahdaywahmayquah (Blackfish), was mortally wounded.


6. Philip P. Mason, Detroit, Fort Lernoult, and the American Revolution (Detroit:


8. Petition from Inhabitants of Boonesborough to Clark, March 10, 1780, Draper MSS., 50J19; Petition from Bryan’s Station to Clark, March 13, 1780, ibid., 50J20; Clark to William Fleming, April 4, 1780, ibid., 46J54.

9. Bowman to Daniel Brodhead, May 27, 1780, ibid., 165S-8; Arent De Peyster to Frederick Haldimand, May 8, 1780, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections (MPHC), X, 396; De Peyster to Mason Bolton, May 16, 1780, ibid., XIX, 519.


11. Henry Bird to De Peyster, June 3, 1780, MPHC, XIX, 517-529.

12. Bird to De Peyster, July 1, 1780, ibid., 538-539; Alexander McKee to De Peyster, July 8, 1780, ibid., 541-543. Background material concerning Ruddle’s and Martin’s stations, as well as a listing of the prisoners and of their ultimate fate, can be found in Maude Ward Lafferty, “Destruction of Ruddle’s and Martin’s Forts in the Revolutionary War,” The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, LIV (October, 1956), 1-44, and Milo M. Quaife, “When Detroit Invaded Kentucky,” The Filson Club History Quarterly, I (January, 1927), 53-67.


15. Bradford, ibid., 15; Wilson, ibid., 32; John McCaddon to John Williams, May 16, 1842, American Pioneer, I (1842), ibid., 29; John McCaddon to Lyman Draper, May 5, 1845, Draper MSS., 8J142, ibid., 30; John Shane Interview with John Sandusky, The Filson Club and The University of Louisville Quarterly (FCULQ), IV (October, 1934), 225-226; Ballard, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 47-48. Hugh McGeary was heard from again. His recklessness was the prime factor behind the Blue Licks disaster August 19, 1782,
and, in revenge, he tomahawked the unarmed, venerable Shawnee leader, Moluntha (who was under American protective custody at that time). This assassination occurred during Benjamin Logan’s Shawnee expedition of 1786.


17. Clark’s Report; Bradford, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 15; Account of Thomas Vickroy, Draper MSS., 8J207, ibid., 51; McKee to De Peyster, August 22, 1780, Haldimand Collection, B122, 529.

18. Wilson, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 33; Clark’s Report; John Shane Interview with William Clinkenbeard, FCULQ, II (April, 1928), 126-127; Robert B. McAfee, “The Life and Times of Robert B. McAfee and his family connections written by himself,” The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, XXV, LXXIV (January, 1927), 31-33; Bradford, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 18.

19. Intelligence from John Clairy, Haldimand Collection, 443; Bradford, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 15-16. The designation, Long Knife, apparently first was used in 1684 by the Five Nations (Iroquois) to characterize Virginia Governor Lord Howard and then the term was assigned to the line of chief executives from that province which succeeded Howard. During 1722, at a conference in Albany, the derivation of the Long Knife appellation was made known. It originated with the Onondaga word, Assarigoa or Asharigoua. This cognomen applied to “...the Governor of Virginia, which signifies a saber, or cutlas, which was given to the Lord Howard, Anno 1684, from the Dutch word, Hower, a cutlas.” See Charles A. Hanna, The Wilderness Trail Or the Ventures and Adventures of the Pennsylvania Traders on the Allegheny Path, 2 vols. (New York and London: G. P. Putman’s Sons, 1911), I, 318.

20. Clark’s Report; Ballard, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 48-49; Narrative of William Whitley, Draper MSS., 9CC34-35, ibid., 52; Wilson, ibid., 33; Clinkenbeard, FCULQ, 126-127.

21. Bradford, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 16; Wilson, ibid., 30; Notes of Israel Morrison, Draper MSS., 8J143-146, ibid., 42-43; Ballard, ibid., 48-49.


23. Wilson, ibid., 33; Notes of Peter B. F. Adams, Draper MSS., 8J148-149, ibid., 44; Account of Abraham Thomas, Troy [Ohio] Weekly Times (March 27 and April 3, 1839), West (ed.), CSC 1780, 22; Clark’s Report; Bradford, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 16.

24. Clark’s Report; McKee to De Peyster, August 22, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 529; William Homan to Bird, August 15, 1780, ibid., 523. Mystical and religious features were involved intimately with war making. Fasts, emetics, sexual continence, visions, dreams, sacred bundles, and individual talismans all were part of the intricate pre-battle preparations. See Nathaniel Knowles, “The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America,” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, LXXXII (1940), 153, and Mary Henry Gibbs, The Shawnee Indians (M.A. thesis, Catholic University of
George Rogers Clark and the Shawnee Expedition of 1780

America, 1932), 51-52. During 1774 Silverheels (1730?-1798?) almost had suffered the eventual fate of Keigleghque (1720?-1777) while escorting to safety a small band of Pennsylvania traders just before the outbreak of Dunmore’s War. West of Fort Pitt, Silverheels was ambushed by Virginia borderers and was seriously wounded. See Richard Walker, Where is the Legendary Silverheels? (Privately printed, 1980), 26-29.


27. Clark’s Report; McKee to De Peyster, August 22, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 529; Wilson, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 34-35; Bradford, ibid., 17. During the final stages of fighting, Clark’s cousin, Joseph Rogers, who had been a Shawnee captive since 1776, accidentally was killed. Dressed in native garb, Rogers inadvertently was shot by the Kentuckians while he attempted to escape to their lines. Clark had a chance to speak briefly with him before he expired. Some of the troops were convinced that Rogers was fighting for the enemy and perhaps their commander agreed. In a letter to his father, Clark did not dwell upon the incident, but merely related “...the fate of poor Joseph Rogers who lost his Life in the Moment it might of been in his power to Render his Country great service. His fate was fixed no possibility of saving him....” The British reported that the Shawnee had too favorable an opinion of Rogers for him to attempt an escape. See Clark to John Clark (his father), August 23, 1780, The Reuben T. Durrett Collection, The University of Chicago Library, ibid., 14; Ballard, ibid., 47; Morrison, ibid., 43; Wilson, ibid., 35; Clinkenbeard, FCULQ, 126-127; Homan to Bird, August 15, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 523.

28. Clark’s Report; Bradford, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 17; James Galloway to Benjamin Drake, January 22, 1840, Draper MSS., 8J263-267, ibid., 24; Wilson, ibid., 35; Morrison, ibid., 43; Clinkenbeard, FCULQ, 126-127.

29. Wilson, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 35-36; Clark’s Report; Ballard, ibid., 47-48; Clinkenbeard, FCULQ, 126-127.

30. McKee to De Peyster, Haldimand Collection, 529; Clark’s Report; Wilson, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 36; Clinkenbeard, FCULQ, 126-127.


32. Wilson, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 36-37; McCaddon to Draper, ibid., 31; Morrison, ibid., 42; Whitley, ibid., 52; Homan to Bird, August 15, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 523; Clinkenbeard, FCULQ, 126-127. By the time of the Revolution, torture as part of the Eastern Woodland war complex had become infrequent. Specific acts of burning and mutilation did occur, however, after certain catastrophic events such as the American devastation of western Iroquoia during 1779 and the genocide of Moravian converts in

33. De Peyster to Mason Bolton, September 3, 1780, MPHC, X, 566-567; Haldimand to Bolton, August 29, 1780, ibid., 565-566; Haldimand to H. Watson Powell, April 20, 1781, ibid., XIX, 622; Clark’s Report; Wilson, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 25; Clinkenbeard, FCU LQ, 126-127; Homan to Bird, August 15, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 523.

34. Bradford, West (ed.), CSC 1780, 18; Thomas, ibid., 23; Wilson, ibid., 36; McKee to De Peyster, August 22, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 529; Clark’s Report.

35. McKee to De Peyster, August 22, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 529; Speech of the Delawares and Shawnees assembled at the Upper Shawnee Village, to their Father Major De Peyster Commandant at Detroit, August 22, 1780, ibid., B122, 533; De Peyster to Haldimand, August 31, 1780, ibid., B122, 537. De Peyster’s comment about Fort Niagara referred to the debilitating effects of General John Sullivan’s 1779 expedition against the Iroquois population of what is today upstate New York. While on a much larger scale than Clark’s 1780 expedition, Sullivan’s undertaking was no less a failure in curtailing the frontier conflict. See Donald R. McAdams, “The Sullivan Expedition: Success or Failure,” New York Historical Society Quarterly, LIV (1970), 53-81.

36. Speech of the Delawares and Shawnees assembled at the Upper Shawnee Village, to their Father Major De Peyster, August 22, 1780, Haldimand Collection, 533; Reply to a Rebel speech by the Shawnees, Delawares, Mingoes, Hurons [Wyandots], & the nations in alliance with them, September 15, 1780, MPHC, X, 429; John Todd, Jr., to Jefferson, November 30, 1780, Clark Papers, I, 466-467; Richard Harrison to Clark, December 7, 1780, ibid., 468; George Slaughter to Jefferson, December 8, 1780, ibid., 472.

37. Indian Council with De Peyster at Detroit, April 5, 1781, MPHC, X, 463-464; McKee to De Peyster, July 15, 1781, ibid., XIX, 648; Clark to George Washington, May 20, 1781, Clark Papers, I, 552.
Battle of Pickaway
August 8, 1780
Cultural Mediation on the Great Lakes Frontier: Alexander McKee and Anglo-American Indian Affairs, 1754-1799

Larry L. Nelson
Fort Meigs State Memorial
Ohio Historical Society

There was little rest for Alexander McKee during the autumn of 1793. Throughout the course of the preceding three years, a loose confederation of Native Americans from along the Maumee River Valley had looked to their British allies for assistance. In their campaign to expel the United States from the Ohio country, the northwestern tribes already had frustrated two American expeditions sent into the region. In October, 1790, troops commanded by Josiah Harmar retreated in disorganized array after encountering unexpectedly stiff Indian resistance at the headwaters of the Maumee. During November of the following year, the confederated tribes completely routed a second United States army led by Arthur St. Clair. Now, the tribes along the Maumee watched with mounting concern as a third force, with Anthony Wayne at its head, poised itself to strike at the native stronghold.¹

Comprised of the Miami, Shawnee, and Delaware tribes living along the Maumee, together with individuals from other bands who had fled into the area after the commencement of hostilities, the confederacy opposing Wayne was as much a creation of McKee and the British government as it was of the Indians themselves. To be sure, the tribes comprising the coalition had come together voluntarily for their mutual defense. They pursued their own interests and set their own agendas. But the aid that McKee offered, and the continued support that the British government promised, served as the glue which held the alliance together.
McKee (born circa 1735 – died 1799), a fur trader, land speculator, and agent with the British Indian Department, played an active role in lower Great Lakes Anglo-Indian affairs for approximately 50 years. Fathered by a white trader, but raised, in part, by his Shawnee mother, McKee was equally at home in either culture. He had lived among, traded with, and fought alongside many of the Ohio country tribes. Now, as tensions between the western tribes and the United States again flared into open warfare, he met with tribal delegations at his post at the foot of the Maumee Rapids to discuss strategy, dispense gifts, and offer advice. He attempted to persuade the petulant Northern Lake tribes to join the league. At the same time, he worked to isolate representatives from the accommodationist eastern Iroquois Confederacy who felt that it would be in their interests to avoid armed conflict. He oversaw the shipment of military supplies and provisions from British officials at Detroit to his storehouse on the Maumee and also coordinated covert British military assistance to the warring tribes. He entertained American envoys and received emissaries from the Crown. He directed spies, interrogated deserters, and exchanged prisoners. American ambition, native aspiration, and imperial apprehension converged at the British outpost along the rapids. In the center stood Alexander McKee.

McKee was a cultural mediator, a go-between who linked the native and white worlds. Cultural mediators were indispensable in establishing and in maintaining the delicate linkage between Europeans and Indians on the Great Lakes frontier. Throughout colonial North America, mediators played equally useful roles in establishing and in maintaining relations between Europeans and Native Americans. Mediators, or cultural brokers, conducted business and forged alliances. They exchanged information and distributed gifts. Nearly always bilingual, mediators not only translated the formal, conventionalized speeches that constituted
tribal councils, but they also assisted both sides in adhering to the rigors of formal ceremonial behavior. Furthermore, they also arranged unofficial meetings and conducted informal negotiations away from the council fires.

For much of the latter half of the 18th century, McKee exploited his familial affiliation and close economic ties to both communities to encourage trade, to foster diplomatic relations, and to forge a military alliance between the British government and the tribes of the Old Northwest. Living on the margins of the British Empire, McKee was nonetheless a loyal British partisan. Throughout his career, he employed his abilities to reconcile Crown and native political, military, and economic interests. Shrewd, politically astute, and skilled as a negotiator, McKee manipulated his position to acquire wealth, power, prestige, and eventually entry into Upper Canada's governing elite.

At the Maumee Rapids, McKee presided during the conclusion of a long and bitter confrontation between natives and whites throughout the region. The final half of the 18th century had been a period of dramatic change along the lower Great Lakes frontier. Native peoples only recently had repopulated the area after their expulsion during the Erie-Iroquois wars that had swept the region during the mid- and late 17th century. After 1740, the area became an arena for virtual continuous intercultural and international conflict. France, England, and the United States, each in its turn, sought to wrest control of the region from its indigenous native population, attempting to extract the wealth promised by vast reserves of land and furs. From the outset of the Seven Years' War to the conclusion of the War of 1812, Native Americans throughout the lower Great Lakes vicinity waged a protracted, rancorous, and often violent resistance against European intrusions into their homelands. Despite their efforts, the line of white settlement moved in an unrelenting tide, flowing westward across the region from the
Historians previously have tended to interpret this era only in terms of military and cultural confrontations. To view the Great Lakes region during this period only in terms of Indian/white conflict, though, is in error. As historian Colin Calloway noted, the reality was far more complex. Inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic cooperation defined the social reality as much as inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic rivalry. A richly diverse social mosaic asserted and defended a tangled web of interconnected national, regional, local, and individual agendas. Unified European stratagems frequently collapsed along opposing ethnic, religious, or economic lines. Indian allegiances equally were fragmented. Sovereign tribes and autonomous bands independently pursued their own self-interests through separate, often competing policies. The Great Lakes frontier was an open, assimilative world of shifting relationships in constant evolution. In such a world, loyalties were fluid, pragmatic, and occasionally uncertain. National, cultural, even racial affiliations could become problematic. Change, indeed, came through warfare. More often, though, the very fabric of everyday life instigated the process of diversification. Social ambivalence was the natural by-product of the region’s intercultural contact, trade, marriage, and diplomacy. Within this world persons such as McKee assumed great importance. Able to transcend the boundaries of race and culture, mediators employed their skills to facilitate, and occasionally to direct, the course of native and European interaction.

During his half century of activity along the Ohio frontier, McKee used his close cultural ties to the region’s Native American and European communities along with his long involvements in business, civic, and military affairs, to position himself as an intermediary among the area’s disparate cultural, economic, and political interests. Historian R. David Edmunds, writing in a recent assessment of needs and opportunities in the field of Native
American studies, has suggested that investigations of the metis, may be particularly productive. Metis were individuals who, similar to McKee, were "mixed blood" members of the tribal community. Commentators frequently have portrayed these individuals as cultural outcasts, unaccepted by either whites or natives. Edmunds, however, has noted that these persons commonly served as "middlemen," both interceding for their tribes and acting as agents for the colonial or federal governments. Rather than unscrupulous misfits, these persons often were well educated, socially sophisticated, and financially shrewd. Their ability to comfortably conduct their own affairs, as well as the affairs of others in both cultures, enhanced their prominence in each.\(^5\)

It appears that the half-Indian-half-white McKee, who was involved in both private and governmental enterprises, was trusted by the Crown, was respected by tribal officials, was regarded highly by his business and civilian associates, and was rewarded well by all, does fit Edmunds' cultural "middleman" model. By virtue of his association with the Great Lakes tribes, his land ventures, and his continued participation in the fur trade, McKee acquired land, influence, and wealth, all the while retaining the high esteem of his Crown, business, and native associates. McKee was a man in the middle, one who, throughout his career, was able to exploit his role as intermediary to benefit his clients, and himself.

The encounter between whites and natives, to be sure, occasionally engendered confrontation and violence. More often the encounter also brought opportunities for economic and social intercourse, intermarriage, and political and diplomatic interaction. Cultural mediators stood at the center of these exchanges. Reflecting, as well as manipulating, the cultural ambiguity of the Great Lakes frontier, McKee and others similar to him shaped the course of Anglo-Indian relations throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Throughout his adult life, McKee helped shape the course of
events transpiring in the political and cultural uncertainty of the Ohio country. McKee was the son of a Shawnee mother and also the son of Thomas McKee, a well-known western Pennsylvania trader. Serving as a junior officer in the Pennsylvania militia during the French and Indian War, in 1759 McKee joined the British Indian Department under the tutelage of George Croghan. Acting as an interpreter and as a low-level diplomatic envoy to the western tribes, he worked on the Crown’s behalf during Pontiac’s Rebellion, Bouquet’s Expedition, and Lord Dunmore’s War. During the same period, he continued to expand his fur trading activities. By 1770, he had taken a wife from, and had established a home with, the Shawnee bands living on the Scioto River in present-day central Ohio. Sir William Johnson, the Superintendent of Indian affairs for the Northern District, recognized the high esteem in which McKee was held among the Ohio country tribes. Upon Croghan’s retirement during 1771, Johnson appointed McKee to replace Croghan as Indian agent and as head of the Indian Department Commissary at Fort Pitt.

Remaining loyal to the British government during the Revolutionary era, McKee made his way to Detroit in 1778. Throughout the remainder of the war, he engaged in a variety of military and diplomatic activities taken against the rebelling colonies. In 1778, McKee accompanied Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton’s expedition to Vincennes. Later, he participated in Henry Bird’s 1780 campaign into Kentucky and with the 1782 foray along the Ohio River to Bryan’s Station which culminated in the defeat of American irregulars at the Battle of Blue Licks.

