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OUIATANON

A STUDY IN INDIANA HISTORY

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NOTE.

The extracts from letters and documents given in this study are quoted literally. No attempt is made to change either spelling or grammatical arrangement. It should be noted, however, that such proper names as Wabash, Ohio and Ouiatanon were frequently written in different ways and had no fixed orthography until later years.

OUIATANON.

On the west side of the Wabash river and four miles below the present city of Lafayette is one of the historic spots of Indiana. It is the site of Post Ouiatanon.[1] A place where for nearly a century was maintained a trading post and settlement. A place that, had it not been for the accidents of war, would still be known as the first permanent settlement in Indiana.

La Salle was doubtless the first white man to cross the territory now included within the limits of the State. This bold voyageur was one of the most dauntless of the early French explorers. He was educated as a Jesuit, but severed his connection with that order and came from France to Canada in 1666. The monks of St. Sulpice granted him a tract of land a short distance from Montreal, and this he named La Chine.

La Chine served as a kind of frontier post for Montreal, and here La Salle proposed to establish the basis of his operations in the fur trade. While here he learned of the Ohio river from a band of Seneca Indians, and, being attracted by the descriptions of it, asked permission of the Canadian authorities to fit out an expedition for the purpose of exploring southward and west. This permission was granted.

The first mention made of this expedition is by Patoulet, November 11, 1669. He says, "Messieurs La Salle and

[1] Pronounced We-aht-ah-non.

Dolier have set out accompanied by twelve men with a design to go and explore a passage they expect to discover communicating with Japan and China."[1]

Talon, Intendant of Canada, under date of July, 1670, wrote to the king of France as follows: "Since my arrival I have despatched persons of resolution who promise to penetrate further than has ever been done. The one to the west and northwest of Canada and the others to the southwest and south. These adventurers are to keep journals in all instances, and reply on their return to the written instructions that I have given them; in all cases they are to take possession, display the king's arms, and draw up procès verbaux to serve as titles."[2]

We find that these expeditions were approved, for Colbert, the French Minister, replies in February, 1671, "The resolution you have adopted to send Sieur de La Salle toward the south and Sieur de St. Lusson toward the north in order to discover the passage to the South Sea is very good, but the principal thing to which you ought to apply yourself in these sort of discoveries is to look for the copper mine."[3]

The Sulpician monks joined with La Salle in fitting out this expedition and two of their number, Dolier and Gallinee, were appointed to act in concert with him. On the 6th of July, 1669, the combined parties, numbering seven canoes and twenty-four men, started from La Chine. Having passed Niagara Falls and reached a point not far from where Hamilton now stands, they met Joliet, who was returning from the northwest where he had been sent to investigate the Lake Superior copper mines. Joliet told them of the numerous Indian tribes in that lake region, who were without any knowledge of God. This

[1] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 787.
[2] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 64.
[3] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 70.

so influenced Dolier and Gallinee that they determined to give up trying to reach the Ohio and go to these tribes as missionaries. La Salle reminded them in vain of the fact that the Jesuits had already occupied that territory and would probably give them, the representatives of a different order, the order of St. Sulpice, very little encouragement.

The company separated, the priests going to the northwest and La Salle continuing in his purpose of reaching the Ohio.[1] He was successful, but how far down he followed it is a matter of some conjecture, probably as far as the rapids near the present city of New Albany, possibly as far as its junction with the Mississippi. It was then thought that the Ohio found its way into the Mississippi, and that the Mississippi emptied into the Vermillion sea, now called the Gulf of California. It was not until 1682, when La Salle descended the Illinois into the Mississippi, and from thence floated to the Gulf of Mexico, that the true course of the Father of Waters was known.

Concerning La Salle's movements after being deserted by the two Sulpicians, Dolier and Gallinee, two versions are given. These accounts are not contradictory, although they differ in some minor matters of detail and are probably, for the most part, true. The first of these accounts is as follows:

"Meanwhile M. de la Salle continued on his way by a river which runs from east to west and passed to Onondaga, afterward to six or seven leagues below Lake Erie; and having reached as far as the 280th or 283rd degree of longitude and to the 41st degree of latitude, he found a rapid which falls to the west into a lowland, marshy, covered with dead trees, of which there were some that were standing. He was obliged to take to the land, and, fol-

[1]Parkman.

lowing a ridge which led him a long distance, he found certain savages who told him that afar off from there the same stream which lost itself in this vast and low country reunited in a channel. He then continued his journey, but as the fatigue became very great twenty-three or twenty-four men who had followed him thus far quitted him in one night, regained the river and made their way, some to New Holland and some to New England. He then found himself alone, four hundred leagues from home, whither he hastened to return, reascending the river and living by the chase and by herbs and by what the Indians that he met on the road gave him."[1]

The other is an account given by La Salle himself. It is found in a memoir addressed to the king. In this memoir he asks for certain privileges, and recounts his explorations, speaking of himself in the third person.

