

GENERAL CLARK—"HANNIBAL OF THE WEST"

By L. M. GRIMES¹

It may be interesting to Iowans to be reminded of the events preceding the admission of the state into the Union. The capture of the Northwest Territory by Gen. George Rogers Clark led to the purchase of the Louisiana Country, a part of which is now Iowa. Spain had ceded the Louisiana Country to France, provided that country would not dispose of it except back to Spain.

After we had acquired what was known as the Northwest Territory, the port of New Orleans was closed. This so stirred the citizens, up and down the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, that Jefferson's minister to France, Robert Livingston², purchased the whole of the Louisiana Country in 1804. The governor of Indiana, Gen. William Henry Harrison, was designated to also exercise governorship over the newly acquired territory. The seat of administration for the area, including what is now Iowa, therefore was at Vincennes.

Upper Louisiana became Missouri territory in 1809, remaining so until the state of Missouri was organized in 1821. Then followed the period when Iowa was without civil headship—from 1821 to 1834 — the military being in charge. In the latter year it was attached to Michigan territory, in 1836 made a part of Wisconsin territory, in 1838 formed an independent Iowa territory, and in 1846 admitted to the Union as a state.

Clark crossed the mountains out of Virginia seeking a home in Kentucky. He had little education. In 1775 he stopped at Lees Town on the Kentucki river, thinking it was the most beautiful spot. It did not grow. He was back and forth in Virginia and Kentucki, command-

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² By lucky chance Robert Livingstone, who had been appointed Minister to France in 1801, primarily to collect a damage claim, and later authorized to negotiate for the purchase of the island of New Orleans for a shipping base, learned that Napoleon would sell all of Louisiana. Then in 1803, James Monroe was hurriedly dispatched to Paris to assist, but found on arrival that Livingstone had already completed negotiations for the purchase not only of the island, but for the whole of the territory later known as the Louisiana Purchase.

ing the irregular militia at Harrodstown, now Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Governor Patrick Henry gave him 500 pounds of powder to be used in adding Kentucki as a county to Virginia. In 1777 he organized Kentucki as a part of Virginia.

The legislature authorized him to lead an expedition against enemy posts in Illinois and Wabash Country. The soldiers were promised land out of Clark's grant of land in what is now southern Indiana. This was by a mere letter signed by Thomas Jefferson and two other members of a committee of the Virginia assembly. Expecting 500 men, only 250 followed him to the Ohio river country seeking the capture of Detroit, Kaskaskia and Vincennes. Reinforcements either were scattered or driven back by the Indians.

His army was not considered a part of the Continental army, although it was expected the territory subdued would belong to the new nation. His force was concentrated in May 1778, on an island of about 100 acres in the Ohio river near Lewisville, now Louisville, Kentucky. When ready to start down the Ohio one company deserted. The island was fortified and twenty families left to cut timber and cultivate the land. Erosion long since has washed it away.

In this country on the Indiana side can be found thousands of unmarked graves and substantial stone fortifications extending in a curve for thirty miles. The legend is that this was the Indians Coney Island and that an entire race of White Indians here were exterminated by the Black Indians.

CLARK'S CAPTURE OF KASKASKIA

Clark started down the river with 200 men on June 24, 1778, during a nine-tenth eclipse of the sun at Lewisville. At the mouth of the Tennessee river a guide was taken from a hunting party. When the Mississippi river was reached the boats were hidden. On July 3, 1778, they were within three miles of Kaskaskia, which was captured without firing a shot. The army had

marched fifty miles with no horses or wagons, only strong men carried the munitions and baggage.

During the time Kaskaskia was controlled by England, France or Virginia, it was capital of the Illinois Country, and also during the territorial period. The trip from Ohio Falls had taken four days and nights rowing and six days on land, two of which were without food. The personal property of Rochblave in command at Kaskaskia was confiscated, sold and \$4,000 proceeds divided among the soldiers. Clark met and received aid from one Pierre Gibault, who for ten years had been a loved and honored French priest to those in and around Vincennes and Kaskaskia. Jesuit fathers from Kaskaskia from 1708 to 1780 had served in the Vincennes Catholic church.