Remaining with the British Indian Department following the American Revolution, McKee also renewed his participation in the fur trade with the Ohio country tribes. In addition, he became a prominent figure in local and provincial affairs during this time by serving as a member of the Land Board of Hess, the provincial
body which regulated settlement along Upper Canada’s Detroit River region. He also was appointed a justice with the local Court of Common Pleas and served as a lieutenant colonel in the Essex County militia of Upper Canada. During the 1790-1795 Ohio Country Indian Wars, McKee played a central role in defining and implementing Upper Canada’s diplomatic response. Throughout the crisis, he was an energetic participant in the Crown’s efforts to supply arms, ammunition, and provisions to the Maumee Valley tribes opposing United States expansion into the region. The 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers and subsequent Treaty of Greeneville ended the conflict with an American victory. Soon thereafter McKee was named Deputy Superintendent and Inspector General of Indian Affairs for Upper Canada, a position that he retained until his death during January, 1799.

The process of assimilation played a prominent role in the life of Alexander McKee, defining his role as cultural mediator. Who he thought he was influenced his actions as much as what he thought he was. Both changed dramatically during the course of his career with the Indian Department. During the 1750s and 1760s, the period in which he first entered the historical record, McKee apparently was a completely accepted and fully participating member of Indian society. His Shawnee background aided him in acquiring complete fluency in several native languages and in mastering the liturgical intricacies of tribal ceremony and diplomatic protocol. His cultural ties to Shawnee society were strengthened further through his decision to live, to marry, and to raise his children among the tribe, as well as by his continuing involvement in the economic life of the community.

At the time of his death, his contacts with native society were more formal than intimate. He resided in a home that he properly referred to as “the mansion,” controlled vast holdings of land, kept African slaves and other servants, purchased a commission in the
British army for his son, and enjoyed easy access to and great influence within the highest levels of local, county, and provincial governments. He had become a totally accepted and fully participating member of Upper Canada’s governing aristocracy.\textsuperscript{7}

McKee typified the world in which he lived. Being a product, as well as a creator, of the social and political complexity of the Great Lakes frontier, he straddled the critical intersections where national, ethnic, and individual interests intertwined. He and others, such as Simon Girty, Matthew Elliott, and William Caldwell, brokered the encounter between whites and natives along the Ohio frontier. Like his contemporaries, he intimately was connected to the cultural and political ambiguity of the region and was adept at transforming this personal sense of cultural diversity into a shared perspective of common cause between Europeans and Native Americans. As Colin Calloway observed, the Ohio country offered these men both place and purpose as cultural mediators.\textsuperscript{8}

Calloway recently has reassessed the career of another cultural mediator, Simon Girty, who was active along the Great Lakes frontier. In analyzing Girty’s life, Calloway employed an ethnographically derived approach, utilizing Everett Stonequist’s definition of “the marginal man” as a sociological model for understanding Girty’s life. According to Stonequist, a marginal man is one “who through migration, education or marriage, or some other influence, leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another,” consequently finding himself “on the margin of each, but a member of neither.” Calloway’s methodology has removed Girty’s life from the “paranoia, fear, and rumor colored” stereotypes that have framed previous interpretations. In Calloway’s appraisal, Girty becomes more than a heinous criminal. He was, indeed, a traitor to Americans living along the Ohio frontier. But, to British settlers in the same region, he was no less a Loyalist, a faithful servant of the area’s
legitimate government. And he continued to defend what he perceived to be the best interests of the area’s Native Americans, people whom he regarded as “his own” until his death. Calloway’s understanding of Girty is complex and subtle, proceeding from a sensitivity to the region’s cultural pluralism.9

What distinguished McKee was his unique sense of place and distinct articulation of purpose. More than any of his fellow brokers, McKee coupled his sense of place within the lower Great Lakes region with a wider appreciation of the frontier’s place within the British realm. If Girty indeed was a “marginal man” as far as white society was concerned, it in part was because that marginality was self-imposed. Girty took little interest in the world beyond the Ohio country. Matthew Elliott, too, was similarly indifferent, with an insular view of the events transpiring outside of his immediate experience. Only McKee’s vision of the Great Lakes frontier transcended the Ohio country and placed it within the broader confines of the British Empire. Girty and Elliott mediated local interests where they intersected with those of the Crown. McKee mediated imperial interests where they meshed with those of the Ohio country.10

For McKee, the process of mediation interconnected with that of assimilation. As he drew away from native society, he gravitated toward the centers of Crown authority. Rather than acquiring marginality, McKee’s growing affiliation with white society brought him cultural centrality. This provided McKee direct access to, and participation in, the decision-making process on both sides of the cultural line. With cultural centrality came opportunities to direct, to control, and to manipulate the course of cultural contact for both his own benefit and that of the British government. Cultural centrality, informed by loyalty to the Crown and filtered through the lens of self-interest, defined his career.

Originating in the British government’s chief offices at
Whitehall, British policy seeking to guide Indian affairs in the Great Lakes region undertook a long and perilous journey before achieving implementation. After crossing the Atlantic Ocean, imperial directives were filtered through successive layers of bureaucracy until, growing increasingly thin and web-like at each stage, they arrived on the trans-Appalachian frontier to be put into action by persons such as McKee. Policy, no matter how explicit or well-defined in Great Britain, became subject to greater and greater degrees of personal interpretation at each stage in the process. Therefore, the execution of imperial Indian policy was derived only partly from the instructions articulated within that policy. Indian affairs also were shaped to a considerable degree by perceptions of self and of place which were carried by the agents who were charged with putting that policy into action. These perceptions differed from person to person and, as McKee’s career showed, were subject to change throughout the course of an individual’s life. To understand Indian policy along the trans-Appalachian frontier, it is essential to be cognizant of the personal world views imposed on that policy by the cultural mediators who shaped the course of Indian affairs throughout the region.
NOTES


3. For general works describing the region’s development during the period 1700-1815 see Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies, (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984); Francis Jennings, Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and
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6. This and the following two paragraphs are drawn from Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 4, 1771-1800 s.v., “Alexander McKee,” by Reginald Horsman.

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Selected Papers from the Ninth and Tenth George Rogers Clark
Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences
Fort Jefferson, 1780-1781: A Summary of Its History

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The origin of George Rogers Clark's Fort Jefferson dates from the summer of 1777 when Clark first developed his plans to capture the British posts of Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes in the Illinois country. By June of that year, Clark had received word from his spies that the Illinois country could be taken easily. Clark formulated plans that included constructing a fort near the mouth of the Ohio River to facilitate trade with the Spanish and French settlements. A fort located at the mouth of the Ohio also would support, through possession, Virginia's revised (1763) "paper claim" to her western boundary. By January, 1778, Clark received permission from Virginia Governor Patrick Henry to proceed with his secret operation (Figure 1).

Without firing a shot, Clark captured Kaskaskia, the first of two British-allied posts, on July 4, 1778. Even more remarkable was his success in approaching that community completely undetected. Clark and his small force, approximately 175 members of the Illinois Battalion, had traversed the entirety of the Ohio River from Fort Pitt to the mouth of the Tennessee River and had traveled overland from the Tennessee River to Kaskaskia on the Mississippi River.

To counter Clark's ambitious move westward, British Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton brought his forces south from Detroit to take control of the garrison called Fort Sackville in Vincennes. Arriving at Fort Sackville late in the year of 1778, Hamilton decided to wait out the winter there along the Wabash River before attacking Clark at Kaskaskia. Clark, however, seized the initiative.

Clark and his followers, accompanied by newly allied
Frenchmen, left Kaskaskia during February, 1779, and headed northeasterly toward Vincennes. This move by Clark was planned both to surprise the British garrison at Vincennes by bringing the fight to them as well as to catch the British off guard and without their usual complement of Indian allies.

Clark’s strategy worked. Hamilton and his forces surrendered Fort Sackville after approximately two days of half-hearted defense. The Americans, jubilant with their three victories, renamed the Vincennes fort, Fort Patrick Henry, to pay homage to the Virginia governor who initially had backed the enterprise.

Everybody loves a winner and George Rogers Clark was a winner. Between March and November, 1779, Clark’s Illinois Battalion grew steadily as word of his undertaking reached the frontier settlements. Recruitment for the Illinois Battalion improved as a result of Clark’s battlefield successes.

In November, 1779, Clark called a council of war with his junior officers to discuss the final part of his enterprising campaign – the building of a fort and of a civilian community near the mouth of the Ohio River.

During January, 1780, the new governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, wrote letters to Joseph Martin, Indian agent; Daniel Smith, surveyor for Virginia; Thomas Walker, surveyor for Virginia; and George Rogers Clark. He directed Martin to contact the Cherokee to purchase land for the new fort. Jefferson did not know at the time, that rather than the Cherokee, it was the Chickasaw – a British ally – who claimed the area upon which the fort would be constructed.

Jefferson further instructed Daniel Smith and Thomas Walker to meet Clark at the site and to determine precisely the exact location, or latitude, of Clark’s new fort, making sure it fell within Virginian territory and not upon North Carolina’s land. In his communication to Clark, Jefferson gave permission to build the
fort and an adjacent civilian community. The latter, Jefferson wrote, could be used to support the fort by growing food supplies Virginia could not afford to send. A civilian community also would attract young men whom Clark actively could recruit.

Clark and Robert Todd, the brother of John Todd and acting paymaster of the Illinois country, discussed the feasibility of reducing the garrisons in the Illinois country and of concentrating their populations at and around the new fort. Some resettlement did occur, but Kentucky County, the westernmost Virginian county in 1780, was about to see its single largest influx of settlers, more than 10,000 during a single year. By midyear, reshuffling of the Illinois population no longer seemed necessary.

To obtain settlers for the community and additional soldiers for his army, Virginia authorized Clark to grant 300 land warrants, each worth 560 acres, to every new soldier. By April, 1780, only a few additional supplies were needed before Clark could leave the Falls of the Ohio (present-day Louisville) for the new post. So promising were the prospects of the new settlement and garrison, that William Shannon, Clark’s commissary at the Falls, requested six-months’ provisions for 1,000 men.

Clark, 175 soldiers, and an untold number of civilians arrived April 19, 1780, at the spot selected for the new settlement. In honor of the presiding Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson, Clark called the new post Fort Jefferson. The adjacent civilian community became known as Clarksville, also Clark’s Town. The fort and community were on a slightly elevated floodplain between Mayfield Creek, also then called Liberty Creek, and a series of eroded bluffs located to the north. The main stream of the Mississippi River was then about one-half mile west of the fort (Figure 2). Clark’s men and the settlers set to the task at hand, clearing the woods and constructing the outpost and town. Clark, however, would have little further time to invest with the fort or settlement.
Jefferson, writing from Williamsburg, suggested Clark should lead a force into the Shawnee country to counter the Indians’ attacks on the central Kentucky settlements. Jefferson did not realize that a more pressing issue was developing near Clark’s new post. Word arrived at Fort Jefferson that a strong force of Indians and British soldiers was expected to attack both St. Louis (also referred to as Pancore) as well as Cahokia. Taking all but 18 regulars from Fort Jefferson, and leaving Captain Robert George in charge of the new post, Clark proceeded north to Cahokia, arriving May 24, two days before the Battle of St. Louis. Clark and the united French, Spanish, and American forces promptly defeated the British and Indian raiders.

Meanwhile, word reached Fort Jefferson from O’Post (Fort Patrick Henry in Vincennes) that British attacks on the central Kentucky settlements were expected any day. News also was received that the Spanish planned to attack the British strongholds at Mobile and Pensacola, actions which would help free the trade on the Mississippi.

By June 1, Clark’s triumphant Illinois Battalion began to relocate at Fort Jefferson. On June 4, 1780, Captain Robert George, Fort Jefferson’s commandant, advised Clark that the construction of the new post was nearing completion. Captain George hoped to have the garrison enclosed with pickets by the end of that week and the settlers, George wrote, nearly were finished with their planting.

The fort was enclosed none too soon. By June 7, marauding Chickasaw began killing members of the Clarksville militia who were surprised on the outskirts of the town. Although it had not been a full-scale attack, the Indians’ presence was a considerable menace to the fort and settlement.

By June 10, Clark had returned to Fort Jefferson with his soldiers and the Indian problem faded into the background. A more demanding obstacle redirected Clark’s attention.
An express messenger from the Falls of the Ohio brought word of an increased number of hostile Indian attacks in the central Kentucky area. Colonel Daniel Brodhead at Fort Pitt preferred not to deal with the problem, recommending, instead, that Clark attack the Shawnee “from his quarter.”

On June 10, 1780, Clark and two others left Fort Jefferson for the Falls of the Ohio. Between June 10 and 14, considerable issues of goods and clothing were made at Fort Jefferson to outfit Clark’s army for the Shawnee campaign. By mid-June, half of the Fort Jefferson troops had left their post to meet Clark at the mouth of the Licking River (across from present-day Cincinnati) to launch the expedition. Clark had begun recruiting for the operation as soon as he had reached the Falls.

The civilian community at Fort Jefferson continued to grow and to prosper. On June 13, several Clarksville trustees (James Piggott, Ezekiel Johnson, Henry Smith, Joseph Hunter, and Mark Iles) wrote to the Virginia government to have Clarksville and its surrounding area recognized as a new county, which, if approved, would give the county a vote in the Virginia legislature. Their petition was sent along with those troops leaving Fort Jefferson June 14, 1780, on their way to join Clark’s Shawnee expedition.

For the next two weeks, all went well at the post on the Mississippi. Numerous issues for dry goods, to be made into soldiers’ clothing, were sewn for officers and enlistees alike. The fort’s bartering system was well established, as witnessed by the type and kind of payments received by the tailors and seamstresses who made clothing for the soldiers. A company of Virginia light dragoons (cavalry) commanded by Captain John Rogers, a maternal cousin of George Rogers Clark, was newly outfitted and was provisioned at Fort Jefferson. On July 14, 1780, they departed for Cahokia and Lieutenant Colonel John Montgomery left for Fort Clark at Kaskaskia.
Three days later at daybreak, the Chickasaw again attacked the Clarksville community, killing two of the militia and wounding several others. The fight, however, was brief and led to relatively little destruction. The shooting was more of a test by the Chickasaw to determine the military strength of both the fort and the community. After obtaining the information they needed, the Indians withdrew.

By July 20, 1780, Laurence Keenan and Joshua Archer were sent as expresses to Fort Clark where they sought the assistance of Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery. Sixty-five Kaskaskia Indians and 10 members of Captain Richard McCarty’s company arrived from Fort Clark to assist Fort Jefferson on July 31, 1780. The Indian allies were employed primarily by Captain George to hunt for the garrison. Also arriving from Fort Clark at Kaskaskia was Captain John Bailey and William Clark (paternal cousin to George Rogers Clark, not George’s younger brother). Bailey and William Clark brought with them 1,400 pounds of flour, 50 bushels of corn, and 28 men from Bailey’s company of infantry.

Members of the fort and of the community entered August pleased that they successfully had thwarted two attacks by the Chickasaw. Undoubtedly they also were proud that they had helped to defeat the combined Anglo-Indian assault on St. Louis and Cahokia the preceding May. Recent arrivals at Fort Jefferson, Captain Richard McCarty and his military company along with Timothe B. Monbreun, added to the feeling of security at the post. But it now was understood that an attack by the Chickasaw might occur at any time and might come from any quarter. Therefore, a higher status of alert was ordered and arms and munitions were issued to the troops to maintain a “prepared” normalcy.

On the morning of August 27, 1780, the civilians and the soldiers of Fort Jefferson once again were tested by the Chickasaw. This time, however, a great band of Chickasaw attacked the community
and its garrison. Estimates of their number varied. The most conservative figure came from Captain George, who suggested that 150 Chickasaw had assailed the post. In this encounter, the Chickasaw were led by Lieutenant William Whitehead, a member of the British Southern Indian Department, and by James Colbert, a Chickasaw half-breed “Big Man.”

Halfway through the battle, Colbert appeared with a flag of truce and demanded the surrender of the post to prevent additional bloodshed. Captain Leonard Helm, Captain George’s second-in-command, told Colbert the Americans would not surrender. Wheeling to walk away from the parley, Colbert was shot in the back by a Kaskaskia Indian. Fighting recommenced later that evening. At the end of the fourth day of battle, August 30, the Chickasaw retreated, but not before they had destroyed much of the corn crop and had killed many of the settlers’ cattle and sheep. In addition to these losses, several Negro slaves had been shot by the Chickasaw and a number of the militia either were wounded severely or had lost their lives during the battle. Captain John Bailey’s company had been ambushed by the Chickasaw while on a hunting party. Four members of his troop were killed and a fifth had been taken prisoner. Nevertheless, the state of preparedness during early August probably saved many more lives at the post.

September was a depressing time for the inhabitants and soldiers of Fort Jefferson. With much of the corn crop destroyed, there was little, if any, hope for food during the forthcoming months. The few bushels of corn that could be garnered from the devastated fields barely would feed the garrison, let alone the town’s men, women, and children. Fearful of spending a winter with little or no food, 24 of the town’s 40 families moved between September 12 and 14, electing to go down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, up the Mississippi to Kaskaskia, or up the Ohio River to the Falls area. To make matters worse, there also were many desertions.
from Clark’s Illinois Battalion. Although there then were fewer mouths to feed at Fort Jefferson, there also were fewer inhabitants and soldiers to defend the post or to assist with the continued construction of the new town.

September marked the beginning of the “sickly” season, as Captain George called it. An examination of the September vouchers vividly illustrates that many persons, soldiers and civilians alike, became sick with the ague (flu) or began suffering from the effects of malaria. As a result, the garrison and town had fewer people than before and those who remained generally were too ill to move or to desert their posts.

Not all was gloomy, however. On September 6, a load of supplies arrived by boat from New Orleans; part of the cargo included 1,200 pounds of gunpowder. On September 10, a party of Kaskaskia Indian allies was granted permission by Captain George to seek revenge against the Chickasaw for the recent hostilities.

October was not much of an improvement from September. Between the fourth and fifth, four more persons were killed near the fort. Although additional ammunition was issued to the post and town, the Indians never fully showed themselves, keeping just outside the community where they could harass the settlers and soldiers. Sickness continued to prevail as did further desertions.

Physical problems now were accompanied by political intrigue. Lieutenant Colonel John Montgomery arrived with Captain John Williams from Kaskaskia on October 22. Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery wanted Captain George to relinquish his command to Captain Williams. George refused, subsequently writing to Colonel Clark to explain that he would not forego his command unless ordered to do so by Clark. Williams, obviously caught in an awkward situation, also wrote to Clark, stating that he would not take command until he received orders from Clark. Although Montgomery and George did not get along, Montgomery did assist
George in his efforts to save the post. By October 28, Montgomery had left Fort Jefferson for New Orleans to procure additional supplies for the garrison and community. Writing later that day, Captain George observed that Fort Jefferson had been reduced severely by famine, desertion, and death. Now, during near drought conditions, low water in the Mississippi hampered efforts to get supplies to the fort.