"In the year 1667, and those following, he made divers voyages with much expense in which he for the first time explored many countries to the south of the great lakes and among others, the great river of Ohio; he followed it to a place where it empties into vast marshes at the latitude of 37 degrees, after having been increased by another river, very large, which comes from the north; and all these waters discharge themselves according to all appearances into the Gulf of Mexico."

Some of the statements in these accounts are evidently inaccurate; as, for instance, the geographical situation as regards latitude and longitude. Enough, however, is beyond controversy to establish the fact that La Salle discovered the Ohio river and coasted the southern shores of Indiana.

From the above accounts it might readily be inferred that La Salle discovered the upper Mississippi. His friends

[1]Margry. Vol. I. Pages 377–378.

have made that claim and pushed it with considerable persistency but the honor of this discovery is usually conceded to Joliet. Even if La Salle did follow the Ohio to its mouth, he never realized the situation and never claimed the honor of having discovered the Mississippi ; something he surely would have done had he considered himself entitled to that distinction.

The French claimed the beautiful river because La Salle discovered it. In his instructions to M. Du Quesne under date of 1752, the following passage occurs: "The river Ohio, otherwise called the Beautiful River, and its tributaries belong indisputably to France, by virtue of the discovery by Sieur de la Salle, of the trading posts the French have had there since, and of possession which is so much the more unquestionable as it constitutes the most frequent communication from Canada to Louisiana. It is only within a few years that the English have undertaken to trade there ; and now they pretend to exclude us from it."[1]

In a letter of private instructions to M. Vaudreuil, dated Versailles, 1755, it is affirmed that "It is only since the last war that the English have set up claim to the territory on the Beautiful River, the possession whereof has never been disputed to the French, who have always resorted to that river since it was discovered by Sieur de La Lassalle."[2]

That the Canadian authorities regarded La Salle's expedition as of great importance, is shown by a letter written to M. Talon. He says, "Sieur de La Salle has not yet returned from his journey to the southward of this country. But Sieur de St. Lusson is returned after having advanced as far as five hundred leagues from here, and planted the cross and set up the king's arms in presence of seventeen Indian nations, assembled on this occasion from all parts.

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[1] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. X. Page 243.

[2] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. X. Page 293.

All of whom voluntarily submitted themselves to the dominion of his majesty, whom alone they regard as their sovereign protector."[1] This ceremony was performed at or near the falls of the St. Mary between Lake Huron and Lake Superior.

The desire of the French to secure trading posts and military stations in the Ohio valley, and thereby to secure the commerce of the Indians in that quarter is well set forth in a narrative of the voyage of Governor Courcelles of Canada, in 1671. It is as follows: "Wherefore some means were sought a long time ago to prevent the Iroquois going to New Netherland to trade, and the best assuredly would be to establish a post as far up as the mouth of the Ontario to command the pass through which this people go to trade when returning from the chase, and thus the French would absolutely control it. For this purpose it was necessary to reconnoitre the place, examine the most convenient sites and the finest land, and this the Governor has done in this voyage. I shall add here a reason for this voyage of no trifling importance. Two years ago, two ecclesiastics left here [to visit] divers Indian nations situated along a great river, called by the Iroquois Ohio, and by the Outaouas Mississippi. Their design did not succeed owing to some inconveniences very usual in these sort of enterprises. They learned, however, from these advances they made toward the river that it was larger than the river St. Lawrence, that the tribes settled along its banks were very numerous, and that its ordinary course was from east to west. After having carefully examined the maps we have of New Sweden, of the Floridas, of Virginia and Old Mexico, I did not discover any river mouth comparable to that of the St. Lawrence. This leads us to think that the river of which we speak disem-

[1] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IV. Page 72.

bogues into another sea—to determine which I leave to the judgment of the more learned. Nevertheless it is probable that it waters those countries toward New Spain, which abound in gold and silver."[1]

The year following La Salle's discovery of the Ohio he seems to have passed around through lakes Huron and the straits of Mackinac into Lake Michigan. From its southern extremity he found his way to the Illinois. On his return he kept farther south and crossed Indiana near the marshes of the Kankakee. Only a few years later we find him familiar with the passage up the St. Joseph and down the Kankakee into the Illinois. In 1679 La Salle built Fort Miamis at the mouth of the St. Joseph river, in Michigan. After ascending the St. Joseph to a portage which led across to the Kankakee, in company with Tonty, Father Hennepin and thirty-one other followers he passed down the Kankakee into the Illinois, and landing below Peoria Lake built Ft. Crevecoeur. [Broken Heart.] This place was so named on account of the loss of the Griffin, a vessel he had built for use in carrying his supplies and merchandise on the lakes. This vessel had just been wrecked, either by accident or by the treachery of the pilot.