Other French villages near what is now St. Louis were taken, including Cahokia, where are located wonderful mounds and other evidences of remote human occupancy and Indian meeting place.

Many French lived in Vincennes and were hostile to British. After capture of Kaskaskia Father Gibault went to Vincennes and persuaded the commander to surrender and in Father Gibault's church all took oath of allegiance to Virginia. The Virginia legislature added the country to that state calling it Illinois county, Virginia.

Also, in 1778, General Hamilton recaptured Vincennes, and Father Gibault and 600 inhabitants became British subjects again, under an oath asking God to forgive them for having sworn allegiance to Virginia.

Clark became friendly with Indian tribes known as: Puans, Socks, Renards, Powtowanties, Miami, Chippowon, Chief Great Blackbird, Plankenshow, Towow, Peoria, Delaware, Pillakishow, Marketan and some Shawnees.

BRITISH AND FRENCH AUTHORITY ENDED

Father Gibault helped organize the men for march on Vincennes. One Francis Vigo had met General Clark. He was a native of Sardinia, served in the Spanish

army, drifted to America and when about twenty-five years of age became a fur trader and general merchant with headquarters in St. Louis, with branches throughout the Illinois Country. Vigo advanced \$8,600 and went surety for supplies.

Gibault and Vigo advised Clark that the garrison at Fort Sackville (Vincennes) had been reduced. Clark and his men left Kaskaskia in winter of 1778-1779 with some horses and two four-pound cannons. The last few days march was over land covered with water. After a few days of occasional shooting, on February 24, 1779, General Hamilton surrendered the fort and Vincennes to Clark and forever ended British and French authority there. General Clark had more prisoners than soldiers. The surrender was because Hamilton could not see final success and the terms were liberal. Hamilton was sent to Virginia and Jefferson ordered him put in chains. All were paroled in 1780.

The last French commander remained in Vincennes and as late as 1830 his daughter operated an inn there. She had a negro servant. The supreme court of Indiana declared her to be free and not a slave. She went to St. Louis with relatives, but soon returned to work in the inn. This surrender by the British permanently fixed the possession of the territory east of the Mississippi and Kentucky.

Clark returned to Ohio Falls and in 1783 General Harrison, the governor of Virginia, relieved him of command and thanked him. His soldiers were in wretched condition, for two years having received no supplies. General Clark was in distress. He went to Richmond, Virginia, and asked for and was refused aid to be charged against what Virginia owed him for supplies furnished by him.

All land acquired by Clark was ceded to the new government in 1781. In 1812 the General Assembly of Virginia declared that Virginia was indebted to him for services, and being informed of his misfortune, his name once a "host filling friends with confidence and

foes with dismay", now "a victim of old age and disease and dependent on bounty of relatives", therefore he was granted a pension of \$400 per year. Some time prior to this, it is said, he had been given a sword by Virginia which he destroyed, saying he needed food not toys.

DRUM CORPS EASED PAIN OF AMPUTATION

General Clark took up his residence in Clarksville, Indiana, across from Louisville, near New Albany and Jeffersonville. Clarksville did not succeed. There he lived alone. About 1808 some friends came over to hunt. After they had left he fell in such a way that his leg was badly burned in the fire place, necessitating amputation. He requested the drum corp march around the house during amputation. Later he lived with a sister at Locust Grove, near Louisville, where he died in 1818, and there buried in his military clothing.

For fifty years no stone marked his grave. Under the leadership of William H. English, of Indianapolis, Indiana, a congressman 1853-61 from an Indiana district, search was made for his grave. After opening nine graves his was identified by red hair and amputated leg. William H. English was a candidate for vice president in 1880 on the Democrat ticket (Hancock and English), and a relative of Emory H. English of Des Moines. In William H. English's history, the "Conquest of the Northwest," the life of Gen. George Rogers Clark, much of this data is found.