Montgomery’s assistance in New Orleans paid off when a shipment of new supplies arrived in November. Even so, soldiers and civilians spent most of their time, when not too ill, making nets in order to seine for fish in the shallows of the Mississippi River. The American frontiersmen experienced a relatively better month during December, 1780. In his letter to George Rogers Clark during the first few days of December, John Donne, the fort’s deputy commissary, reported that militia Major Silas Harlan and other hunters had been successful in bringing more than 8,000 pounds of buffalo, bear, and deer meat into the fort. Unfortunately, there still were more than 150 persons in the garrison, 20 civilian families who had to be fed, and the expectation that several new military companies might arrive any day. Food, although now available, still was in short supply.

On the 12th of December, and again on the 15th, cargo supplies arrived from New Orleans and from the Falls of the Ohio. Both shipments included primarily munitions and dry goods. While these loads contained new shoes, which were welcomed, the newly arrived dry goods would have to be used as barter for food in Kaskaskia and in other Illinois towns. In spite of a bleak outlook, Christmas was greeted by Captain George’s company of artillery by expending 60 pounds of gunpowder in salutes fired from Fort Jefferson’s five swivels and two cannon.

Within a few days another shipment from New Orleans was delivered by Captain Philip Barbour on behalf of Oliver Pollock,
American agent in New Orleans. Barbour, seeing the depressed condition of the fort and civilian community, negotiated the sale of his $25,000 cargo to $237,320. Not wanting to lose the supplies, Captain George conferred with his fellow officers and then agreed to meet Captain Barbour’s demand. The cargo, consisting primarily of dry goods and tafia (watered-down rum), immediately was put to use.

In high spirits, the community and soldiers raised their cups to what appeared to be a bright and shiny new year. Supplies were unloaded, repacked, and sent to Kaskaskia and to the Falls in order to procure foodstuffs for the garrison and civilian community.

Another part of the shipment included munitions. Nearly every member of the garrison, including militia and Indians, received a sword and Clark’s Illinois Battalion officers obtained their new clothing allotments for the year. In addition, the Kaskaskia Indians were granted permission once again to attack the Chickasaw.

January revealed the growing dislike shared by the fort’s officers and civilians for Captain John Dodge, Indian agent and quartermaster for the Illinois Department. Although Dodge would have but a few months left at Fort Jefferson (he spent the first part of the spring at Kaskaskia, then left to settle his books at Richmond), the majority of the inhabitants felt cheated by his dealings and he proved to be a constant source of friction with the officers.

On January 23, 1781, another boatload of supplies was received at Fort Jefferson. A tafia ration (one gill each) for January 30 showed that 110 men remained in the garrison. Captain John Bailey and his company of infantry had departed for O’Post (Vincennes) earlier that month.

February and March of the new year witnessed several activities that would dominate post functions for the next several months. Fort Jefferson became the hub for the distribution of arms, munitions, dry goods, and liquor as military companies arrived
from other Illinois outposts and companies from Fort Jefferson delivered supplies to them. Fort Jefferson finally was becoming Clark’s economic center and military stronghold along the Mississippi.

Fort Jefferson’s prosperity began to erode, however, as quickly as it had been achieved. Although the post then had more dry goods, munitions, and rum (and whiskey) than it possibly could use, its larder still was quite empty in spite of daily hunting parties comprised of soldiers and Indians. No matter how much tafia was consumed (and incredible amounts were), daily meals consisted of little solid food. Grumbling and discontent with the post’s conditions were no longer restricted to whispers among friends. Serious charges were made which only could be settled through courts of inquiry.

During March, courts of inquiry were convened to examine the conduct and character of two of the fort’s newly arrived officers, Captains Edward Worthington and Richard McCarty. Worthington, who had postponed for months his trip from the Falls to Fort Jefferson, was accused of retailing liquor, gambling with the soldiery, and frequently disobeying orders. McCarty, on the other hand, was charged with threatening to leave the service (as well as Virginia) and with insulting a fellow officer. The outcome of Worthington’s court of inquiry is unknown. McCarty was found guilty and a general court-martial was recommended. His chief accuser was John Dodge. McCarty never would suffer the embarrassment of a court-martial, however. Two months later, while en route to the Falls, he was killed by Indians.

Near the end of March, a third court of inquiry was scheduled in the public store at Fort Jefferson. The session examined the conduct of Captain John Rogers, who had been in command at Fort Clark in Kaskaskia. These charges had been brought by Dodge again, but this time the court found them to be without substance and acquitted Rogers.
March was a "happy" month for the majority of the Irish-American officers and soldiers. Their consumption of large quantities of tafia and whiskey truly was amazing, as were their excuses for imbibing the libations. Whether drinking to Saint Patrick's health or death, or maybe even toasting Saint Patrick's wife, Shealy, the Fort Jefferson community members properly celebrated their ethnic customs.

On the other side of the coin, however, there existed discontent and boredom. Lieutenant John Girault, for example, pleaded in a letter to George Rogers Clark that he might be sent on an expedition or otherwise employed usefully somewhere, implying that nothing of consequence was occurring at Fort Jefferson. As tensions relaxed, so did discipline. James Taylor and David Allen were court-martialed on charges of speaking disrespectfully to an officer, beating an officer's servants, and robbing an officer's kitchen. Taylor was acquitted, but Allen was found guilty and received 50 lashes on his bare back.

April brought heavy rains which, in turn, raised water levels dangerously high in nearby Mayfield Creek and the Mississippi River. As a result, by April 25, 1781, many items in the public store had to be removed to higher ground by the fort's soldiers.

Several letters were received in April from General George Rogers Clark. (Clark's promotion from colonel to general had occurred during January, 1781.) The content of those letters is unknown, but as Clark had received permission to plan an assault against Fort Detroit, it is possible that these letters focused on Detroit and that Clark suggested to his officers that they begin preparing for the evacuation of Fort Jefferson.

By the 10th of May, Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery had returned to Fort Jefferson. Shortly after his arrival, increased unhappiness at the post led one of the militia men to attempt a break-in at the fort's public store, forcing Captain George to call
for an inspection of the town.

Evidence of decline was all too apparent. By the first of May, the number of men remaining in the garrison was down to 58. It is evident that the decision to evacuate Fort Jefferson was made prior to June 5, 1781. On that date Captain Abraham Keller’s company left the fort for the Falls area. The remaining soldiers and civilians departed June 8, 1781, the official date of evacuation. Numerous goods, far too cumbersome to remove, were left at the old fort, as were the earthly remains of at least 38 men, women, and children who were buried in the post’s cemetery.

The fort, occupied for only 416 days, had served its function. The fort’s presence, though short-lived, on Virginia’s western boundary (as well as the Virginian military occupations of Kaskaskia and of Vincennes) provided the physical evidence the state needed to justify its claim to its chartered boundaries. On July 12, 1781, tired and exhausted, the Fort Jefferson survivors arrived at General Clark’s new stronghold, Fort Nelson, located at the Falls of the Ohio. Thus ended the saga of George Rogers Clark’s Fort Jefferson.
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Figure 1: Eighteenth century settlements and forts of the lower Ohio Valley (illustrated by Richard Mjos).
Figure 2: A redrafted version of the 1780 William Clark map of Fort Jefferson and the town of Clarksville (illustrated by Richard Mjos).
Selected Papers from the Ninth and Tenth George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences
Daniel Sullivan, Frontiersman and Adventurer

Richard Day

Old French House, Vincennes

During the 30-year period between the end of the French and Indian War in 1763 and the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, the trans-Appalachian frontier produced a new and distinctive American type: the frontiersman. Self-reliant, aggressive, and indomitable, with an insatiable hunger for land, an unruly contempt for authority, and an implacable hatred of the Indian, the frontiersman was the cutting edge with which the new American republic carved out a western empire. The exploits of Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, George Rogers Clark, and others have been celebrated in story, song, and history. Daniel Sullivan also was a pioneer leader. Although a county in southwestern Indiana was named for him, his feats are not well-known. But throughout his life, Daniel Sullivan was considered a frontier leader.¹

Daniel Sullivan was born about 1754 or 1755, probably in the Valley of Virginia.² As the family name indicates, the Sullivans presumably originated from Ulster in northern Ireland, part of the great migration of Scotch-Irish who, between 1717 and the American Revolution, sent a quarter of a million Ulstermen to settle in the colonies. For the newly arrived immigrants the only land cheap enough was located on the frontier. Beginning in the 1740s, the Valley of Virginia was settled by a heterogeneous mixture of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, German Lutherans, and English dissenters, with lesser numbers of Huguenots and Welsh. Most came by way of the backcountry of Pennsylvania, crossing the Potomac River and settling along the Susquehanna River and the South Branch of the Potomac. The Valley was a 200-mile trough running north to south between the main Appalachian range on the west and the Blue
Ridge Mountains on the east. The Great War Road between the Cherokee and the Iroquois ran through it and, after decades of warfare, it was unoccupied by Indians. The Blue Ridge Mountains shut off the Valley from Virginia and the people essentially were on their own. During the French and Indian War, raiding parties of Delaware and Shawnee infiltrated over the Allegheny Mountains and the people of the Valley learned to form themselves into militia units for their own defense. The Valley has been described by historian Dale Van Every as “a nearly perfect school for frontiersmen” in the art of self-reliance. It was there, on the South Branch of the Potomac River, that Daniel Sullivan grew up, along with his older brother, James, and his sister, Sarah.

During the summer of 1763, the Western Indians, under the leadership of Pontiac, attempted to drive the English from the trans-Appalachian region. Raiding parties of Delaware descended upon the Valley of Virginia. During one of these raids, nine-year-old Daniel Sullivan was taken prisoner, along with a boy named Cunningham. The boys were taken to the land of the Delaware along the Muskingum River, about 140 miles away. After a day’s rest, following the Indian custom with prisoners, the boys were made to run the gauntlet between two rows of young Indians armed with hickory switches. Amid loud howls and yells, the Cunningham boy set off running and received a hail of blows before he reached his goal. Sullivan, however, when he was hit by the first switch, turned upon his tormentor and, with a blow to the face, knocked him down and jumped upon him. The Indians appreciated this show of spunk and looked on admiringly while Sullivan fought his foe.

Sullivan and the Cunningham boy were adopted into the tribe. The usual ritual consisted of pulling out all the hair except a topknot, piercing the ears and sometimes the nose for jewelry, and stripping off the white man’s clothes. Often the adoptee would be
scrubbed ritually in a stream to “wash away his white blood.” Then dressed in Indian garments consisting of a breechcloth, moccasins, and a shirt, and suitably adorned and painted, he would be received into the tribe.

Indian life had its charms for young boys. Planting and hoeing were scorned as “squaw’s work.” A young man could go hunting or fishing, or, even, if he wished, could lie idle in camp without fear of scolding by any woman. For nine years Daniel Sullivan lived among the Delaware, learning their language and their ways.

Meanwhile at home, things were changing. In 1768, at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the Iroquois ceded their claim to the lands south of the Ohio. A breach had been made in the Royal Proclamation Line of 1763, which had been intended to confine the colonists to the east of the Appalachians. Now, large numbers of settlers began crossing over the mountains. Many were from the Valley of Virginia: from the north end of the Valley it was 140 miles by Braddock’s Road to Pittsburgh. In 1769 Daniel Sullivan’s brother, James, settled west of the Monongahela River near Pittsburgh. About that time, Daniel’s sister, Sarah, married Zadock Wright and settled approximately 10 miles downriver from Pittsburgh.

It was to Pittsburgh that several Delaware came on a trading expedition in 1772. They were accompanied by the two boys – Sullivan and Cunningham. Despite their Indian garb, the boys were recognized. Zadock Wright, Sullivan’s brother-in-law, entered into negotiations to free them. Cunningham soon was released, but Sullivan was regarded highly by the tribe, and it took a horse, a packsaddle, a half-dozen hatchets, three red blankets, and a gallon of whiskey to win his freedom. But Sullivan, with a shake of his head, refused to leave his Indian family unless he had a beaver hat, such as the white men wore. Wright purchased a cheap wool hat, but Sullivan rejected it as not good enough, with the scornful
comment, "ram beaver." It only was after Wright bought him the more expensive beaver hat that Sullivan at last agreed to become a white man again.

Sullivan went back east to live with this family. But his Indian ways were ingrained too deeply and he didn't fit in with these people. He refused to work on the farm, calling those who did so "squaws," while he preferred to go hunting and fishing. After about a year of chafing under the restraints of civilization, one Sunday Sullivan appeared in church dressed in Indian costume, "bedecked with feathers and adorned with paint, thoroughly armed and equipped." Before the congregation could recover from its amazement, Sullivan shrieked a deafening war whoop and ran into the woods.

Returning to Fort Pitt, Sullivan supported himself as a hunter. However, the influx of settlers into the region around Fort Pitt generated friction with the Indians, friction which escalated and finally broke out into Lord Dunmore's War in 1774. Sullivan enlisted as a guide with Major John Connolly's company of Virginia militia. His brother-in-law, Zadock Wright, was a lieutenant in this company, as was Simon Girty, who later was to become a notorious renegade. Simon Kenton, hiding under the alias of Simon Butler, also was in the company.

The 1774 victory of the Virginia militia at the Battle of Point Pleasant provided the frontier with a two-year respite from Indian warfare, but with the outbreak of the American Revolution, Sullivan again became a scout for Virginia. In November, 1776, Sullivan and another man were patrolling near Fort Randolph, at the mouth of the Kanawha River, when they encountered some hostile Indians who were not more than eight yards away. Sullivan was just jerking his gun to his shoulder when one of the Indians fired at him, hitting the patch box of his gun, exactly opposite his chest, and the fragments grazed his arm in two or three places. The two scouts
returned fire, mortally wounding an Indian, who, it later was discovered, was the brother-in-law of Pluggy’s Son, an important chief.\textsuperscript{14}

A few months later, in February and again in April of 1777, Sullivan, dressed as an Indian, was sent from Fort Pitt in order to spy throughout the Indian country.\textsuperscript{15} At Cuyahoga, near the site of modern-day Cleveland, he found the Delaware disposed for peace with the United States. There he hired himself out as a boatman to a Detroit-bound trader and on April 27, 1777, he arrived at Detroit, the headquarters of the British war effort in the West. After being questioned by Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton, Sullivan was allowed to stay with the governor’s Indian interpreter, William Tucker, whose wife originally was from the Valley of Virginia and who had lived with Sullivan’s sister. Mrs. Tucker informed Sullivan that “Governor Hamilton did all in his power to induce all Nations of Indians to massacre the Frontier Inhabitants of Pennsylvania and Virginia and paid very high prices in Goods for the scalps the Indians brought in.”\textsuperscript{16} It was reports similar to this that won Hamilton the epithet, “the Hair Buyer,” among frontiersmen. Unfortunately for Sullivan, it would be a year before he could report this intelligence. As he was strolling the next day about the fort and about the town, he was recognized by Pluggy’s Son, the brother-in-law of the Indian Sullivan had killed six months before. Pluggy’s Son denounced Sullivan to Hamilton. As proof the Indian pointed out the wound Sullivan had received in his left arm from the shattered patch box. Governor Hamilton promptly clapped Sullivan in irons and sent him to Quebec. After spending several months in captivity, Sullivan was paroled at New York on December 22, 1777, and did not return to Fort Pitt to make his report until March 20, 1778.

Upon his return, Sullivan found the Indian Department at Fort Pitt in chaos. Since 1776, the Indian agent at Fort Pitt, George
Morgan, had attempted to keep the powerful Shawnee and Delaware tribes friendly to the patriot cause – or at least to keep them neutral.17 This was made difficult by Indian attacks on frontier settlements. The frontiersmen, who rarely distinguished between friendly and unfriendly Indians, demanded retaliation. Morgan’s counsels of forbearance were interpreted as evidence of pacifism – or even as pro-British sympathies. During October, 1777, Morgan had been confined to his house pending a Congressional investigation. Although acquitted in March, 1778, that same month Morgan suffered yet another blow with the defection from Pittsburgh to Detroit of the influential Tory fur traders, Alexander McKee, Matthew Elliott, and Simon Girty, who promptly set about persuading the Shawnee to join the British cause.18

Morgan consoled himself with the thought that he still could depend upon the Delaware. But during Morgan’s absence, three Delaware chiefs entered into a treaty on September 19, 1778, at Fort Pitt. This treaty not only permitted the Americans to build a fort in Delaware territory and to march across Delaware lands, but it even committed the Delaware to fight on the side of the Americans and against the other Indians. This was a reversal of Morgan’s policy of keeping the Indians neutral and, when the Delaware discovered its implications, approximately 200 went to the English side.19 In spite of his having signed this treaty, Delaware Chief White Eyes subsequently was murdered by frontier militia while accompanying them on an expedition.20 Sullivan was put in charge of the chief’s effects.21 Upon Morgan’s return to Fort Pitt, January 5, 1779, he sent Sullivan to the Delaware camp at Coshocton to console them on the loss of their chief and to denounce the treaty as the work of a “wicked, false interpreter.” Morgan recommended Sullivan as an interpreter and invited the Delaware chiefs to visit with and to protest to Congress at Philadelphia.

The Delaware were impressed with Sullivan as “a sober, honest
man” and gave him an Indian name, Po-pe-may-toohah, or Popemetoughwe.23 Because he urged the Delaware to repudiate the treaty, Sullivan angered Fort Pitt’s military men who had negotiated the treaty. On April 7, 1779, Sullivan was arrested and was confined at Pittsburgh for “Obstructing The Commanding Officer...and endeavouring to make the Delaware Indians break the last treaty of peace....”24 Sullivan somehow was freed and was sent to accompany the delegation of the principal chiefs on its visit to Congress and to General George Washington at Princeton, N.J.