Father Hennepin wrote a description of the building of Fort Miamis, which incidentally sheds a great deal of light on those early days. He says just at the mouth of the river Miamis there was an eminence with a kind of platform naturally fortified. It was pretty high and steep, of a triangular form, defended on two sides by the river and on the other by a deep ditch which the fall of the waters had made. We felled the trees that were on the top of the hill, and having cleared the same from bushes for about two musket shot we began to build a redoubt of

[1] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 82.

eighty feet long and forty feet broad with great square pieces of timber laid one upon another, and prepared a great number of stakes of about twenty-five feet long to drive into the ground to make our fort the more accessible on the river side. We employed the whole month of November (1679) about that work, which was very hard, though we had no other food but the bear's flesh our savage killed. These beasts are very common in that place because of the great quantity of grapes they find there, but their flesh being too fat and luscious our men began to be weary of it, and desired to go hunting to kill some wild goats. M. La Salle denied them that liberty, which caused some murmurs among them, and it was but unwillingly that they continued their work. This, together with the approach of winter and the apprehension that M. La Salle had that his vessel was lost made him very melancholy, though he concealed it as much as he could. We had made a cabin wherein we performed divine service every Sunday, and father Gabriel and I, who preached alternately, took care to take such texts as were suited to our present circumstances, and fit to inspire us with courage, concord and brotherly love."

That La Salle continued to trade in the waters of the Ohio, the Wabash and their tributaries is not only a natural thing to expect but is evidenced by a memoir of Denonville, on the French limits in North America, in which the passage occurs. "For the continuation of which trade he caused a fort and buildings to be erected and a bark to be began at a place called Crevecoeur in order to proceed as far as the said South Sea, two-thirds of which bark only were built, the said de la Salle having afterward employed canoes for his trade in said countries, as he had already done for several years in the rivers Oyo, Ouabache and others in the surrounding neighborhood which flow into the said Mississippi river, whereof possession had been

taken by him in the king's name, as appears by the relations made thereof."[1]

In 1683 La Salle established an Indian Confederacy on the Illinois river at Fort St. Louis. The purpose of this confederacy was to protect the French commercial interests in the west and to defend their Indian allies from the attacks of the Iroquois. The Iroquois nation had been, as a rule, friendly to the English and hostile towards the French. From their country in New York they were in the habit of making incursions further west in search of furs or on the war-path against other tribes. Sometimes these expeditions extended almost to the Mississippi. During the time of this confederacy Indiana was almost entirely denuded of the Indian population, as the tribes in this locality were friendly to the French and emigrated to Fort St. Louis.

Between 1671 and 1683, the time of the founding of the confederacy, it is extremely probable that fur traders visited the state, but it was not until the confederacy was broken up and the Indians had returned and relocated that trading posts were established. Ouiatanon, the subject of this sketch, was one of the first of these, on account of its favorable situation. It is located at that point on the Wabash where the lighter barks and canoes that were used in the carrying trade between Canada and the southwest by way of the Miami and the Little Wabash were changed for larger ones to be used on the deeper waters of the lower Wabash and the Ohio.

A reference to the map of Indiana will show that by ascending the Little Wabash the portage across to the St. Mary's and the Maumee was very short.

This post was to the Indians and fur traders of that day the head of deep water navigation, just as in later years

[1]N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 383.

and before the days of railroads Lafayette, only four miles above it, was known as the head of steamboat navigation on the Wabash.

In addition to the facilities for trade already mentioned, there were other considerations that made Ouiatanon a favored locality. It was situated near the mouth of the Wea river, a place where fish of many kinds were very plentiful. Near by was to be found a fertile soil, easy of cultivation and well adapted to the simple agricultural methods of the times. Within easy distance were to be found extensive prairies and thickly wooded forests each supplying its own particular kinds of game. It would be difficult to imagine a place better suited to purposes of trading post and settlement than was this one. While easy of access yet within signaling distance were elevations that commanded a view of the country in all directions.

It was one of the early traditions that valuable mines existed somewhere in this vicinity—mines of silver, of copper and of coal. Some of these traditions have come down even to the present generation. But no such mines have ever been found to exist near this locality.

Recently prospectors are said to have found coal a few miles above and near the mouth of the Tippecanoe river. But no mines have yet been developed.

Before the year 1718 we find that the Ouiatanons, after which tribe the post was named, were located in this neighborhood. They had once lived west of the Mississippi and at another time in the region of the Great Lakes. They were related to the Miamis and helped to form the great Miami Confederacy. They had moved to Fort St. Louis, and were a part of La Salle's colony, but on the assassination of La Salle and the disbanding of that confederacy gradually made their way to the Wabash and established themselves at this place.