In 1869 the remains were moved to Cave Hill cemetery, Louisville, Kentucky, where a modest but substantial stone marks his grave and others of his family. In 1888 the United States senate made an appropriation of \$25,000 for a monument, and this was approved by a committee of the whole, but was never heard of again.

Now there is a substantial monument at Vincennes, and also one at the foot of Soldiers Monument opposite the English hotel in Indianapolis. Fifty years after Clark's retirement and twenty years after his death, the government paid his estate \$30,000 on account of ad-

vancements made by him for supplies. Unmarried, he had left only collateral heirs. His will was set aside by the court and the \$30,000 squandered in litigation.

GAINED FAME AND PLACE IN HISTORY

It is written that his expedition from Kaskaskia to Vincennes was the "boldest, most trying, most difficult and hazardous ever undertaken and successfully concluded." John Randolph, of Roanoke, said that Clark earned the title of "Hannibal of the West", as "his march was never excelled and no man had more control over Indians". Considering his means and accomplishments he is ranked by some as the equal of Washington. He and his small band conquered and held possession at time of the peace treaty, of the vast territory out of which came the great states of Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and a part of Minnesota.

At the peace conference we were hampered by restrictions imposed by our government to the effect that we would not take any territory in peace negotiations without consent of France. This we finally violated. Both France and Spain aided us from selfish motives, as both wanted our boundaries limited.

Francis Vigo, a great aid, lived and died in Vincennes in 1835. He was looked up to by the French in matters of finance and credit. His credit account with the government amounted to \$8,616, with interest from 1779 to 1875, totaled \$49,898, which was allowed his estate forty years after his death. Out of this sum his funeral expenses were paid and a bell placed in the tower of court house in Terre Haute, county seat of Vigo county, Indiana, named for him. His relatives received nothing and it is uncertain what became of all the allowance, except some large commissions, fees, etc.

Father Gibault was looked up to in all matters of religion and morals. He rendered great assistance and should be credited with saving many lives. At one time he asked the government for five acres of ground upon which he could erect a house for a home. This at

the time was denied for the reason given that no one had power to give away public property. Later he was delivered a deed for five acres, but the description was so uncertain it could not be located. Where he died and is buried is unknown.

CLARK'S LAND DISTRIBUTED

Clark's grant of land was parcelled out to the surviving soldiers of his army. To carry out the promise, a board of commissioners was organized by the Virginia assembly in 1783, to supervise the distribution of 150,000 acres in what is now Clark, Scott and Floyd counties in southeastern Indiana. The recipients totaled 171, including both privates and officers. One thousand acres were set aside for the construction of Clarksville. Here and at Charlestown, Indiana, the commissioners afterwards lived, the board remaining in existence until April 2, 1847. Among the recipients of this land are found names familiar in Iowa—Wm. Brenton, ——— Whitehead, Robt. Davis, Isaac Bowman, John Montgomery, John Grimes, ——— Van Meter, Wm. Bush, Sam Pickens and others.

Historians give Pierre Caron de Beaumarchais, a Frenchman, credit for being one of the principal saviours of America when aid was sorely needed. Beaumarchais accumulated wealth and formed a financial institution later becoming the bank of France. He bought and shipped great supplies of war material. He raised some four million livres and sent a fleet of forty ships with 25,000 guns, 25,000 uniforms, thirty mortar cannons and powder.

Some of the money was borrowed from king of France which our government paid, but refused to pay Beaumarchais, bringing him to verge of bankruptcy. He died without receiving any payment. Thirty-six years after his death, congress paid his heirs 800,000 francs in settlement for debt of 3,800,000 francs. It can hardly be said that we overpaid those who contributed so much toward independence and establishment of a new free government.

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