The result was the Princeton Treaty of May 10, 1779, which reaffirmed the policy of keeping the Delaware neutral.25 Soon afterwards, Morgan unfortunately was accused of land speculation and was forced to resign. It is true that Morgan seemed to have had one eye on Indian friendship and the other on Indian land, but it also is true that if his policy had been followed, the Delaware might have remained neutral for the duration of the war.26

In 1780, Sullivan and his brother, James, moved to the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville) and near there they established Sullivan’s Station. The brothers were involved heavily in land speculation. Daniel eventually was to claim more than 11,000 acres.27 Land speculation sometimes could be frantic. In March, 1782, Daniel Sullivan complained to the Jefferson County Court that Deputy Land Agent John Carr had bitten off the lower part of his (Sullivan’s) right ear during a fight.28 About this time Sullivan married Susan de la Fere. On February 6, 1782, was born their son, also named Daniel, who later would conduct some of the first land surveys in Indiana.29

During the summer of 1782, the Sullivan brothers built for General George Rogers Clark the first of what was intended to be a fleet of gunboats to patrol the Ohio against Indian attack.30 The gunboat, “Miami,” had ropes of pawpaw for lack of hemp, and had high gunwales to deflect gunfire. It was equipped with three small
cannon and a crew of 110 marines and militia. It began patrolling in July, 1782. Although ineffective in stopping Indian raids because of its slowness, it sparked rumors of Clark’s intention to invade the Indian country, thus tying up hostile warriors in defensive preparations, rather than in attacking settlements.  

Daniel Sullivan also was employed as an “express” in the dangerous occupation of carrying messages between military outposts. On September 9, 1782, Sullivan and Colonel John Floyd set out in a canoe from Fort Pitt to convey messages and a load of 50 three-pound cannonballs to General Clark at Louisville. On their way down the Ohio at approximately sunset on September 11, they had the misfortune of passing by Wheeling, just as Fort Henry was attacked by a force of 40 British rangers and 250 Indians. Floyd and Sullivan managed to scramble up the steep bank to the fort, but Sullivan was wounded in the heel. According to a pioneer story, which may be a legend, the Indians decided to use the captured cannonballs to knock down the fort’s walls. They took a hollow log to serve as a cannon, wrapped chains around it, loaded it with gunpowder and a ball, and applied a lit match. With a tremendous roar the log burst into slivers killing or wounding several of the attackers.

It was during this siege that a famous frontier incident occurred — although it also may be a legend. The defense of the fort was being conducted by the Zane family, led by Ebenezer Zane. When the defenders were running low on gunpowder, young Elizabeth Zane volunteered to divest herself of her outer garments to run to a nearby cabin to get more powder. As she burst out of the fort gate, the startled Indians, amazed at her intrepidity, could only exclaim, “a squaw! a squaw!” On her return run, bullets whizzed about her, but missed. After making three unsuccessful assaults the first night and one the second night, on the third night the British and Indians withdrew. Sullivan was nursed back to health by Mrs.
Zane and two months later again was carrying messages, this time alone.\textsuperscript{36}

With the war ended, in 1785 Daniel Sullivan joined in an immigration of settlers to Vincennes, where it was believed that each settler could get 400 acres merely for the cost of filing.\textsuperscript{37} The settlers originally established a station on the River Deshee, about three miles south of Vincennes, but soon the tense Indian situation forced them to take refuge on the prairie next to town. Daniel Sullivan in 1786 established a station and a sawmill on a small creek north of Vincennes at a place called La Chipaille.

Some Indians began ambushing boats coming up the Wabash River.\textsuperscript{38} After one such ambush, the Vincennes militia under the leadership of Colonel John Small, Colonel Moses Henry, and Colonel Daniel Sullivan decided to retaliate. The result was the “Battle of the Embarras River” fought between the militia and a group of Piankashaw Indians. The encounter occurred three miles east of town on April 15, 1786. The Americans had the worst of it with several killed and a few wounded. The Indians, angry and upset, left their village next to Vincennes and went upriver to their main village near the mouth of the Vermillion River for reinforcements. The Americans withdrew to their fort on the prairie near Vincennes. In July, approximately 400 Piankashaw warriors came to Vincennes determined to kill the Americans.

The French inhabitants met the Indians at “the little rock” (le Petit Rocher) three miles up the river from Vincennes and, with the generous use of gifts and rum, persuaded the warriors to give up the attack. Alarmed, the Americans wrote to Kentucky for help. In September George Rogers Clark led the Kentucky militia to Vincennes and then set off to attack the Indian villages on the upper Wabash River. But, before Clark could reach the Indian villages, part of the army mutinied and headed back to Kentucky.\textsuperscript{39} With the remainder of his army, Clark occupied Vincennes, but his
reputation as a leader was damaged seriously. The following year the U.S. Army established Fort Knox at Vincennes, thus stabilizing the situation. Sullivan again went back to carrying express messages — now from Vincennes to Louisville — which he combined with business, to which a 1789 contract bore witness. In it, Sullivan took $1,100 from Pierre Le Ferre to purchase tobacco, flour, and pork at Louisville and to transport them to New Orleans. An unusual feature of the contract was the provision that if he “has the misfortune of being killed by the Indians,” his heirs and executors would only be obliged to repay half the money. The provision was significant in light of the fact that for more than a year, raiding parties of Indians had been attacking settlers along the Ohio with increasing frequency.

What had been anticipated finally came to pass in April, 1790, along the Buffalo Trace about 67 miles from Vincennes. Daniel Sullivan and Jacob Tevebaugh, Jr., were attacked and were killed by Indians. The place where this battle occurred was known later as Sullivan’s Spring. Accounts of the battle vary, although all agree that Sullivan fought bravely. One old settler recalled that Sullivan was “shot to pieces.” Another claimed that Sullivan “becoming desperately wounded, and his entrails falling out and in his way, he tore them off, and continued to fight until he fell and expired. The Indians after this considered him something more than a man.” A third account said that the Indians tried to capture Sullivan alive, but he held them at bay by swinging the barrel of his broken rifle like a club until finally they shot him.

After his death, the Indians cut out Sullivan’s heart and ate it in order to partake of his courage. According to one family history, they then carved a wooden heart, which was inserted into Sullivan’s body. The wooden heart was kept in the family for a long time. Its last known owner died during 1920 in Florissant, Mo. What became of this curious artifact? Was it passed down to heirs? Was it sold?
at an auction of the estate? Does it now rest in a shoe box tucked away, unknown and unrecognized, in a closet? Or does it even yet hold a place of honor upon a mantelpiece where it may remain as a unique token of the desperate courage and indomitable enterprise of Daniel Sullivan?
NOTES

1. Besides Indiana, five other states have counties named Sullivan: Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. Most, if not all, of the other counties are named for General John Sullivan, who served during the American Revolution. Sullivan County, Ind., was established January 15, 1817. History of Greene and Sullivan Counties, State of Indiana (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishers, 1884), pp. 478-480. According to The Indiana Gazetteer of 1850, the county was “named in honor of Daniel Sullivan, who was killed by the Indians on the road from Vincennes to Louisville, while carrying an express, in the public service, between those places.” Quoted in Audrey F. Cox, The Carlisle, Indiana Sesquicentennial Historical Book and Souvenir Program (n. pub., 1965), p. 32.

2. Daniel Sullivan’s birth date is deduced from two sources. In his deposition of March 20, 1778, given in Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., Frontier Defense on the Upper Ohio, 1777-1778, Draper Series III (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1912), p. 231, Sullivan stated that he was taken prisoner by the Delaware “when young,” and nine years later, “in 1772 or 3” he returned to live with his relatives in Virginia. This would make the date of his capture in 1763 or 1764. A near relative of Sullivan, Isaac Kuykendall, gives additional information in Samuel Kercheval, A History of the Valley of Virginia, originally published in 1833, revised edition 1850, reprinted as 4th ed. (Strasburg, Va.: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1925), p. 96. “About the year 1756, Daniel Sullivan, at nine years of age, was taken prisoner by the Indians, with whom he remained nine years.” Assuming that Kuykendall was wrong about the year, but right about Sullivan’s age at the time of his capture, Sullivan was born about 1754 or 1755. Gibson Lamb Cranmer, History of Wheeling City and Ohio County, West Virginia (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1902), p. 129. Cranmer agrees that Sullivan was nine when he was captured, but says that Sullivan was born in 1758 at Pittsburgh. That site seems unlikely in view of the fact that it was a French outpost until November 25, 1758. See Charles Frederick Post, “Two Journals of Western Tours,” in Early Western Travels 1748-1846, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites (New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 259.


4. According to a typewritten Sullivan family genealogy (in Vincennes University’s Byron R. Lewis Historical Library Genealogical Collection, Box 11, Folder 15) by French Rayburn Deane, It Must Be Wonderful to Have Ancestors, (August, 1970), p. 1, Sullivan’s father also was named Daniel Sullivan, of Jefferson County, Va. This was during 1743. There was a Daniel Sullivan at Suffolk in Nansemond County, Va., during 1744 according to Michael O. O’Brien, Irish Settlers in America, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1979), II, 129. It is unclear what the relationship of the preceding Daniel
Sullivan could have been with Daniel Sullivan who enrolled during July, 1757, in the 7th Company, Virginia Regiment, commanded by Captain Joshua Lewis. This Daniel Sullivan was age 27, stood five feet seven and one half inches tall, and was a seaman by trade from Ireland. He was described as having a swarthy complexion and sandy hair. Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck, *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1988), p. 94. Besides Daniel, the subject of this paper, there were two other siblings, a brother, James, born in 1748, and a sister, Sarah.


9. Deane, pp. 2-3, gives the name of "Zodiac" Wright. A person named "Zeddic" Wright was on the south branch of the Potomac during 1755, and Zadock Wright was a sergeant in a Virginia ranging company during 1764 and was a lieutenant under the command of Lord Dunmore in 1774. Bockstruck, pp. 53, 148, and 265; Cranmer, p. 130.


11. Ibid., p. 131.


16. Ibid., pp. 231-32.


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22. Ibid., pp. 193-194.
23. Ibid., pp. 202-203.
24. Ibid., p. 277.

29. Deane, p. 3.
32. Draper MSS., 52 J 43, 52 J 46.
35. Ibid., pp. 358-359.
36. Crammer, p. 132.
38. Ibid.
40. Files 89 and 193, Knox County Court Records, Knox County, Ind., Records Library, Vincennes, Ind.
42. John D. Shane interview with Joshua McQueen in 1842, Draper MSS., 13 CC 121.
43. Isaac Kuykendall in Kercheval, p. 96.
44. Cranmer, pp. 132-134.
45. Deane, pp. 1 and 9.
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The Great Revival in Kentucky

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When historians address the question of the trans-Appalachian frontier's influence upon the mainstream of American history, they often begin their discussion with the Jacksonian Period of the late 1820s and 1830s. Historians quite naturally conjure up images of backwoodsmen such as Andrew Jackson, Davy Crockett, and Sam Houston as frontier politicians who changed the course of national politics. Or they focus on structural changes in American politics such as universal manhood suffrage and stump campaigning which arose in the West, but soon became the norm of the nation, culminating in William Henry Harrison's "Log Cabin and Hard Cider Campaign" of 1840. Perhaps in politics the real influence of the trans-Appalachian frontier did not arise until the late 1820s. But in other cultural and social areas, and especially in religion, events and trends which emerged in the trans-Appalachian region profoundly affected mainstream American history some 25 years before Jacksonian Democracy emerged. The crucible for these events during the early 19th century was a frontier phenomenon known as the Great Revival.

The Great Revival as a movement sometimes has been difficult to define. It had no exact beginning or ending dates. Some historians have seen its beginnings as early as the late 1780s, but most have agreed that it burned hottest between 1800 and 1807.1 The revival eventually spread to most of the settled Southeast and into the southern Northwest, but it had Kentucky as its epicenter. American historians traditionally have pictured the Great Revival as a function of the frontier, a radical shift, an innovation, and a clear break with past religious norms.2 Recent scholarship, however, has revealed

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that much about the Great Revival, at least in its origins, was not radical, innovative, or frontier-generated. This new angle on the Great Revival can be seen most clearly in the person and experiences of James McGready, often designated in American historiography as the Father of the Great Revival and as the creator of the camp meeting.

Most historians point to the meetings in James McGready’s three churches in Logan County, Ky., during the summer of 1800 as the beginning point of the Great Revival. McGready had sought and had worked for revival in his churches for three years. McGready had grown up in North Carolina and Pennsylvania in evangelical Presbyterian churches and had been educated heavily in the evangelical Calvinism of Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism and in the tradition of Scotch-Irish revivalism which dated to the 1620s. McGready patterned and understood revivalism along Presbyterian, Calvinistic lines and hoped to recreate the Presbyterian revivalism of Gilbert Tennent and the Great Awakening throughout Pennsylvania during the 1730s and 1740s. The camp meetings that McGready and others employed during the Great Revival essentially were frontier versions of Scotch-Irish “sacramental occasions” which had reappeared continually in southwestern Scotland and in Ulster from at least the 1620s.

Although McGready sometimes preached at camp meetings with Arminians, his own theology remained completely Calvinistic and his sermons remained traditional in format and organization. Even the religious exercises (barking, falling, jerking, and laughing, among others – for which the Great Revival is perhaps best known) were not completely new. McGready’s mentor remarked that the exercises of the Great Revival were different from those he had seen in previous revivals only in intensity and variety. As late as 1804 the Great Revival was Calvinistic enough, orderly enough, and traditional enough that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian
Church in the United States could proclaim from Philadelphia that the western revival was a clear "dispensation of the grace of God."7 Within two years the General Assembly completely changed its opinion of the Great Revival, not because of events between 1800 and 1804, but because of events which occurred throughout Kentucky between 1804 and 1807.

The years after 1804 introduced two new components into the equation. First, by 1804 the exercises and camp meetings were no longer Presbyterian possessions. The Baptists and Methodists had appropriated McGready’s revival and were beginning to expand their denominational power and numbers throughout the West and the South. By 1806 it was clear that these two denominations – not Presbyterians – would be the primary beneficiaries of the Revival. That could not have pleased eastern Calvinists who shuddered at the thought of the rapid growth of these Arminian denominations. There may well have been a political component to their objections as well. Many eastern Calvinists aligned themselves with the Federalist Party, whereas the southern and western Baptists and Methodists tended to support Jeffersonian Republicans. The ecumenicalism of the Great Revival, therefore, proved to be one of its undoings in the Presbyterian Church.

The second ingredient – doctrinal heterodoxy and schism – proved to be even more explosive within the Presbyterian Church. Division came twice to Kentucky Presbyterians between 1804 and 1807, disrupting the unity of the church and discrediting the revival within the Presbyterian Church. The first eruption centered in the Washington Presbytery of eastern Kentucky and soon became known as the New Light Schism. By 1804, several Washington pastors such as Barton W. Stone and Richard McNemar had become disaffected with Calvinism and Presbyterianism and had led a group of churches first into an independent presbytery and eventually into a new denomination called the Christian Church, a revivalistic,
Arminian, and antihierarchical church. Some of these New Lights, led by McNemar, eventually headed into the Shaker Church, a move which was an even more radical departure from Presbyterianism.

The second division in Kentucky Presbyterianism emerged in McGready's own Cumberland Presbytery by 1805. For a variety of reasons, some theological, some hierarchical, and some personal, the Cumberland Presbytery bitterly split between 1805 and 1807. Many of McGready's revivalist friends were defrocked, the synod of Kentucky dissolved the presbytery and reabsorbed it into the Transylvania Presbytery, and McGready's opponents in the presbytery conducted a smear campaign against him, unjustly charging him with financial fraud in a personal matter. The Cumberland feud was so ugly that by 1807 McGready was forced to vacate his home in Russellville for the more remote, but more peaceful town of Henderson, Ky., on the Ohio River. McGready submitted to the actions of the synod, but several others, headed by Finis Ewing, refused submission and continually appealed to the General Assembly for relief between 1807 and 1810. The General Assembly responded harshly to this group, telling them that their own actions were the "origin of the evils" about which they complained, expressing sorrow that such a "spirit of fanaticism, propagating the most palpable errors" had appeared in the Kentucky Synod, and warning of "dangerous consequences" if they did not submit. Spurned by the General Assembly, this small group likewise formed a new denomination in 1810 – the Cumberland Presbyterian Church – which was both revivalistic and Arminian.

These two dramatic schisms severely colored the attitude of the Presbyterian General Assembly. The year after the assembly had referred to the Revival as a "dispensation of the grace of God," the Committee on Missions adopted a somewhat less enthusiastic report. It acknowledged many conversions and powerful preaching, but
noted that "in some instances" the Revival had "proceeded to such lengths as greatly tended to impede the progress, and to tarnish the glory" of the Revival. Arguing that "God is a God of order and not confusion," the assembly lamented the "irregular and disorderly" camp meetings and rejoiced that they seemed to be subsiding and that the "minds of the people are reverting to more rational and scriptural views and exercises." By 1806 the assembly was only willing to express its thanks for the conversions of the Revival, while warning that Satan had incited many "to the most absurd and extravagant outrages upon christian sobriety and decorum." It cautioned ministers in Kentucky to stick to the "unerring guidance of God's written word" or they undoubtedly would fall victim to "ignorance, superstition, and fanaticism." The effects of the Presbyterian Church's rejection of the Great Revival would be profound by 1807.

The first result of this particular rejection of revivalism was a generally more suspicious attitude by eastern Calvinists of revivals and revivalism in general. Indeed, during the next few decades the Presbyterian Church essentially left the revival-fostering business and instead turned to organized missionaries as its chief evangelistic tool in the trans-Appalachian frontier. These missionaries normally were eastern in origin, highly educated, and theologically orthodox. They also met with much less evangelistic success than had Presbyterian revivalists such as McGready. That is not to say that Calvinistic revivalism immediately died or that it even quickly succumbed after 1807. McGready and other Presbyterian revivalists continued their work in the West for decades to come and sacramental occasions continued to dot that area. McGready conducted several sacramental occasions in and around Vincennes during the 1810s. As a rule, however, the Presbyterian Church increasingly relied upon missionaries while the Baptists and Methodists relied upon revivalists for evangelistic expansion
throughout the frontier. Most everyone is familiar with the oft-described rejection of Calvinism by American revivalists; but fewer are familiar with the equally potent rejection of revivalism by American Calvinists.

As a result of these dual rejections caused by (or at least accelerated by) the events throughout Kentucky between 1800 and 1807, the denominational map in the West was altered remarkably by 1820. During the 1790s, to the extent that any denomination dominated expansion into the trans-Appalachian frontier, the Presbyterians held sway. By 1820 the Baptists and Methodists had outstripped them in numbers and in influence and would continue to grow faster than Presbyterianism for many more decades. In Indiana during 1812, for instance, only one Presbyterian church existed in a territory of 24,000 persons, while the Baptists had established 29 congregations, the Methodists had 1,210 members, and the New Lights possessed six congregations. Three years later, after numerous missionary visits, the Presbyterians still only had four congregations, despite Indiana’s growth to 70,000 people. All three denominations rapidly grew during this time, but the Arminian Baptists and Methodists advanced much faster that their Calvinistic brethren.