A French writer thus describes Ouiatanon in 1718: "This river Ouabache is the one on which the Ouyatanons are settled. They consist of five villages which are contiguous, the one to the other. One is called Oujatanon, the other Peanguichias, and another Petitscotias and the fourth Les Gros. The name of the last I do not recollect, but they are all Oujâtanons, having the same language as the Miamis, whose brothers they are and properly all Miamis, having all the same customs and dress. The men are very numerous, fully a thousand or twelve hundred. They have a custom different from all the other nations which is to keep their fort clean, not allowing a blade of grass to remain in it. The whole of the fort is sanded like the Tuilleries. * * * Their village is situated on a high hill and they have over two leagues of improvements, where they raise Indian corn, pumpkins and melons. From the summit of this elevation nothing is visible to the eye but prairies full of buffaloes. Their play and dancing is incessant. All these tribes use a vast quantity of vermillion. The women wear clothing; the men very little."[1]

This description of the character of the soil and the elevation of the country is exceedingly accurate. The soil is a loose sand and peculiarly adapted to the products named, especially the melon. From a point of land a short distance from the place occupied by the fort the view is one of the finest. To the left the Wea Plains and the city of Lafayette, as far as the eye can reach in front are prairies dotted here and there with groves of timber; to the right, the Wabash valley extends indefinitely.

The French, in order to counteract the influence of the English and to keep their ascendancy over the Indians, established a military post at Ouiatanon in 1719 or 1720.

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[1]N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 891.

Under date of October 28th, 1719, Vaudreuil, Governor of Canada, wrote to the Council of Marine: "I learn from the last letters that have arrived from the Miamis that Sieur de Vincennes having died in their village these Indians had resolved not to move to the river St. Joseph and to remain where they are. As this resolution is very dangerous on account of the facility they will have of communicating with the English, who are constantly distributing belts in secret among all the nations to attract them to themselves by means of certain Iroquois runners and others in their pay, I had designed Sieur Dubuisson for the command of the post of Oujatanons and that he should on going thither employ his credit among the Miamis so as to determine that nation to proceed to the river St. Joseph, or, if not willing to leave that it should remain at its place of residence in order to counteract the effect of all those belts it was too frequently receiving and which, as they caused eight or ten Miami canoes to go this year to trade at Orange, might finally induce all that nation to follow their example."[1]

It is probable that the garrison did not reach the post before 1720. The exact location of this fort has been a matter of much dispute, but a careful investigation of maps and descriptions of the post as well as the recent finding of material such as Jesuit crosses, vessels used in church service, belts, buckles and fragments of other military equipments fix its position beyond a reasonable doubt. The French fort was placed upon the site of the "sanded" Indian fort already described. Both French and Indian relics are found here, and although the surface of the ground has been considerably changed by the washing of the sandy soil the general outlines of the fort

[1] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 894.

may yet be distinguished by the careful observer.[1] Post Ouiatanon on the site of the old Indian fort, the Ouiatanon town on the south side of the Wabash river and a few miles lower down, and Kethtippecanunk several miles above and near the mouth of the Tippecanoe river are not always clearly distinguished from each other by writers on early western history.

The description of the fort already quoted from a Canadian record, the description to be given later on by General Scott and by General Wilkinson are accurate when applied to the fort as located above, but will not apply to the other localities.

The first French Commandant then at Ouiatanon was Dubuisson, but he was soon succeeded by Francois Morgan, a nephew of the Sieur de Vincennes, already mentioned, who at his uncle's death, succeeded to the title. Francois Morgan, the new Sieur de Vincennes remained in charge of the fort for several years.

At this time the French ruled their possessions in the new world from two centers, Canada and Louisiana. After Francois Morgan had succeeded to his uncle's title, he was induced by a consideration of three hundred livres in addition to his salary as Lieutenant on half pay, to transfer his allegiance from the Governor of Canada to the Governor of Louisiana. Leaving Ouiatanon he proceeded down the river to the Indian village of Chipkawkay, and there established a military garrison. This was known for a long time simply as the Fort on the Wabash. It is not until 1752, that we find the name Vincennes applied to it. This fort should be carefully distinguished from Fort St. Vincent on the lower Ohio, established by Juc-

[1] Many French and Indian relics found here have been collected and deposited in the museum of Purdue University by Mr. Robert Hatcher, of Lafayette, Ind.

hereau, in 1702, and disbanded in 1704 by Lambert,[1] who had succeeded to the command at Juchereau's death. The fact that the lower Ohio was frequently called the Ouabache doubtless led to the error of considering these two posts as the same.