Simultaneously, orthodox Presbyterianism moved during this time from being an insurgent religion to becoming an establishment religion. During the 18th century, Presbyterians had been members of a frontier denomination and a denomination of the common person. Partly because of its rejection of revivalism during the early 19th century, it increasingly came to be viewed as (and viewed itself as) a member of the religious establishment. It increasingly became urbanized and as it did so, it lost its grip on the mostly rural frontier. Eastern missionaries made moderate successes in western urban settings, but generally could not compete with revivalists in more rural settings. As with the rejection of revivalism, the net effect of
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these changes was a decrease in the relative denominational strength of the Presbyterian Church throughout the West by the late 1820s.

These occurrences provide valuable insights about the relationship of the trans-Appalachian frontier and the Eastern Seaboard in the early 19th century. This turn of events should, therefore, draw the attention of historians of Early National America working outside the fields of religious or ecclesiastical history. It is indeed a case study of how actions in the West affected decisions in the East which then caused significant changes back in the West. To a significant degree, the events in Kentucky between 1800 and 1810 caused the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, based in Philadelphia and dominated by eastern concerns, to withdraw its support and encouragement for revivalism as an evangelistic tool. Instead the assembly increasingly turned to institutionalized mission and tract work to spread the gospel. Those dual decisions helped accelerate Presbyterianism’s decline as the dominant denomination in the trans-Appalachian West.

Certainly there were other forces at work to assist this decline – chiefly the rise of democratic, antiauthoritarian sentiment that historians generally have associated with Thomas Jefferson and later with Andrew Jackson. But the course of action chosen by the Presbyterian Church between 1800 and 1820 accentuated rather than attenuated its problems on the frontier. The historical irony is that the early success in McGready’s revival meetings eventually led (because of the schisms which soon flowed from them) not to Presbyterianism’s triumph, but to its decline in the West. As for the West itself, it rapidly grew into an agricultural powerhouse (North and South) and by the 1830s began to change the way American economics and politics worked. As indicated by this case study, however, trans-Appalachian influence on the course of American history began more than two decades before Andrew Jackson’s “boys” finally occupied the White House.
NOTES


11. Mary Aline Polk, Helen Polk, and Mary R. Hribal, eds., Minutes of the Session of Indiana and Upper Indiana Presbyterian Churches, 1812-1873 (typescript, Vincennes University, 1965), pp. 2-3.

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William Henry Harrison: Master of Grouseland

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In 1800, William Henry Harrison; his wife, Anna; and their three children, ages four, two, and the baby who was less than three months old, made their tortuous way west from Richmond, Va. At the polls that fall, Thomas Jefferson had won the presidency. Harrison’s brother, Carter, was a Jefferson elector in Prince George County, Va. But as the newly appointed governor of the Indiana Territory, William Henry Harrison had taken no part in the contest. No doubt he considered himself fortunate to be in transit from one miserable out-of-the-way tavern to the next where his allegiance to his presidential benefactor, John Adams, might be less subject to public scrutiny. Certainly he made no explicit declaration on behalf of the president who had appointed him. That autumn, President Adams had the thankless job of moving a lame duck government from Philadelphia to the Potomac — “a wilderness,” First Lady Abigail Adams said — but nowhere near as wild as the young governor’s destination: the territorial capital of Indiana.¹

At Pittsburgh on November 2, 1800, Harrison hired a Kentucky boat from Major Isaac Craig. The major’s receipt described a boat “forty five feet long, fitted up with three rooms, two chimneys, two windows...a Necessary, a tarred cloth over...two rooms...together with Oars, Pump,” 20-pound cable, “one Batteau and one Tent.” Once afloat in one of the covered rooms, a fastidious traveler of the early 1800s might declare such accommodations to be quite cozy. Some travelers even testified to the quality of Ohio River drinking water.²

By November 28, 1800, the Harrisons had floated to Cincinnati where they disembarked to renew old friendships and to assemble
what they needed for life in Indiana. The governor abandoned a plan to visit the Ohio Legislature which then was assembled in Chillicothe, the new capital of the Ohio Territory. His resignation as territorial delegate was announced to the legislature and nothing occurred to enhance his hope that some contingency might keep him from assuming, what he described as, his “new dignity.” Before venturing westward to Vincennes, he deposited his family with Anna’s brother-in-law and sister, Judge and Mrs. Peyton Short, at the latter’s estate, Greenfield, near Lexington, Ky. In this bucolic setting, he remained for the Christmas season. Although paid as territorial governor since July 4, Harrison demonstrated no urgency to assume his new responsibilities. Governor Arthur St. Clair had established a fixed policy of gubernatorial absenteeism.  

Sometime after January 1, 1801, however, Harrison set out for Vincennes traveling, no doubt, by way of the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville) and Clark’s Trace, an old buffalo trail leading from the Falls to the Wabash River – a long trek through a wilderness. At Vincennes the new governor found approximately 700 people classified by the census of 1800 as being 373 white males, 317 white females, eight slaves, and “16 free persons except Indians, not taxed.” In the neighborhood of Vincennes the census reported another 819 persons, including 15 slaves; but from the Wabash to the Mississippi there was not a single house. The postmaster general hoped to establish a mail route from the Wabash River through the wilderness to Cahokia on the Mississippi River. But no one seemed willing to hazard a weekly trip across the prairie. Not until 1807 did the government propose building a road in the direction of St. Louis.

When a noted French author, C. F. Volney, visited Vincennes in 1796, he found no school and in the French community he reported that “of nine French people scarcely six could read or write.” Ignorant, but splendid, isolation had not contributed to the
attractiveness of the townspeople. Although, as Timothy Flint observed, Vincennes was one of the oldest places “in the western world,” it had not acquired many of the hallmarks of civilization. Government agencies were remote or inaccessible and women were nonexistent. Higher courts seldom met – only when judges found their way through the woods from Cincinnati. Neighboring Piankashaw, Wea, and Eel River Indians, debauched by contacts with whites, reveled in “all the freaks of vulgar drunkenness” during their periodic visits to trade in town.5

Greeting the new governor upon his arrival was John Gibson, the territorial secretary, who had been acting governor since July. Born in Lancaster, Penn., during 1740, Gibson had helped to seize French Fort Duquesne as a member of Forbes’ 1758 expedition. Settling in Pittsburgh as an Indian trader, he ventured into hostile territory on a trading mission during Pontiac’s uprising and was captured. According to tradition, he was saved from death “Pocahontas fashion.” He remained in captivity using the name of “Horse-head” long enough to acquire a useful command of Native American dialects. Later, Gibson became a lieutenant colonel in George Washington’s army and returned to Pittsburgh after the Revolution to become a judge of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, a major general of the Pennsylvania militia, and a supporter of the federal government during the Whiskey Rebellion. Impressed by this devotion to federalism, as well as by his obvious suitability for a frontier assignment, President Adams appointed Gibson territorial secretary of Indiana.6 Then in his dual role as acting governor, Gibson had begun organizing the new territorial government that had come into being on July 4, 1800.

The Ordinance of 1787 gave governors awesome powers. Lew Wallace, in his writings about Harrison’s grandson, called such powers “more nearly imperial than any ever exercised by one man in the Republic.” As an imperial 27-year-old, Harrison had authority
to appoint territorial and county officials, to commission militia officers, and to set county and township boundaries. Once on the scene in Vincennes, he promptly started building a political organization described as “the Virginia aristocrats,” a term some inhabitants considered derogatory. Harrison’s tenure began with an inaugural ceremony on January 10, 1801. He administered the oath of office to William Clarke, the chief judge, who then performed the same service for him. Harrison completed the ceremony by swearing in Judge John Griffin and Judge Henry Vanderburgh, both of whom had an intimate knowledge of frontier conditions. Formalities thus concluded, the governor issued a call for the first session of the Territorial Legislature on January 12, only two days after the inaugural. This matter was arranged quite easily since it involved only those who had been installed.\(^7\)

The three judges and the governor met in legislative session for less than a month, passing seven laws and three resolutions before adjourning. The fact that it was assumed that all existing laws of the Northwest Territory remained in force greatly simplified the legislative members’ work. They only needed to supplement established legislation. To curb reckless experimentation, Congress had limited territorial legislatures to passing only those regulations already in force throughout the several states. During this period, Harrison and the judges took almost all the laws from those of southern states. Of most importance during this first session was the need to provide for a more adequate judicial system, a deficiency that had helped to bring the new territory into being.\(^8\)

When the session concluded January 26, 1801, Harrison made political appointments and completed the establishment of county governments. In decisions which he later would regret, he made John Rice Jones attorney general and William McIntosh territorial treasurer. To facilitate territorial business in his absence, he made Secretary Gibson a Pooh Bah with many hats, including justice of
the peace, recorder, and judge of quarter sessions. On February 3, a particularly active day, the governor established Clark County with a temporary county seat at Springville; redrew boundaries for Knox, Randolph, and St. Clair counties; issued 32 licenses; and in a personal transaction, purchased a prospective homesite from the town’s most influential personality, Colonel Francis Vigo.⁹

Vigo had come to America as a member of a Spanish Army Regiment stationed in New Orleans. After his discharge, he became a prosperous fur trader with headquarters in St. Louis. During the Revolution he gave financial help and military intelligence to George Rogers Clark. After the Revolution, Vigo moved to Vincennes. A generous host, Vigo was said to have paid 20 guineas to a builder to hasten completion of his two-story frame house, so that he might entertain Harrison upon the latter’s arrival. As a land speculator and fur trader he had good reason to cultivate cordial relations with the young governor. So tradition probably is accurate in placing Harrison as a guest in Vigo’s parlor throughout January and during part of February, 1801.¹⁰

After scarcely a month in Vincennes, the governor returned to Greenfield where he rejoined his wife and family at the home of Judge Peyton Short and his wife, Maria. The visit was saddened by Maria’s death on March 28. Her death occurred after a five-day illness with “bilious fever.” Unaware of this family tragedy, Harrison’s stepmother-in-law, the venturesome Susan Symmes, supervised the packing of the Harrisons’ furnishings in North Bend, Ohio. On April 14, she set out with them on a flatboat. Drifting down to the Falls of the Ohio River, Mrs. Symmes met Harrison and his family there, where the goods were repacked aboard a keelboat below the Falls. The reunited family then went down the Ohio and up the Wabash to Vincennes, arriving on May 14. Harrison, however, became impatient while going up the Wabash and abandoned ship. He hurried overland and arrived ahead of the
others on May 9 in order to issue a proclamation forbidding whites from settling, hunting, or surveying on Indian lands.\textsuperscript{11}

Although biographers know a great deal about Harrison’s public life, there is surprisingly little information available concerning his private life. Thus, they leave him and his growing family crowded into Vigo’s parlor until Harrison’s mansion called Grouseland was finished. But Harrison and Anna had to share their space not only with their three children, but also with his stepmother-in-law, Susan Symmes, and her niece, Jane Ridley. Mrs. Symmes warned that her husband, the irascible Judge John Cleves Symmes, planned a “first & last” visit for the entire ensuing winter – a prospect that might test the hospitality of the Deity, to say nothing of the gracious Colonel Vigo. It is only plausible to locate the Harrisons as tenants in one of Vigo’s four houses, probably the one at the southwest corner of First and Broadway streets.\textsuperscript{12}

The judge’s third wife, Susan Symmes, clearly preferred the company of her stepdaughters to that of the hapless judge. Her detailed, insightful letters provide a far clearer view of the Harrisons’ domestic life than do those of the governor. After four months in Vincennes, she paid tribute to Mrs. Harrison, testifying to her “many amiable virtues” and to her “uniform kindness.” She described each of the children: Betsey, “now just turned 5...all meekness, & mildness...a most beautiful, elegant child”; John Cleves Symmes, “3...all turbulence, a most imperious little rogue”; Lucy, “15 months...a perfect beauty, but a poor afflicted babe...she has just had 18 large boils, her disorders have made her as much trouble as 5 or 6 children.” Though Mrs. Symmes concluded that “this is a charming country,” she firmly declared, “I can never feel at home in it.”\textsuperscript{13}

Discriminating visitors joined Mrs. Symmes in praising the beauties of the countryside. Moses Austin in 1797 listed the Wabash “among the beauties of Nature” and the landscape “equal to any
thing of the Kinde” he ever had seen – even “the severity of Winter
could not change” it. Caleb Townes in 1815 found the Wabash “a
beautiful and valuable stream—the water generally perfectly clear
& transparent” with a “clean gravelly bottom—It abounds with
Fish...Bass—Pickerel, Pike,—Perch—...the Catfish are of every size
up to 122 1/2 lb.”

Travel on the Wabash, however, often resulted in debilitating
“fever & ague.” Harrison suffered “three fits of it” the first summer
he was there. Later letters reported troubles with influenza, sick
headaches, and pinkeye. The governor, nevertheless, insisted that
his family “enjoyed quite as much health here” as they ever had.14

Although Harrison governed an area larger than France, he did
not find the cares of office overburdening. In an intimate letter to
James Findlay, his distillery partner in Cincinnati, Governor Harrison
confessed that he “generally” spent half of each day “making war
upon the partridges, grouse, and fish.” Always mindful of public
relations, he assured Findlay that “nothing can exceed” this country
“in beauty and fertility.” He hoped Findlay would “take to the
woods” and would pay a visit.15

On December 31, 1801, in an effort to promote education,
Harrison assembled a select group to petition Congress for funds
for Jefferson Academy, an enterprise that later led to the founding
of Vincennes University. As its first president of the board of
trustees (1806 to 1811), he included in the articles of incorporation
a provision permitting Indians to attend “at the expense of the
institution” and he established a nationwide lottery to raise funds.
When the school developed slowly because of a lack of adequately
prepared students and teachers, the trustees promoted a grammar
school to qualify students for higher education. In an allied activity,
Harrison became founder and first chairman of the Vincennes
Library Board.16

The governor maintained cordial relations with the eminent
Father Jean Francois Rivet, who ministered to the educational as well as to the spiritual needs of his parishioners. Mrs. Harrison, a devout Presbyterian, missed the presence of a Presbyterian minister and she agonized over what she considered to be the low state of morality and of religion. Harrison, an Episcopalian and more ecumenical than his wife, once held a candle for the services of an itinerant Methodist evangelist, William Winans. During 1805, a missionary, Thomas Clelland, visited Vincennes, and Mrs. Harrison invited him to preach – his was the first sermon by a Presbyterian ever given in Indiana. During 1808, the Reverend Samuel Thornton Scott settled in Vincennes where he served a dual function as teacher and as minister. During 1811, he began a four-year stint as head of the university.

During his first three years as governor, Harrison understandably was concerned about his reappointment. As an appointee of Federalist John Adams, Harrison took considerable pains to establish himself with the incoming administration of Thomas Jefferson. He wrote an obsequious letter to Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin, assuring him that it “will give me pleasure to receive your commands, & should the interests of your Humble Servant (a poor provincial Governor) require the aid of a powerful friend I with confidence expect to find one in the person of the Secretary of the Treasury.” Harrison asked his brother, Carter Harrison, who was a congressman from Virginia, to lobby on his behalf with Secretary of State James Madison and with Secretary of War Henry Dearborn. William Henry Harrison’s relationship with President Jefferson always had been cordial, especially because of his success in dealing with Native Americans. Once, as a delegate to Congress, Harrison had discussed city planning with Jefferson. As an amiable gesture he laid out the town opposite the Falls of the Ohio after a pattern Jefferson had suggested. “I have taken the liberty,” he wrote the president, “of calling it Jeffersonville. The beauty of the spot...
advantage of the situation and the excellence of the plan, make it highly probable that it will...become a place of considerable consequence."\textsuperscript{18}

To minimize the possibility that the Federalists in Congress would oppose his appointment, Harrison wrote Senator Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey, a Federalist leader and a business associate of his father-in-law, Judge Symmes. "The emoluments of my appointment are very important to me," he admitted frankly, "and this session will determine whether I am to enjoy them after the month of May or not." Cajolery triumphed. On February 4, Jefferson sent Harrison’s reappointment to the Senate, which confirmed it four days later. The Federalist appointee of 1800 thus won Republican approval in 1803. A grateful governor sent the president a barrel of Louisiana pecans.\textsuperscript{19}

In a separate appointment that same day, Jefferson granted the governor the position of commissioner with “full power” to conduct and to sign treaties with the Indians. This commission was prompted by the urgency created when the French reoccupied Louisiana, a geopolitical change that Jefferson claimed was “felt like a light breeze among the Indians.” With Napoleon Bonaparte ruling along the Mississippi, Jefferson recognized the critical necessity for a speedy transfer of Indian land titles. "Under the hope of their [French] protection,” Jefferson predicted that the Indians “will immediately stiffen against land cessions to us.” Harrison’s aggressive land grabbing thus received a mandate from the idealistic president himself. From 1801 to 1809 the governor negotiated 11 treaties, clearing title to more than one-third of Indiana and to approximately two-thirds of Illinois. In 1803, Ohio became a state and Upper and Lower Michigan were added to the Indiana Territory. During 1804, after the Louisiana Purchase, Upper Louisiana also was added. As John Randolph of Roanoke charged, Harrison was “proconsul” over United States territory north of the Ohio and
Missouri rivers and west of the state of Ohio to the Continental Divide – if not, indeed, all the way to the Pacific Coast. Some northern and western boundaries had not been determined definitively yet. Harrison was to govern this boundless wilderness from Vincennes.

During October, 1804, while the governor went to St. Louis to establish an American presence in Upper Louisiana, Anna Harrison remained in Vincennes for the birth of her fifth child, John Scott Harrison – destined to be the son of one president and the father of another. Anna confessed to being “very much depressed” by her husband’s absence, but she took comfort in her growing family and in her new home which was under construction. Harrison had postponed building until his title cleared and his reappointment came. Although the mansion proved to be “rather too expensive” for his purse, it soon became heralded as the most impressive house in the territory. The governor named it Grouseland.

As capital of Jefferson’s vast “empire for liberty,” Vincennes was growing. A visitor during 1805 counted five stores, four taverns, two mills, a saddle shop, a church, two blacksmiths, three physicians, and seven lawyers – especially lawyers – a necessary profession there because of its land squabbles and its bitter political controversies. Mail dispatches went more or less regularly to Louisville and postal receipts escalated more than 700 percent from 1801 to 1803: from a total of $85.49 to $705.05. During 1804, Elihu Stout began publishing the Indiana Gazette, later the Western Sun, a stormy publication that supported Harrison. A bitter enemy called Stout “an humble slave sold to the governor.” As civilization advanced, a jail became necessary and in 1803 Judge Vanderburgh supervised its construction at the corner of Second and Buntin streets.