In 1736, in an attempt to defeat the Chickasaws and English, the noble Commandant Sieur de Vincennes was killed. The French, assisted by the Illinois Indians, were unable to cope with the combined forces of English and Chickasaws. "Vincennes died nobly, cheering on his men and urging them to be worthy of their country and of their religion."[2] After Sieur de Vincennes had taken service under the Governor of Louisiana, Ouiatanon received other French garrisons and continued to be one of the most important of their frontier settlements. Beauharnois, writing to Count Maurepas in 1731, says: "I have continued to give orders to the commanding officers in the neighborhood of the river Ouabache to be on the lookout for every attempt the English might make in that quarter." And again, in 1732, he writes: "I have had no further intelligence, my lord, of the latter having attempted to make an establishment in the neighborhood of the river Ouabache. The order I issued some years ago and which I have renewed this year, will have apparently diverted them from any views they manifested to establish themselves there."[3]

In 1744 Beauharnois wrote: "On receiving intelligence, this spring, of the different settlements and magazines the English have formed on the Beautiful River, I issued my orders and sent belts to the Detroit nations to drive them thence by force of arms and to plunder the stores they have

[1] Dunn. Page, 39.
[2] Dillon's History of Indiana.
[3] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 1035.

there. I gave like orders to the commandant among the Ouiatanons and the Miamis."[1]

In the journal of important events in Canada, for the year 1747, it is recorded that Ensign Chevalier de la Peyrade, commandant of the post of the Ouiatanons, writes from Detroit on the 24th of August "that he was on his way down to Montreal with the nations from the Ouabache when he learned in the Miami river of the treachery of the Hurons; that this intelligence, conjointly to other circumstances, obliged those nations to return to their village, where they were pretty quiet when he left them to come to Detroit, where he is waiting for news from Niagara to return to the Ouiatanons to continue his service there."[2]

The same journal, under the date of January 29, 1748, makes the following statement, after saying that thirty Frenchmen had been sent from Detroit to Ouiatanon by Mr. de Longueuil, the commandant: "That as some of our people remain among the Ouiatanons, where even some families are settled, he did not consider it right to abandon countries where no disorder has occurred and where great disturbances break out in the absence of assistance."[3]

In a communication to M. de Rouillé, dated April 21, 1751, M. de Longeueuil, commandant at Detroit, says: "Mr. de Ligneris, commandant at the Ouiatanons, believes that great reliance is not to be placed on the Mascouten's, and that their remaining neutral is all that is to be expected from them and the Kiskapous; he even adds, we are not to reckon on the nations which appear in our interests. No Ouiatanon chief has appeared at the post

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[1]N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. IX. Page 1105.
[2]N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. X. Page 139.
[3]N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. X. Page 139.

for a long time, although they had promised to inform him of all that they knew."[1]

The settlement at Ouiatanon did not increase as much in numbers as some others for the reason that the commandants did not make any grants of land to settlers as was done in other places. There is the record of a baptismal service performed in 1752. The certificate was found among other papers in the Catholic church at Vincennes. The French officer in charge of the fort was usually styled captain of infantry and commandant for the king.

When in 1760, at the surrender of Montreal, Canada passed into the hands of the English, it was also agreed that the French troops should be withdrawn from the posts in the Mississippi valley. British officers were sent to take command. Ouiatanon thus passed into the hands of the English, and the double cross of St. Andrew and St. George took the place of the lilies of France.

At the beginning of Pontiac's War, Lieutenant Jenkins, of the British army, had charge of the fort. On June 1, 1763, the Indians by stratagem took the place and made Lieutenant Jenkins and his men prisoners. It had been planned to massacre the entire garrison, but through the intervention of some Frenchmen who lived near the fort, their lives were spared and they were well treated.

In a letter to Gladwyn, at Detroit, Lieut. Jenkins thus explains the situation that has befallen him.

"OUIATANON, June 1, 1763.

"SIR: I have heard of your situation which gives me great pain; indeed, we are not in much better, for this morning the Indians sent for me to speak to me and immediately bound me when I got to their cabbin, and I soon found some of my soldiers in the same situation. They told me Detroit, Miamis and all of them posts were

[1]N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. X. Page 246.

cut off, and that it was folly to make any resistance; therefore they desired me to make the few soldiers who were in the fort surrender, otherwise they would put us all to death in case a man was killed. They were to have fell on us and killed us all last night, but Mr. Maisonville and Lorain gave them wampum not to kill us, so when they told the interpreter we were all to be killed and he, knowing the condition of the fort beg'd of them to make us prisoners. They have put us into French houses and both Indians and French use us very well. All these nations say they are very sorry but that they were obliged to do it by the other nations. The belt did not arrive here until last night about 8 o'clock. Mr. Lorain can inform you of all. Just now received the news of St. Joseph's being taken; eleven men killed and three taken prisoner with the officer. I have nothing more to say but that I sincerely wish you a speedy succor, and that we may be able to revenge ourselves on those that deserve it.

"I remain, with my sincerest wishes for your safety,

"EDWARD JENKINS.

"N. B.—We expect to set off in a day or two for the Illinois."[1]

In this expectation the Lieutenant was disappointed, for there is record of a letter written by him from Ouiatanon the last of the next month.