Recreational opportunities were limited somewhat, but Graeter’s Tavern featured a billiard table and the governor played
approximately 25 games during 1809 while his political opponent, Jonathan Jennings, played 60, and editor Stout more than 300. The French community popularized card playing and dancing, addictions that spread even among the Virginia aristocrats. Catherine Randolph, wife of Attorney General Thomas Randolph who was a nephew of Thomas Jefferson, described several occasions with a literary skill rivaling that of British author Frances Trollope. Mrs. Randolph wrote to her “Dear Mother” on December 18, 1810:

I was at a Ball last night. The evening was very cold – the company gay, and the Musick good, two violins, & the Drum & Fife: had the room been warm, I should have enjoyed myself very much. When I reflect on dancing, I some times think it all folly: yet when I join the mazy throng, I feel transported with pleasure...I think very innocent pleasure: yet I may be thought like one of those whom Dr Franklin says “is pleased with a rattle & tickled with a straw.”

Three weeks later she reported an even more colorful occasion, a dance at Fort Knox II. Although it was January, she recounted that the officers “convey’d the Ladies...3 miles up the Wabash in a large Keel Boat, with the Musick on board.”

Though identified as “Virginia aristocrats,” members of Governor Harrison’s faction came from diverse places and classes. Attorney General and Mrs. Randolph might have qualified as aristocrats, but only Randolph, a graduate of the College of William and Mary, could have been called a true Virginia aristocrat. His wife was the granddaughter of a Pennsylvanian, Governor Arthur St. Clair, and she also was the stepdaughter of James Dill, a native of Dublin, Ireland, who, like Harrison, became an aide to General Anthony Wayne during the Indian wars. Dill, who was a lawyer, a Harrison appointee, and a postmaster at Lawrenceburg, Ind., made a studied effort to play the aristocrat, dressing in knee breeches and
silver buckles – thus making a statement against the easy manners of an egalitarian frontier. Dill’s son-in-law and stepdaughter, while building a residence in Vincennes, lived at Grouseland with the Harrisons. “I feel very anxious to be in a House of our owne,” Mrs. Randolph assured her sister. “The Govr and Mrs. Harrison are both very polite,” but she longed for a private place even if it was only one room. Catherine planned to join in the frontier “fashion” of spinning, but admitted that her husband “very much opposed” it. After all, aristocratic Virginia women detested plebeian fashions, especially those involving manual labor. 

In addition to Randolph, three other Virginians gave a semblance of credence to the charge that Harrison’s followers constituted a Virginia party. General Washington Johnston, once a resident of Culpeper, Va., read the Latin classics, composed verses in French, and tripped a very light fantastic at the French balls – all attributes that marked him as a frontier aristocrat. Henry Hurst, clerk of the general court and trustee of Vincennes University, had a Virginia heritage, as also did Waller Taylor, judge and chancellor. Non-Virginia members of the governor’s faction included Secretary Gibson from Pennsylvania – in no sense an aristocrat and, as Gallatin insisted, “totally incompetent” as a secretary. But, Harrison replied, Gibson was something better than a good secretary: he was “a very honest man.” Benjamin Parke, a major figure, served Harrison successively as attorney general, legislator, and judge. A native of New Jersey, Parke studied law in Lexington, Ky., and moved to Vincennes during 1801. Tall, dignified, and resourceful, Parke ably defended the governor in the rough-and-tumble of frontier politics. For example, he damned a leader of Harrison’s opposition, William McIntosh, as a “filcher, a pilferer, [and] a thief” – thus revealing the gentility of the political discourse of that day.

A hospitable Governor and Mrs. Harrison set the social fashion at Grouseland, keeping the latchstring out for legislators, territorial
officers, and visitors. From September 23 to 26, 1805, they entertained a distinguished fugitive from justice, Aaron Burr, who then was retired as vice president and who was wanted in New Jersey for the murder of Alexander Hamilton. Neither editor Elihu Stout nor members of the household thought to record details of his visit, but one contemporary paraphrased Milton, likening it to “Lucifer’s intrusion into ‘the newly created Eden.’” Seriously underestimating Harrison’s sophistication, novelist Gore Vidal has envisioned the governor in a log cabin pouring cider to Burr, the peripatetic intriguer. Charge accounts in Philadelphia serve as testimony that Harrison poured madeira on festive occasions.

The governor, then in his 30s, was portrayed variously as “commanding,” “prepossessing,” and “despotic.” Even his enemy, “Decius,” told of his “sprightly” conversation. On September 26, 1811, when Harrison left for Tippecanoe River, he was described by a lieutenant’s wife as being dressed in “a hunting shirt” of calico “trimmed with fringe” and crowned with a “beaver hat ornamented with a large Ostrich feather.” She said, “He is very tall & slender with sallow complexion, & dark eyes, his manners are pleasing, and he has an interesting family.”

Social life waned in the aftermath of the Battle of Tippecanoe. The general became engrossed in defending his military reputation. In addition, the New Madrid earthquakes, beginning December 16, 1811, kept knocking down chimneys until March, 1812. “We live in times of comets, earthquakes, and rumours of War,” lamented one survivor of the Tippecanoe battle. During late spring, the Harrisons moved back to Ohio. “[My] nursery fills much faster than my strong box,” the governor assured the president. Five of the Harrisons’ 10 children had been born in Vincennes, site of the governor’s happiest days and of his most substantial achievements.
NOTES

1. William Henry Harrison left Richmond about October 10, 1800, and by November
28, he was in Cincinnati. Harrison to Thomas Worthington, November 28, 1800, John D.
(March, 1951), 61; Harrison to James Findlay, July 18, 1800, in Logan Esarey, ed.,
young Afro-American, who had been inherited from Harrison’s estate, accompanied and
assisted them. “Last Will and Testament,” Benjamin Harrison V, BR, Box 2, Henry E.
Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.; Page Smith, John Adams, 2 vols. (New York:
1962), II, 1,049. Harrison later rationalized his failure to participate in the election by
saying, “I therefore accepted the appointment [governorship] with a determination, as
Indiana had no voice in the choice of a president, that I would take no part in the contest.”
Harrison to Matthew Lyon, June 1, 1840, in Jacob Piatt Dunn, Indiana: A Redemption
from Slavery (Boston: 1896), p. 300.

2. Dorothy W. Bowers, The Irwins and the Harrisons (Mercersburg, Penn.: 1973),
p. 113; Major Isaac Craig’s receipt, November 2, 1800, quoted in Leland D. Baldwin,
The Keelboat Age on Western Waters (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1941), pp. 47-49.
Lydia Bacon praised the quality of Ohio River drinking water. Mary M. Crawford, ed.,
“Mrs. Lydia B. Bacon’s Journal, 1811-12,” Indiana Magazine of History, XL (December,
1944), 379.

3. Harrison to Worthington, November 28, 1800, and Charles W. Byrd to Nathaniel
Massie, August 18, 1800, in David Massie, Nathaniel Massie, A Pioneer of Ohio...
(Cincinnati: 1896), pp. 161-162; Susan Symmes to “My Dear Sister,” June 21, 1801,
William Henry Harrison MSS., Library of Congress (microfilm); Clarence Carter, ed.,


5. Constantin Francois Volney, A View of the...United States of America
(Philadelphia: 1804), p. 372; Timothy Flint quoted in Harlow Lindley, ed., Indiana as

6. Carter, ed., Territorial Papers, VII, 16-17; William W. Woollen, Daniel W. Howe,
and Jacob Piatt Dunn, eds., Executive Journal of Indiana Territory, 1800-1816 (Indianapolis:

7. Lew Wallace, Life of Gen. Ben Harrison (Cleveland, Ohio: 1888), p. 27; Carter,
ed., Territorial Papers, VII, 16.

8. Francis S. Philbrick, ed., The Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809 (Springfield,

Vanderburgh Somes, Old Vincennes: The History of a Famous Old Town and its Glorious


“Methodism in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History, XVII (1921), 132.


Selected Papers from the Ninth and Tenth George Rogers Clark Trans-Appalachian Frontier History Conferences
“Best Troops in the World”: The Michigan Territorial Militia in the Detroit River Theater During the War of 1812

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“Best troops in the world!” William Henry Harrison exclaimed to some Michigan men at Fort Meigs, Ohio, during 1813. But when a comparison is made between “Old Tippecanoe’s” evaluation of Michigan soldiers during the War of 1812 and those assessments of modern historians, it seems perfectly clear that General Harrison simply was playing to his audience and was being politic. Even though the Detroit River region was one of the major theaters of the War of 1812, modern historians consistently either ignore the military service of the people there or rate it as marginal at best.

John R. Elting in his recent book, Amateurs. To Arms! A Military History of the War of 1812, is typical. He states that the territory was “very thinly settled...” and those areas that were settled mainly consisted of “…French-Canadians and half-breeds, shiftless subsistence farmers and part-time hunters and trappers.” Elting considers them of no consequence to General William Hull in his disastrous 1812 campaign. “The Michigan Militia,” he writes, “would not be of any appreciable use, its only reliable element being the 140-man Michigan Legionary Corps....” After this point, Elting ignores Michigan soldiers.

J.C.A. Stagg also disregards the Michigan militia in his recent volume, Mr. Madison’s War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early Republic, 1783-1830. He does not consider their contributions significant, as the territory, in his view, “has scarcely been settled by Americans and.... There were, in fact, more settlers of French-Canadian origin than there were Americans.”
to expectations, Michigan historians have done no better. Both Fred C. Hamil’s *Michigan in the War of 1812*, a booklet published by the Michigan Historical Commission to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the war, and Willis Dunbar’s thicker tome, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State*, give the reader the impression that Michigan’s citizens were bystanders in the actions that encompassed their homeland.⁵

A close scrutiny of manuscripts and of literature published just after the conflict presents an impression different from that of modern histories. These sources tell a heroic story of the Michigan militia in the southeastern corner of the territory and from this evidence, the reasons for the obscurity of the militia’s history become clear.⁶

Michigan Territory, established by an act of Congress in 1805, had three distinct population centers during the years before the war. The fort and fur trading center at Mackinac was the most northerly post. Detroit was the largest center. The town had more than 700 souls. But the Detroit settlement also included farms located on the north and west banks of the Detroit River, homesteads on the shores of Lake St. Clair and in the environs of the St. Clair River, and cabins on both banks of the River Rouge. At the western end of Lake Erie, 40 miles to the south of Detroit, was the River Raisin country. This settlement, founded in the 1780s, was centered on the River Raisin, at the present site of Monroe, Mich. It also included two hamlets on creeks just north of the Raisin and five others hugging the shores of streams and of rivers as far south as the Maumee River. An 1811 census listed 4,762 residents in the territory. The enumerator counted 1,340 in the River Raisin country. The Detroit area boasted 2,807 inhabitants. There were 1,253 males of militia age – older than 16 – residing in the Detroit area and throughout the River Raisin country.⁷

Four-fifths of the territory’s residents were of French Canadian
descent. In the territory’s southeastern corner, almost all of these were scions of long-established families who had arrived during the separate colonial rules of Great Britain and of France. Most of these Canadiens had ties to the Indian fur trade and if they spoke a second language it more than likely was an Indian tongue rather than English. Of the native English speakers, the largest number were holdovers from the British rule. Similar to the French, they were veterans of the Indian trade and intimately knew the Indian country and customs. Although Yankee settlers were arriving in greater numbers, these Americans were vastly outnumbered.

During September, 1805, in one of his first acts as governor, William Hull developed regulations establishing the militia. The law created two regiments. The First Regiment was composed of men residing in the vicinity of Detroit and points north while men living in the River Raisin country formed the Second Regiment. The Legionary Corps, an elite unit of one company each of light infantry, riflemen, cavalry, and artillery, was recruited from within the jurisdiction of the First Regiment. On the eve of the war, the Second Regiment had seven companies and the First Regiment consisted of eight. The two militia companies at Mackinac and the two on the St. Clair River were detached from the First Regiment and were formed into an independent corps.

Hull modeled his militia – uniforms and all – after the well-disciplined units he knew from his New England home. The territorial militia men fell far short of his expectations. Colonel John Anderson of the Second Regiment found it necessary to arrest most of his “French” officers to prod them into procuring uniforms. “The more I exercise [the soldiers],” he complained, “the less they learn.” During the years before the war, as the famous Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa’s Indian revival movement swept the frontier and heightened tensions, Hull wondered if his militiamen’s familiarity with the Native people was more of a liability than an
asset. Worrying especially about the French, Hull wrote to the secretary of war:

The French inhabitants who form much of the greater part of the settlements of this Territory appear friendly to our government. It is however necessary to consider their character and situation, to determine how they would act in the event of War with the Indians. From their infancy they have been in the habit of friendship with the Indians. A great part of them, indeed, are allied [sic] to them by blood. The greatest part of them speak their language, and in a variety of respects there is a great similarity and connection between them. The Indians are as familiar and as much at home, in the homes of these people, as the people themselves. The French people are indeed organized into a militi[a]...but considering their character and situation, I ask you what dependence could be placed on them, in the event of Indian War?11

Hull’s second-in-command, Reuben Attwater, put it more bluntly. Writing to the secretary of war in January, 1812, he warned that in the event of war with the British and the Indians, most of the militiamen in the Michigan Territory “will prove to be British subjects.”12 This fear of the French and doubt about the loyalty of the English-speaking traders haunted the Michigan militia throughout the war.

After the Battle of Tippecanoe, concern turned to fear as Indians streamed through the region and the British made overt preparations for war. The 100 men garrisoned at Fort Detroit and the territorial militia were totally inadequate for this situation. Residents petitioned the federal government for reinforcements and Hull went to Washington, D.C., where he personally appealed for aid from the Madison administration. Just to secure the territory in its present state and to defend it in the event of war, Hull estimated that a
military commander at Detroit would need more than 1,000 soldiers plus naval superiority on Lake Erie.

The gravity of the situation was obvious. The government commissioned Hull as military commander and authorized him to march north with 1,200 raw Ohio militiamen accompanied by 300 seasoned soldiers of the U.S. Fourth Infantry. To handle the immediate crisis in the territory, the government gave authority to call four companies of Michigan militia – a total of 338 men – into federal service. Three companies, Captain Antoine Dequindre’s riflemen, Captain Stephen Mack’s artillery, and Captain Richard Smyth’s cavalry were activated between late April and June from the Legionary Corps in Detroit and were placed under the command of Major James Witherell. In the River Raisin country, Colonel Anderson mustered the Second Regiment and called for 80 volunteers to serve one year in a company. In a ground swell of enthusiasm, “a great portion” of the regiment stepped forward and the company was selected by lot from among them. Electing Hubert LaCroix as their captain, they began serving May 18. An additional 20 men from the Raisin under the command of Ensign Isaac Lee volunteered and were attached to Captain Smyth’s cavalry.

The Legionary Corp units patrolled Detroit and the adjacent settlements. Smyth’s cavalrymen also escorted the mail. In the River Raisin country, Hubert LaCroix set his soldiers to strengthening the blockhouse in the existing stockade on the River Raisin and to constructing two stockades in more remote parts of the settlement. To prepare for the expected arrival of Hull’s U.S. Infantry and Ohio militiamen, LaCroix diverted men to improving the vital supply road that ran the length of the River Raisin country between the Maumee and the Huron rivers.

The day Hull’s army reached the River Raisin country – July 2 – he received notice of the declaration of war. That day in Detroit, three additional companies, 152 men from Captains Jacques
Campeau’s, Whitmore Knaggs’, and Solomon Sibley’s units in the First Regiment, were mustered into service to help secure the town. On July 6, Hull’s army arrived in Detroit and six days later he invaded Canada. Except for dispatching interpreters and guides for other brigades, the Michigan militia did not participate in the invasion of Canada. They could not be spared from the daunting task of protecting the dispersed settlements in their own territory.\footnote{17}

The test for Hull’s Michigan militia came after the influential Wyandot cast their lot with the British late in July.\footnote{18} This cut off Hull’s supply road since two of the Wyandot villages strategically straddled that route. These villages were at a point just across the river from Canadian Fort Maiden. Captain LaCroix’s men were the first to encounter this obstacle. He had to mount a large escort for the mail when his couriers returned to the Raisin following their discovery of two ambushed Ohioans, who had proceeded them along the route.\footnote{19} The situation deteriorated at the increasingly isolated Raisin. Explaining to Hull, “We are invaded on all sides,” and the Indians are “skulking about,” Colonel Anderson called all of the Second Regiment into service leaving in reserve only the company that resided on the Maumee. This amounted to an additional 207 men on duty from companies commanded by Jean Baptiste Couture, Dominique Drouillard, Joseph Jobin, Jean Baptiste Lasselle, Jacques Martin, Joseph Menard, and Daniel Muholland.\footnote{20}

It was imperative that Hull open the road to the Raisin as the Ohio militia escorting desperately needed supplies would go no further than the River Raisin. On August 5, Hull dispatched Major Thomas Van Horne and about 200 Ohio militiamen to clear the road and to bring these supplies forward. During their march south, they were joined by 25 of Captain LaCroix’s mounted militiamen under the command of Ensign Duncan Reid. The mounted men had been escorting the mail. As they approached Brownstown, one of the Wyandot villages south of Detroit, a small party of Indians
ambushed Van Horne’s detachment. Terrorized, the Americans bolted and ran back to Detroit. The Michigan militia troop dropped the mail and scattered, some of the militiamen returning to Detroit and others, including two wounded, going to their homes in the River Raisin country.²¹

Van Horne’s failure underscored Hull’s dilemma and forced the General to withdraw from all but a token post in Canada. Now Hull put all his efforts into opening his supply route. On August 6, he dispatched Lieutenant Colonel James Miller of the Fourth U.S. Infantry with another detachment. Miller’s contingent consisted of approximately 600 men: 280 Regulars, a mixed troop of Ohio and Michigan cavalry under the command of an Ohio officer, several companies of Ohio infantry, and Captain Antoine Dequindre’s company of Michigan riflemen. At the abandoned Indian village of Monguagon south of Detroit, a combined force of British and Indians ambushed Miller’s men. Though caught by surprise, the Americans held their ground. The regulars in the center and Dequindre’s soldiers on the left charged the enemy, sending them flying. On the right, the Ohio men faltered and Miller order Dequindre to wheel his detachment around to stiffen their line. While Miller’s men decisively routed the British and Indians, they did not hold the field and thus the route to the Raisin remained closed. In his report, Miller lauded Dequindre’s troops for their bravery in battle.²²

After this battle, Hull sent another detachment by a back route in still one more unsuccessful attempt to link up with the men and the supplies at the Raisin. On August 16, before these men returned, the British and Indians boldly crossed the Detroit River to the American side and demanded that Hull surrender. Hull summarily refused. As the redcoats and Indians approached the fort and the town, Hull waivered. Seeing the enemy advance unopposed upon the fort, in turn, unnerved the Michigan militia assigned to defend that town’s walls. One of their officers went to the fort and asked
Hull if he intended for the militiamen to defend the town by themselves. Hull did not respond for a brief moment before he gave the order to raise the white flag, thus surrendering all his forces in Detroit as well as those in the River Raisin country.