In a report of Sir William Johnson, Governor of Canada, under date of November 18, 1763, he states that the Kickapoos, Mascoutens, Pyankeshaws and Ouyatanons reside in the neighborhood of the post at Ouiatanon and about the Wabash river, having many tribes and villages. In a letter to the Board of Trade he thus describes the ill-feeling existing between the English and the French and Indians. "Several French families of the worst sort

[1]Parkman Conspiracy of Pontiac. Vol. 1. Page 277.

live at the Miamis and several at Ouiatanon, and in short at all other places where they formerly had posts or trading houses, and such is the credulity of the Indians that although they may find themselves repeatedly deceived by such reports they will still give them credit from their blind partiality for the French. The possession would in some measure, but not absolutely check this villainy. I hope that Colonel Croghan is far advanced on the way thither the last account I had from him mentions his being at Fort Pitt."[1]

The deceptive reports referred to in the letter had reference to the continuation of the war by the French. Colonel Croghan arrived at Fort Ouiatanon, but not exactly in the way anticipated by Sir William. On leaving Fort Pitt, he passed on down the Ohio, and when about six miles below the mouth of the Wabash was captured and taken first to Vincennes afterward to Ouiatanon. After reaching the latter place he was set at liberty and treated with great respect.

While at Ouiatanon he received a message from the French commandant, St. Auge, who still held the garrison at Fort Chartres, the English not having up to this time sent a garrison to take control. In response to this message he started at once for Fort Chartres, but soon met Pontiac, who with a number of Indians was on his way to Ouiatanon. Together they returned to the post, and the preliminary treaty looking to the closing of Pontiac's War was arranged.

The Colonel in speaking of Pontiac says, "I made it my duty to converse with Pontiac and several of the chiefs of the different nations as often as opportunity offered in order to find out the sentiment they have of the French and the English. Pontiac is a shrewd sensible Indian of

[1] N. Y. Col. Doc. Vol. VII. Page 716.

few words, and commands more respect among these nations than any other Indian I ever saw could amongst his own tribe. He and all his principal men of these nations seem at present to be convinced that the French had a view of interest in stirring up the late differences between his majesty's subjects and them and call it a beaver war, for neither Pontiac nor any of the Indians I met with ever pretend to deny that the French were at the bottom of the whole, and constantly supplied them with whatever they needed as far as in their power, everywhere through that country. Notwithstanding they are at present convinced that it was for their own interest, yet it has not changed the Indian's affection to them. They have been bred up together like children in that country, and the French have always adopted the Indian customs and manners, treated them civilly and supplied their wants generally by which means they gained the hearts of the Indians, and commanded their services and enjoyed a very large fur trade."[1]

Much the same sentiment in regard to the relations of the French and Indians had been expressed in a letter written from Ouiatanon in 1763, and quoted by Parkman. "The Canadians here are eternally telling lies to the Indians * * * One La Pointe, told the Indians a few days ago that we should all be prisoners in a short time (showing when the corn was about a foot high), that there was a great army to come from the Mississippi, and that they were to have a great number of Indians with them; therefore advised them not to help us, that they would soon take Detroit and these small posts, and then they would take Quebec, Montreal, etc., and go into our country. This I am informed they tell them from one end of the year to the other. He adds, "that the Indians will rather

[1] Col. Doc. Vol. VII. Page 787.

give six beaver skins for a blanket to a Frenchman than three to an Englishman."[1]

Colonel Croghan, while at Ouiatanon, described it as follows: "The distance from Post Vincent to Ouiatanon is two hundred and ten miles. This place is situated on the Wabash. About fourteen French families are living in the fort, which stands on the north bank of the river. The Kickapoos and Musquattimes, whose warriors had taken us, live nigh the fort on the same side of the river, where they have two villages, and the Ouiatanons have a village on the south side of the river. The country hereabout is exceedingly pleasant, being open and clear for many miles. The soil is very rich and well watered. All plants have a quick vegetation and the climate is very temperate. This post has always been a considerable trading place. The great quantity of furs taken in the country induced the French to establish this post, which was the first on the Wabash, and by a very advantageous trade they have been nobly recompensed for their labor."[2]

From the post Colonel Croghan passed on through the Indian tribes to Detroit, and there the permanent treaty was signed with Pontiac, the preliminaries of which had already been arranged at Ouiatanon.

In Hutchin's Topographical Description the following occurs: "Ouiatanon is a small stockaded fort on the western side of the Wabash, in which about a dozen families reside. The neighboring Indians are the Kickapoos, Pyankeshaws and the principal part of the Ouiatanons. The whole of these tribes amount, it is supposed, to about one thousand warriors. The fertility of soil and diversity of timber in this country are about the same as in the vicinity of St. Vincient. The annual amount of skins and furs obtained at Ouiatanon is about £8,000. By the

[1] Parkman's Conspiracy of Pontiac.