When a British officer brought Hull’s order to surrender to the River Raisin two days later, both the Michigan and Ohio militia considered it a ruse. The situation at the Raisin then was desperate. Repeated alarms that Indians were coming prompted civilians to flock to the stockades “with their most valuable property for protection against the savage foe.” The Ohioans there feared the Michigan militiamen. As their commander, Captain Henry Brush, wrote, “The inhabitants here are principally Canadian French and little to be trusted....They pretend fidelity while their actions indicate the contrary.” The French, in turn, feared the British and Indians would attack before any help could arrive.

After several soldiers who had escaped from Detroit confirmed Hull’s surrender, both the inhabitants and the Ohioans initially determined they would hold their position and would fight. However, they soon reconsidered and the Ohio militia and many of the River Raisin country’s Yankee settlers fled to Ohio carrying what they could. The remaining Michigan militiamen paraded the next day and grounded their arms. In accordance with Hull’s terms of surrender, the River Raisin country militia who surrendered were declared prisoners of war on parole. This also had been the case with the Detroit units. This parole was provided so long as they swore not to fight Great Britain or her allies for the duration of the war or until they formally were exchanged.

The service of the Michigan militia during Hull’s campaign, while not glorious, was honorable and certainly at least equaled that of the other units who participated. According to the muster rolls, 697 Michigan militiamen saw duty during this campaign.

Although Hull officially had surrendered everyone under his
command, his capitulation actually did not mark the end of the militia’s service. Twenty-two of Smyth’s cavalrymen – mostly his soldiers stationed at the River Raisin at the time of Hull’s surrender – fled to Urbana, Ohio, where Major James V. Ball attached them to his squadron of the Second U.S. Regiment of Light Dragoons. During the Mississinewa campaign in December, they served with some distinction under the command of Cornet Isaac Lee. During this battle, several acted as guides and two of them were wounded in action.²⁹ They continued as the 12 Months Michigan Territory Volunteer Light Dragoons until their enlistments expired in May, 1813.

Redeeming the territory lost in Hull’s surrender was a priority for the United States. In spite of the surrender, Michigan men continued to do all in their power to further the American effort. At the vanguard of this drive to recapture Michigan Territory was an army of Kentuckians led by General James Winchester. Eleven hundred of these soldiers advanced January 11, 1813, to the Rapids of the Maumee, just upstream from present-day Toledo, Ohio. Seeing their deliverance at hand, emissaries from the River Raisin begged the Kentuckians to push forward and to drive out the British and Indians stationed there.

Winchester succumbed to their pleas and on January 18, a detachment of slightly more than 660 Kentuckians faced about 60 Canadian militiamen, more than 200 braves, and a small fieldpiece positioned on the opposite bank of the River Raisin. Standing with the Kentuckians were as many as 100 territorial residents. Many had joined the ranks of the Kentuckians along the march from the Rapids, others fell into formation at the River Raisin. Only a handful of their names are known. In later years Ambrose C. Charland claimed he acted as captain.³⁰ In a burst of enthusiasm at the commencement of the action, some of these Michigan men sallied out between the Kentuckians and the enemy. Though this put them
in a cross fire, they eagerly chased their hated foe from their homeland. The Americans handily won. While the Michigan men did not turn the tide of the battle, their prowess earned them admiration from their comrades in arms.\textsuperscript{31}

The Kentuckians realized that the Michigan men who had joined them in combat had done more than just dodge bullets in battle. Most of these men still were on parole. Taking up arms as they had done was a flagrant parole violation and had made them liable to severe punishment from the British and answerable to the wrath of the Indians. As one Kentucky officer aptly put it, “the people, having taken an active part against the British, will be subjected to utter ruin – perhaps scalped.”\textsuperscript{32}

General Winchester reinforced his position on the River Raisin and by the morning of January 22, he had 934 men stationed there. In the predawn darkness that day, a larger force of British and Indians caught the Americans by surprise, sending nearly half of them into flight. The other half of the Americans doggedly held out and surrendered only after they were surrounded and nearly out of ammunition. Once again the local people had turned out and had fought valiantly. When the battle swung against the Americans, these Michigan fighters “took to their heels,” lest they be caught in violation of parole. Two locals, Captain Jean Baptiste Couture and Henri Chauvin, died in the action.\textsuperscript{33}

In the hopes that making examples of several people would prevent further parole violations, the British arrested Captain Hubert LaCroix, Captain Whitmore Knaggs, and Isaac Ruland and sent them to prison.\textsuperscript{34} The Indians were not appeased so easily. The following day, they exacted vengeance on the Kentuckians by massacring 60 of their wounded who were left behind and they burned and pillaged numerous civilian homes to teach the inhabitants a lesson.\textsuperscript{35}

Especially after this disastrous campaign it would have been expedient for the residents to heed the warnings and to comply
with the British and Indians’ solicitations to change allegiance and to fight alongside them. In the wake of the battles and massacre of the River Raisin, the Michigan citizens’ resolve was confirmed stronger than ever. During the months after these actions, significant numbers of them offered their services at Fort Meigs, General William Henry Harrison’s new post on the Maumee. The status of these volunteers was ambiguous at best. Since most spoke French, Harrison referred them to his only French-speaking officer, Captain Charles Gratiot. Gratiot confessed, though, that he did not know if they were under his command or under his “protection.” During the spring and summer of 1813, the number of Michigan volunteers at Fort Meigs averaged from 20 to 30. Some of them later claimed they had formed a spy company and had chosen Antoine Couture as their captain. Harrison and other fort commanders did find their knowledge of the terrain and familiarity with Native people invaluable and they constantly utilized the Michigan men as guides, messengers, and scouts assigned to reconnoiter the British and the Indians.

Michigan men did serve through the sieges of Fort Meigs during May and July, 1813. A skirmish they fought April 8, though, particularly distinguished them. Harrison’s aide, Captain Gratiot, even described this action as “one of the best and hardest fights, and the most brilliant in the affairs of the campaign” at Fort Meigs. During this fight, 12 of the fort’s Frenchmen shoved off in a canoe as they pursued Indians who had ambushed an American fatigue party. Several miles down the Maumee they engaged these Indians. It was a desperate fight on land and on water. By the time a militia detachment from the fort arrived to chase the remaining braves, seven of the French were wounded, two mortally. They, in turn, claimed they had shot eight of the Indians.

Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry’s victory on Lake Erie September 10, 1813, cleared the way for Harrison to move on
Detroit and on Fort Malden. To speed the advance, most of Harrison’s infantry boarded Perry’s ships, while Colonel Richard M. Johnson’s Kentucky mounted infantry took the land route north from Fort Meigs. As many as 19 soldiers in Captain John Reading’s spy company of this “Kentucky” Regiment claimed Michigan as their home. With a good number more Michigan residents in the entourage, Johnson’s mounted men arrived at the River Raisin on September 27.\(^4\) Harrison’s infantry liberated Detroit three days later.

Johnson’s mounted troops took the lead as Harrison pursued the British and Tecumseh’s Indians up the Thames River in Canada. During this advance, the Michigan men in Reading’s company participated in a skirmish that drove the Indians from a vital bridge on October 4.\(^4\) The next day Harrison’s army caught up with the British and their allied warriors. With Johnson’s mounted troops in the vanguard, the Americans handily routed the enemy. What part Reading’s company and the Michigan men played during the Battle of the Thames is not certain. In later years, two of the Michigan men who were there, James Knaggs and Medard Labadie, swore that in the midst of the fray they came to the assistance of the wounded Colonel Johnson. They claimed that Johnson was located near the spot where they had seen Tecumseh’s body.\(^4\) Following the victory on the Thames, Colonel Johnson moved his regiment south and at Cincinnati on November 19, he discharged all his soldiers, including the Michigan men.

After the Battle of the Thames, the government appointed Lewis Cass territorial governor. Michigan still was a dangerous place. Until the war’s end, Indians posed a threat on all sides and there were well-grounded concerns of British advances from Canada. The federal garrisons at Detroit and at the newly established post of Fort Gratiot at the base of Lake Huron chronically were undermanned. To supplement the regulars, in October Governor
Cass activated Captain Isaac Lee’s 43-man cavalry company. They stayed on duty for seven months. Their first crisis came in December when there was a resurgence of Indian hostilities. Detroit’s garrison, then consisting of only 250 soldiers, was inadequate to handle the situation. To counter this threat, Cass asked permission from the secretary of war to establish a “secret service” of interpreters to be sent among the Native people to report their movements and to quell the “secret intrigues of the enemy.” Evidence is that the veteran Indian trader, Gabriel Godfroy, led this “service.” It is not known which men or how many men he recruited. To further supplement the federal garrison, Cass activated 200 Michigan militiamen. Among the militia activated, the only muster roll that exists is for Captain John McDonall’s troop of 51 cavalrymen who served from mid-December until mid-March.

In January, 1814, rumors circulated that British and Indians were massing at Chatham on the Thames River in Canada. Colonel Anthony Butler, the commandant of Fort Detroit, sent Isaac Lee’s Michigan cavalry to reconnoiter. Lee found and scattered a small enemy force, capturing a militia colonel in the process. Just after this, Colonel Butler dispatched Captain Andrew Holmes, of the 24th U.S. Infantry, with approximately 170 regulars and Michigan militia to discourage further British activity in this quarter of Canada. Their destination in Canada was Port Talbot on Lake Erie, but they pushed as far as Longwood where, on March 10, they repulsed a British counterattack. Captain Lee’s soldiers again distinguished themselves in action.

Throughout the spring of 1814, the Indians and the British in Canada remained a concern. To keep tabs on this situation, in May, Cass accepted the services of Andrew Westbrook’s 26-man detachment of spies he had recruited from among fellow expatriate Canadians and Michigan residents. During June, still another alarm
of Indians massing to attack prompted the commander at Detroit to activate for one month James Audrain's 133-man spy company and also to send Westbrook's men scouting in Canada. Westbrook reported some British activity. To counter this, during July, Cass detailed two small raiding parties to Port Talbot and to Oxford and then sent a third party to that same region in August.49

During September, there was yet another alarm in Detroit. This time it was a group of Indians gathering to the northwest of the town. Cass sent an urgent appeal to General Duncan McArthur for reinforcements from Ohio and from Kentucky. He also called for more Michigan militiamen and ordered them to chase any hostile braves they could find.50 By the time McArthur and 600 reinforcements had arrived in Detroit during mid-October, this crisis had passed. Still determined to strike the enemy, McArthur surprised everyone by foraying deep into Canada. With him were some Michigan militia, probably all or part of Captain James Audrain's 99-man squad of rangers activated on October 22, the day before McArthur left. Completing a successful raid, they penetrated as far as Malcom's Mill near Brantford where they defeated a Canadian militia detachment.51 McArthur's expedition was the last action of any consequence in the Detroit theater of the war. When word of the war's end reached the territory in February, 1815, the only Michigan unit on active duty was Captain Audrain's company of rangers.

While it cannot be claimed that the Michigan militia changed the course either of the war or of any particular battle, their service was exemplary. Their knowledge of the Indians and familiarity with the terrain proved invaluable. Contrary to fears, they were loyal, dependable, and stood as firm as any in battle. They enthusiastically lent their arms and repeatedly joined a fight even when discretion counseled otherwise. Their raw numbers alone speak volumes. A compilation of the names on muster rolls and on
other documents lists approximately 1,040 individuals from the Detroit area and from the River Raisin country who served during the war. Of these men, 142 joined more than one unit. Figuring that the 1811 census enumerated 1,253 men older than 16 living there just before the war, this means 83 percent of the eligible men in the southeastern corner of the territory served during the war. This is an exceptional figure considering that percentage is probably low – it does not account for the many men who served, but whose names were not recorded.52

During the war, many officers underrated or overlooked the Michigan militia. Also, historians, both past and present, consistently have ignored them. There are many reasons for this. Seldom did more than two companies serve together. In most actions where Michigan militia units served, they found themselves incorporated into larger brigades and placed under the command of officers from outside the territory. As a result, with the exception of Hull, who has an infamous reputation, their officers and units generally did not command recognition.

The Michigan Territory had an inordinately large number of men on the rolls of “Spy” companies.53 Spy, in this case, meant scout or ranger. The nature of these companies and the duties they performed were not conducive to attention. Similarly, the most important duty of the other Michigan units, that of protecting the territory’s homes, did not bring them to center stage.

In many of the actions when Michigan men did play key roles, their contributions went unnoticed because they served as individuals detached to other units or they were supernumeraries who, on their own accord, volunteered at key moments. Indeed, in a few instances they volunteered in such large numbers they formed ad hoc companies. Even in cases where there were records, documenting this type of service is extremely difficult. This kind of duty seldom was noted in official reports or rosters and in cases
where there was a record, one must be familiar with individuals’ names to recognize them as Michigan men.\textsuperscript{54}

Illiteracy also explains why the contributions of many Michigan men were overlooked. An extraordinarily high number of men neither could read nor could write their names.\textsuperscript{55} This especially was the case with the French who comprised four-fifths of the population. The result was that comparatively few men wrote accounts and when names appeared on rosters they usually were spelled phonetically.\textsuperscript{56}

Michigan militiamen had an identity problem, too. A majority spoke only French and most spent their lives trading with both the British and the Indians. Even though almost all Michigan militiamen became citizens of this country when the British relinquished the territory in 1796, people then and historians since have doubted the Michigan militiamen really were Americans.\textsuperscript{57}

When closely scrutinized, the documents that exist tell a story of the Michigan militia that demands rescue from obscurity. This is a history with few parallels in the story of this nation. It is one of the few instances of Americans fighting to liberate their homeland and to fend off a foreign army. The record of their conduct, when called to arms in this situation, does them credit. But, were they the “Best troops in the world”? When Harrison uttered those words, he probably knew he would be hard pressed to find troops who were better.\textsuperscript{58}
NOTES

3. Ibid., p. 27.
11. William Hull to Eustis, Detroit, July 20, 1810, (typescript in Ottawa file, Great Lakes-Ohio Valley Indian Archives Project, Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology, Indiana University).


15. Captain Hubert LaCroix to Major James Witherell, River Raisin, June 15, 1812, Benjamin F.H. Witherell Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; Deposition of Ambrose C. Charland, Monroe, Mich., July 15, 1853, Gabriel Godfrey Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; LaCroix to Witherell, River Raisin, July 16, 1812, and LaCroix to Witherell, River Raisin, June 26, 1812, in Michigan Pioneer Vol. 8, 2nd ed. (1907), pp. 631 and 632.


17. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, p. 383.


21. Lossing, The Pictorial Field-Book, pp. 276-277; Deposition of Joseph Dazette, Monroe County, Territory of Michigan, March 27, 1830, Raisin River Claims, War of 1812, miscellaneous records of the General Accounting Office, Manning Collection, records of the Third Auditor of the Treasury Department, U.S. General Accounting Office, National Archives of the United States, (Collection hereinafter cited as Raisin River Claims); Deposition of Claude Couture, County of Monroe, Territory of Michigan, [May, 1835], War of 1812 military file of Claude Couture, National Archives of the United States; Deposition of Hubert LaCroix, River Raisin, November 4, 1817, War of 1812 pension file of Louis Jacobs, National Archives of the United States.


25. Captain Henry Brush to Governor Return J. Meigs, River Raisin, August 11, 1812, Return J. Meigs Papers, Ohio Historical Society.

26. Samuel Williams to Edward Tiffin, River Raisin, August 11, 1812, Samuel Williams Papers, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.

27. Anderson, “A Short history,” John Anderson Papers, Bentley Historical Library; [Samuel Williams]: “The late expedition to the river Raisin commanded by Capt. Brush, having excited considerable interest: the following account of it may not be uninteresting at this time.” MSS., Samuel Williams Papers, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio.


30. Deposition of Ambrose C. Charland, Monroe, Michigan, July 15, 1853, Gabriel Godfroy Papers, Burton Historical Collection.


32. Captain Nathaniel G.S. Hart to Harrison, Frenchtown, January 21, 1813, in


37. Statement of Charles Gratiot, [February, 1846], in War of 1812 pension file of Joseph Louis Dusseau, National Archives of the United States.

38. Deposition of Pierre Navarre, Monroe County, Territory of Michigan, March 19, 1830; Deposition of Antoine Navarre, Monroe County, Mich., February 3, 1855; Deposition of Medard Labadie, Monroe County, Territory of Michigan, May 4, 1830; Deposition of Antoine Sergent, Monroe County, Territory of Michigan, March 19, 1830, Raisin River Claims.

“Best Troops in the World”: The Michigan Territorial Militia in the Detroit River Theater During the War of 1812

43. MSS., Barnett and Rosentreter, Michigan’s Early Militia.
46. Ibid., p. 237; Barnett and Rosentreter, Michigan’s Early Militia.
53. MSS., Barnett and Rosentreter, Michigan’s Early Militia.
54. Ibid.
56. While the vast majority of the veterans did not write accounts detailing their service, many had depositions taken, thus documenting their service. These depositions can be found in the military, pension, and bounty land claims files in the National Archives. Other depositions are in the records of the Third Auditor of the United States which also are on deposit in the National Archives. These records deal with the numerous claims filed for private property destroyed during the war.
57. Hull to Eustis, Detroit, July 20, 1820, (typescript in Ottawa file, Great Lakes-Ohio Valley Indian Archives Project, Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology, Indiana University); Attwater to Eustis, Detroit, January 21, 1812, in The Territory of Michigan,
58. I wish to express my particular thanks to Dr. LeRoy Barnett and Dr. Roger Rosentreter of the Bureau of Michigan History for their permission to use their manuscript compilation of muster rolls of Michigan men who served during the War of 1812. The manuscript compilation is a part of their forthcoming book, *Michigan’s Early Militia in Action: A Compilation of Michigan Men Who Served in Conflicts From the War of 1812 to the Mexican War*. This was a key source for this article.
“Best Troops in the World” : The Michigan Territorial Militia in the Detroit River Theater During the War of 1812
During the summer of 1991, the Warren County Park Board acquired the Cicott Trading Post Site. The property will be converted into an interpretive park. To this end archaeological investigations of the site were undertaken during the summers of 1991 and 1992. In addition, there is ongoing ethnohistoric research into the life and times of Zachariah Cicott, the French Canadian who resided at the site and who operated a trading post there from the early to the mid-19th century.