[2] Croghan's Journal, Hist. of Ky. Butler.

river Wabash the inhabitants of Detroit move to the southern parts of Ohio and the Illinois country. This route is by the Miami river to a carrying place, which, as before stated, is nine miles to the Wabash, when the river is raised with freshes."

In a review of the state of trade and Indian affairs in 1767, Sir William Johnson, Governor of Canada, states that Ouiatanon in one of the desirable trading posts of the West and that he contemplates putting a garrison there. There had been no garrison since Pontiac's War and the capture of Lieutenant Jenkins. The place now began to be distinguished more as an Indian rendezvous than as a trading point, although white families continued to reside here and the amount of trade was considerable. Lieut. Gov. Abbot, in a report dated 1777, says: "The Wabash is perhaps one of the finest rivers in the world. On its banks are several Indian towns, the most considerable of which is Ouiatanon, where it is said there are a thousand men capable to bear arms. I found them so numerous and so needy that I could not pass without great expense. The presents though very large were in a manner despised. They said their ancient French father never spake to them without a barnful of goods."

In 1785 there was a big powwow at the post. At this meeting the Indians decided to stop the advance of the whites northwest of the river Ohio. The result was that in attempting to carry out their design a few whites were killed and a general Indian war became imminent. This was prevented, however, by the movements of Captain Logan and Colonel Clark.

Antoine Gamelin was sent from Vincennes in April, 1790, to convey messages to the Indians on the Wabash. It was his object to dissuade them from war and to encour-

age peaceful relations. After he had made his talk at Fort Ouiatanon, a chief replied, "Know ye that the village of Ouiatanon is the sepulcher of all our ancestors. The chief of America invites us to go to him if we are for peace. He has not his leg broken being able to travel as far as the Illinois. He might have come here himself, and we would be glad to see him at our village. We confess that we accepted the ax, but it is by the reproach that we continually receive from the English and other nations that received the ax at first, calling us women. At the present time they invite our young men to war. As to the old men they are wishing for peace."[1] The Indians refused to give Gamelin any positive answer until they had consulted with their kinsmen, the Miamis. From Ouiatanon he passed on to the Miamis and other tribes, but his efforts were in vain, for the Indians continued to be hostile and to commit depredations on the exposed settlements near the Ohio. An expedition was planned against them and put under General Scott, with the following as a part of his instructions: "The mounted volunteers are to proceed to the Wea or Ouiatanon towns of Indiana, there to assault the said towns and the Indians therein either by surprise or otherwise, as the nature of circumstances may admit—sparing all who may cease to resist, and capturing as many as possible, especially women and children. And on this point it is the positive orders of the President of the United States that all such captives be treated with humanity and that they be carried and delivered to the commanding officer of some post of the United States on the Ohio."

Pursuant to his instructions, General Scott, with his eight hundred mounted men, crossed the Ohio and marched towards Ouiatanon. On the first day of June he reached the

[1]Dillon's Indiana. Page 228.

villages on the south side of the Wabash. In his official report, after describing the march from the Ohio and his approach to the scene of action, he says: "On the morning of the first instant, as the army entered an extensive prairie, I perceived an Indian on horseback a few miles to my right. I immediately made a detachment to intercept him; but he escaped. Finding myself discovered, I determined to advance with all the rapidity my circumstances would permit, rather with the hope than the expectation of reaching the object sought that day; for my guides were strangers to the country which I occupied. At one o'clock, having marched by computation one hundred and fifty-five miles from the Ohio, as I penetrated a grove which bordered on an extensive prairie I discovered two small villages to my left at two and four miles distance.

"My guides now recognized the ground and informed me that the main town was four or five miles in my front behind a point of woods which jutted into the prairie. I immediately detached Colonel John Hardin with sixty mounted infantry, and a troop of light horse under Captain McCoy, to attack the villages on the left, and moved on briskly with my main body in order of battle toward the town, the smoke of which was discernable. My guides were deceived with respect to the situation of the town; for instead of standing on the edge of the plain through which I marched I found it on the low ground bordering on the Wabash. On turning the point of woods one house presented in my front. Captain Price was ordered to assault that with forty men. He executed the command with great gallantry and killed two warriors.

"When I gained the summit of the eminence which overlooks the villages on the banks of the Wabash, I discovered the enemy in great confusion endeavoring to make their escape over the river in canoes. I instantly ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant Wilkinson to rush forward

with the first battalion. The order was executed with promptitude, and this detachment gained the bank of the river just as the rear of the enemy had embarked, and, regardless of a brisk fire kept up by a Kickapoo town on the opposite bank, they, in a few minutes, by a well directed fire from their rifles, destroyed all the savages with which five canoes were crowded. To my great mortification the Wabash was many feet beyond fording at this place. I therefore detached Colonel Wilkinson to a ford two miles above which my guide informed me was more practicable.