The site offers an excellent opportunity to study acculturation, the late fur trade, and French Canadians' adaptation and ethnicity during early territorial and statehood settings. (Jones and Mann, 1992). This paper will examine the subject of ethnic identity, from both the ethnohistoric and the archaeological perspectives.

Ethnic identity can be defined as the "subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate" oneself from other individuals or groups. (De Vos, 1975:16). Contact with and interdependence on other ethnic groups do not lead to an erosion of ethnic identity. On the contrary, as Fredrik Barth has pointed out, "ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are
maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories.” (Barth, 1969:9-10). In other words, Zachariah Cicott should have been able to maintain a sense of ethnic identity despite his interaction with an interdependence upon the British, the Americans, and the Native Americans.

Zachariah Cicott was born February 17, 1776, to Jean Baptiste and Angélique (Poupard) Cicott in Detroit. (Tanguay, 1887:67). Though officially a British possession after 1763, Detroit remained an essentially French community until after the War of 1812. The British, though not numerically superior, viewed the Detroit French with contempt. The same year that Zachariah was born, Detroit’s Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton described the French as “mostly so illiterate that few can read and very few can sign their own names.” He went on to say that although fish were plentiful in the river, “not one French family has got a seine – Hunting and fowling afford food to numbers who are nearly as lazy as the Savages.” (Lajeunesse, 1960:84-85).

It is clear from the foregoing that boundaries existed between the French and the British. These barriers were maintained by just such statements which drew a distinction between “us” and “them.” The French themselves maintained these boundaries by ascribing to a “set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact.” (De Vos, 1975:9). The marriage of Cicott’s parents provides an excellent illustration.

The French habitants of North America generally adhered to the coutume de Paris in regard to civil matters. The coutume de Paris consisted of a compilation of customs, laws, and precedents passed to each generation as oral tradition. (Ekberg, 1985:186, 362). The coutume de Paris required couples to create a marriage contract which would insure the proper transmittal of family wealth. (Ekberg, 1985:186). The marriage of Jean Baptiste Cicott and Angélique Poupard occurred June 7, 1770, in Detroit. Their marriage
contract revealed their adherence to the *coutume de Paris*. This holds that the couple’s marriage be governed “according to the usage and customs of Paris, in express derogation of all other customs....” (Hamlin, 1879:76). Clearly, Cicott was born into what may be termed an ethnic community, one which held to its own traditional customs and institutions rather than to those of the dominant culture.

Although his father was a merchant, and a successful one if the 3,000-livre dowry promised to Angelique was any indication, (Hamlin, 1879:76), Zachariah sought to gain his fortune elsewhere. By his own recollection he arrived in Vincennes about 1792. (Henry, 1982:27). His arrival at that time may have been an attempt to bolster family land claims in the Vincennes area. (American State Papers [ASP], Public Lands, Vol. I, 1832:300; ASP, Public Lands, VII, 1860:705). Although Vincennes still essentially was a French village in 1792, many Americans had immigrated there during the years immediately following the Revolution bringing with them an economy based on the cultivation of large tracts of land. This prompted the French to petition the Congress for a donation of land during 1789. (Lux, 1949:441-445). Until that time, they had been, in their words, “chiefly addicted to the Indian trade” and “contented to raise bread for our families.” (Lux, 1949:432).

John Heckewelder, who visited Vincennes the same year Cicott arrived, counted 30 American families living there. Just as their predecessors, the British, had done, the Americans viewed the French with contempt. Heckewelder described the French as being, “not accustomed to work and could not be taught how.” Compared to the Americans, who he said dressed in linen and cotton, “there is hardly one among the French, who can dress himself decently, but whoever knows the Indian dress, knows theirs also.” (Heckewelder, 1888:170).

Zachariah Cicott, then, spent his formative years in the French
Canadian ethnic communities of Detroit and Vincennes. In both cases, the French Canadians were considered a distinct group by the prevailing powers. This distinction was recognized and was perpetuated by the French. In keeping with this, Cicott chose to enter the fur trade. As noted, the coming of the Americans brought many changes to the French at Vincennes. Chief among these changes was the decline of the fur trade. In their petition to Congress the French cited their “decreasing peltry trade” as one of the principal reasons behind the request. (Lux, 1949:442). Nevertheless, the fur trade continued to be a part of the Vincennes economy, though the Indians just were as apt to take their furs either to the British or to the Spanish traders. During 1788, John Francis Hamtramck, commandant at Vincennes, expressed his desire for more American merchants to come to Vincennes. He commented, “for if the Indians can not get their necessary supplys [sic] at this place they will go to the British....” He continued, “Linen is a capital article, a man with a good assortment of it would get all the peltry of the Illinois and of this place.” (Thornbrough, 1957:77).

Cicott recalled beginning his trading activities about 1802 or 1804. (Goodspeed, 1883:37). The earliest documented evidence of his participation in the fur trade is an 1807 receipt for goods he purchased. Included on this receipt were 40 Jew’s harps, several yards of calico, and various types of silk hanks, all of which clearly were items for the Indian trade. (Knox County Court Files, 1807). Cicott’s decision to enter the fur trade, whether or not done consciously, was a reflection of his ethnicity. As Heckewelder somewhat caustically remarked, and as the French themselves acknowledged, Frenchmen first and foremost were fur traders.

Participation and expertise in a certain occupation can be ways in which members of a particular ethnic group define themselves or are defined by outsiders. Ethnohistorian Jacqueline Peterson has referred to the French Canadian traders and their metis families,
who lived at Green Bay in present-day Wisconsin during the 18th and 19th centuries, as an occupational subculture. (Peterson, 1978:59). This subculture was characterized by Peterson as having consisted of a French-speaking Catholic population, largely intermarried with the local Native Americans. (Peterson, 1978:42). Cicott was all of the above.

Though his trading operation got off to a shaky start – Cicott was jailed in Vincennes for failure to pay his debts during 1809 and again in 1818 – he seemed to have found a niche by the early 1820s. (Henry, 1982:27). In 1824 and again in 1825, he was granted a license to trade with the Piankashaw, Wea, Kickapoo, and Miami Indians. (19th Cong., 1st sess., House Doc. 118; 20th Cong., 1st sess., House Doc. 140). The ledgers of Pierre Menard, of the Ste. Genevieve/Kaskaskia firm of Menard and (Francois) Valle, listed numerous transactions with Cicott or with his agents during this time. The entry for November 3, 1826, listed more than $1,500 worth of goods purchased by Cicott. Included on this list were more than 50 blankets, several varieties of cloth, several dozen knives, 500 gunflints, four kegs of gunpowder, and 150 small lead bars, to name only a few of the obvious trade items. (Illinois State Historical Society [ISHS], 1972).

Cicott continued to participate in the fur trade, or perhaps more aptly in the Indian trade, well into the 1830s. At the 1836 Potawatomi annuity payment, Cicott presented a claim for $4,800 which he withdrew during the investigation of a fracas which had erupted between rival traders. This situation brought a halt to the payment. (Edmonds, 1837:10). His withdrawal of this claim left questions as to its validity. This also may have marked the end of his trading career since he would have been 60 years old by that time and the claim was the last documentary evidence of his trading endeavors.

As alluded to above, Cicott indeed had followed the pattern of
intermarriage established by generations of French traders. Peterson pointed out that by the 19th century French and Indian intermarriage was not due to a lack of European women, but rather it was a matter of choice. (Peterson, 1978:55). Marital alliance with influential tribal lineages was the most likely way for the independent trader to insure some degree of success. To this end, Cicott married an Indian woman, Pe-say-quot, sometime prior to 1816. She was the sister of Perig or Peeresh, a headman of the Not-a-wa-se-pee band of Potawatomi. (23rd Cong., 1st sess., Senate Doc. 512:344). Also known as Pierre Moran, Perig was reported to have been the son of the French trader Constant Moran and a Kickapoo woman. He became a chief of the Potawatomi by marrying into that tribe. (Robertson and Riker, 1942(1):371).

Pe-say-quot’s Christian name was given as Marie on the 1816 baptismal record for her and Cicott’s daughter, Sophie. (Burget, 1974:3). It is not known whether Pe-say-quot also was the daughter of Constant Moran. It is known that she was considered to be a Native American. The baptismal record for Sophie more specifically stated that on “April 29, 1816 I (Father G.J. Chabrat) baptised Sophie born Jan. 1 same year of legit marriage of Zacharie Chicot and Marie, a savage woman.” (Burget, 1974:3).

This passage also shed light upon the nature of Cicott and Pe-say-quot’s marriage. No official record of their marriage has been found yet and it is likely that the two were married a la façon du pays, (after the custom of the country) without the presence of a notary or a priest. Marriage a la façon du pays was derived from Indian practices. Once consent was obtained from the girl’s parents and a bride price was paid by the trader, a ceremony involving native rituals occurred. The alliance between the trader and tribe then was sealed by smoking a calumet. (Van Kirk, 1980:36-37). These unions, though frowned upon by the clergy, were not so much opposed as counteracted. Thus, when a priest’s services could
be obtained, these marriages then were regularized in accordance with Christian practices while the Indian brides and any offspring duly were baptized. (Dickason, 1985:23). This may, in fact, be the process by which Pe-say-quot acquired her Christian name. This alliance seems to have had the desired effect for Cicott’s trading operation peaked following his marriage to Pe-say-quot.

In addition to trading opportunities, by the 19th century intermarriage also offered access to large tracts of land by means of reserves granted to these families. Cicott and Pe-say-quot produced three children, Jean Baptiste, the aforementioned Sophie, and Umelia. (Robertson and Riker, 1942(2):595). By the Potawatomi Treaty of 1821, Jean Baptiste was allowed “the section of land granted by the Treaty of St. Mary’s in 1818, to Peerish or Perig.” (Henry, 1982:28). This reserve was located along the Wabash River in present-day Warren County, Ind., and surrounded the land upon which Cicott already may have established his trading post. The Cicotts again were granted reserves in the Potawatomi Treaty of 1826. Cicott received one section of land and each of his three children was given half of a section of land. (ASP, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 1835:680). Clearly, Cicott and his offspring benefited from Pe-say-quot’s Indian heritage. Though Pe-say-quot’s fate is unknown, it is certain that sometime prior to 1838 Cicott took a second Indian wife, Elizabeth Isaacs. She was a member of the Brotherton band of Indians, a remnant Indian group from New York state. She and Cicott had at least one child, Susan Cicott. (Henry, 1982:28).

Sometime between 1817 and 1824, Cicott had done well enough in the fur trade to replace the “rude building” he had erected prior to 1812 with a larger, more substantial structure. It was in this building that Cicott raised his family, conducted his trade, experienced the death of at least one wife, and finally expired in 1850 at the age of 74. The cultural significance of this structure
should not be underestimated.

As already has been established, Cicott was reared in what may be termed the French Canadian ethnic communities of Detroit and Vincennes. At Detroit, as throughout the remainder of French North America, a distinctive architectural tradition had developed by the time of Cicott’s birth. French architecture in North America was characterized by the use of hewn vertical logs set either in the ground or on a sill. As French communities spread across North America, regional architectural differences developed. In the Detroit River region, historian Dennis Au found that by the last quarter of the 18th century, the *poteaux sur une solage*, or posts-on-sill method, had replaced the earlier *poteaux en terre*, or posts-in-ground method. (Au, n.d.:12-13). A *poteaux sur une solage* house consisted of vertical logs mortised and tenoned into a wooden sill which, in turn, rested upon a stone foundation. The interstices between the vertical timbers were filled with either a clay-and-straw mixture, *bousillage*, or a stone-and-mortar mixture, *pierrotage*. The entire exterior then was whitewashed. (Au, n.d.:12, Ekberg, 1985:286-287). Throughout the Detroit River region, *pierrotage* seems to have been the preferred filling. (Au, n.d.:13).

A third style of French architecture, *piece sur piece*, may have been the predominate style in the Detroit River region from the mid-18th through the early 19th centuries. (Au, n.d.:15). This style was constructed by placing hewn horizontal timbers between vertical timbers which, in turn were mortised and were tenoned to a wooden sill. A distinctly French hallmark of each of these styles was the use of Roman numerals to mark adjoining timbers, thus indicating that these structures were “prefabricated” to insure a custom fit upon final construction. They also served as testimony to the fact that these structures usually were the work of professional carpenters. (Au, 1991b:11).

These three house styles would have been the most familiar to
Zachariah Cicott, 19th Century French Canadian Fur Trader:
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Cicott and it is likely that he lived in one or more of them while in Detroit and while in Vincennes. Heckewelder noted that in Vincennes, for instance, “The buildings of the French are all one story and instead of placing the smooth planks flat they are put upright against the frames upon which they nail them.” (Heckewelder, 1888:170).

Heckewelder also made mention of another distinctive French architectural tradition, the palisade fence. (Heckewelder, 1888:168, 170). Carl Ekberg has noted the French insistence on having picket or palisade fences in colonial Ste. Genevieve, Mo. (Ekberg, 1985:285). These fences were used to enclose the houses, outbuildings, kitchen gardens, and orchards of the French, while their livestock were left to roam freely. (Ekberg, 1985:285). The same appears to have been true of the Detroit River French. Dennis Au has described the French fences of this region as being “built of saplings and split rails about five feet tall, set a trench and secured to a horizontal rail near the top.” (Au, n.d.:6).

These architectural styles and the unique use of fences were culturally significant to the French. These were two of the traits which helped define the French as an ethnic group. The historical archaeologist James Deetz has called the house the focus of that basic human social unit, the family. As such, the form of an individual’s home “can be a strong reflection of the needs and minds of those who built it.” (Deetz, 1977:92).

The ethnohistoric record shows that Anglo-Americans who saw Cicott’s house did not know exactly how to describe it, referring to it both as a fort and as a blockhouse. (Henry, 1982:31). Other sources commented on the unusual manner in which the house was constructed. Jacob Hanes, Sr., an early Warren County settler, described the house as being “built in 1817, the logs being hewn and shapen (sic) ready for putting up and boated here.” (Hanes, 1880). During an 1886 interview, Patrick Henry Weaver, son of
another early settler, claimed that Cicott’s house had been framed from logs in Vincennes and had been brought in pirogues to present-day Independence, Ind., by Batise Seralyer. (Levering, n.d.:2). Yet another early settler, H.N. Yount, wrote in his reminiscences:

Cicot built him a log mansion, two stories high that was quite an imposing structure. This backwoods residence was made of logs carefully cut, hewed and numbered with Roman numerals, the whole arranged to form a house pattern when put up. (Yount, 1908).

These accounts hint at the possibility that Cicott’s house was built in one of the aforementioned French styles. Unfortunately, the house is no longer standing and no photographs of it are known to exist. We must turn to archaeology to provide additional data.

Excavations conducted at the Cicott Trading Post Site (Indiana Site Number – 12Wa59) during the summers of 1991 and 1992 have revealed evidence which collaborates with the ethnohistoric accounts. During the 1991 season, more than 7,000 artifacts were recovered. (Jones and Mann, 1992:10-11). The trade silver, glass beads, buttons, gunflints, and the white clay and stone smoking pipes represented the tangible remains of Cicott’s participation in the fur trade. They were an indirect reflection of that portion of his ethnic identity.

In addition to the artifacts, seven cultural features were uncovered, one of which was of particular interest. Extending at least 13.5 meters (approximately 14.8 yards) east to west and another seven meters (approximately 7.8 yards) north to south across the site was a narrow trench. Within the trench was a series of postmolds spaced about three to five centimeters (approximately 1.2 to two inches) apart. The postmolds ranged in diameter from five to 10 centimeters (approximately two to four inches). These features were interpreted as being the remains of a fence or of a palisade line. The smallness and nonuniformity of the postmolds indicated that
saplings may have been used for the pickets. This palisade may have appeared similar to the one described above. Archaeologically, this same pattern has been found at a late 18th or early 19th century French Canadian house site on the River Raisin south of Detroit. (Au, 1991a:8). Unfortunately, the exact dimensions of Cicott’s palisade line is not known, thus making further interpretations currently impossible.

Excavations during the summer of 1992 were centered on a portion of the site most likely to have contained the main structure. Although analysis still is in the early stages, preliminary observations suggest success. A linear concentration of limestone appeared to be the partial remains of the foundation. It extended roughly north to south across that portion of the site. Structural and architectural artifacts, including large amounts of nails and window glass, were associated with this feature. However, the most culturally significant artifacts recovered here may have been the mortar fragments or perhaps more appropriately, *pierrotage*. These fragments are identical in appearance to the *pierrotage* used in a posts-on-sill house built sometime during the early 19th century in Ste. Genevieve, Mo. Many of the fragments recovered at Cicott’s location still were covered with a coat of whitewash. Taken in conjunction with the ethnohistoric accounts, this limestone foundation and the associated *pierrotage* may be seen to represent the remains of either a posts-on-sill or *piece sur piece* structure, both of which could have been set on a stone foundation.

This structure, of which these artifacts and features were the physical remains, was the product of a conscious decision by Zachariah Cicott. It was the most outwardly visible manifestation of both the personal and the ethnic identities which he chose to display to the world.

By the time of Cicott’s birth, the French colonial experience in North America rapidly was drawing to a close. Detroit, the
French *entrepôt*, or warehouse, for the southern Great Lakes region, had been an official British possession for 13 years. Nevertheless, the French of North America retained a separate sense of being, an ethnic identity. The personal choices made by Zachariah Cicott, such as his occupation, his selection of wives, and his style of house, – as reflected in the ethnohistoric and archaeological records – revealed that this ethnic identity persisted into the 19th century. Contrary to the statement in a book about Indiana history that “French civilization did not leave an abiding influence in the Indiana area” after 1763 (Barnhart and Riker, 1971:129), French men and women, with their distinctively French ways, did continue to play an influential role in both Indiana’s development and settlement. And they did so for nearly a century after the Treaty of Paris had ended French control throughout the region.
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