"The enemy still kept possession of the Kickapoo town. I determined to dislodge them; and for that purpose ordered Captain King's and Logsdon's companies to march down the river below the town and cross under the conduct of Major Barbee. Several of the men swam the river and others passed in a small canoe. This movement was unobserved and my men had taken post on the bank before they were discovered by the enemy who immediately abandoned the village. About this time word was brought me that Colonel Hardin was encumbered with prisoners and had discovered a stronger village further to my left than those I had observed, which he was proceeding to attack. I immediately detached Captain Brown with his company to support the colonel; but the distance being six miles, before the captain arrived the business was done, and Colonel Hardin joined me a little before sunset, having killed six warriors and taken fifty-two prisoners. Captain Bull, the warrior who discovered me in the morning, had gained the main town and given the alarm a short time before me; but the villages to my left were uninformed of my approach and had no retreat.

"The next morning I determined to dispatch my lieutenant-colonel commandant with five hundred men to destroy the important town of Keth-tip-e-ca-nunk, eighteen miles from my camp, and on the west side of the Wabash;

but on examination I found my men and horses to be so crippled and worn down by a long and laborious march and the active exertions of the preceding day that three hundred and sixty men only could be found in a capacity to undertake the enterprise, and they prepared to march on foot. Colonel Wilkinson marched with this detachment at half past five in the evening and returned to my camp the next day at one o'clock, having marched thirty-six miles in twelve hours, and destroyed the most important settlement of the enemy in that part of the federal territory.

"Many of the inhabitants of this village were French, and lived in a state of civilization. By the books; letters and other documents found there, it is evident that place is in close connection with, and dependent on, Detroit. A large quantity of corn, a variety of household goods, peltry and other articles were burned with this village, which consisted of about seventy houses, many of them well finished.

"Misunderstanding the object of a white flag which appeared on an eminence opposite to me in the afternoon of the first, I liberated an aged squaw and sent her with a message to the savages, that if they would come in and surrender their towns would be spared and they should receive good treatment. It was afterwards found that this flag was not intended as a signal of parley, but was placed there to mark the spot where a person of distinction among the Indians, who had died some time before, was interred.

"On the fourth, I determined to discharge sixteen of the weakest and most infirm of my prisoners with a talk (written) to the Wabash tribes. My motives to this measure were to rid the army of a heavy incumbrance, to gratify the impulses of humanity, to increase the panic my operations had produced, and, by distracting the councils of the enemy, to favor the views of government; and I flatter myself these objects will justify my conduct and secure the ap-

probation of my country. On the same day, after having burned the town and adjacent villages, and destroyed the growing corn and pulse, I began my march for the rapids of the Ohio, where I arrived on the fourteenth of June, without the loss of a single man by the enemy and five only wounded; having killed thirty-two, chiefly warriors of size and figure, and taken fifty-eight prisoners.

"It is with pride and pleasure I mention that no act of inhumanity has marked the conduct of the volunteers of Kentucky on this occasion. Even the inveterate habit of scalping the dead has ceased to influence. I have delivered forty-one prisoners to Captain Ashton, of the First United States regiment at Fort Steuben, for which I have his receipt. I sincerely lament that the weather and the consequences produced by it rendered it impossible for me to carry terror and desolation to the head of the Wabash. The corps I had the honor to command was equal to the object; but the condition of my horses and state of my provisions were insuperable obstacles to my own intentions and the wishes of all."[1]

The address sent to the tribes by the released prisoners was as follows:

"*To the various tribes of the Piankeshaws and all the nations of Red People lying on the waters of the Wabash:*

"The sovereign council of the thirteen United States have long patiently borne your depredations against their settlements on the side of the great mountains in the hope that you would see your error and correct it by entering with them into the bonds of amity and lasting peace. Moved by compassion and pitying your misguided councils, they have frequently addressed you on this subject, but without effect. At length their patience is exhausted and they have stretched forth the arm of power against

[1] American State Papers.

you. Their mighty sons and chief warriors have at length taken up the hatchet. They have penetrated far into your country to meet your warriors and punish them for their later transgressions; but you have fled before them and declined the battle, leaving your wives and children to their mercy. They have destroyed your old town Ouiatanon, and the neighboring villages and have taken many prisoners. Resting here two days to give you time to collect your strength, they have proceeded to your town of Keth-tip-pe-ca-nunk; but you again fled before them and that great town has been destroyed. After giving you this evidence of their power, they have stopped their hands, because they are merciful as strong; and they again indulge the hope that you will come to a sense of your true interests and determine to make a lasting peace with them and all their children forever.

"The United States have no desire to destroy the red people, although they have the power; but should you decline this invitation and pursue your unprovoked hostilities their strength will again be exerted against you. Your warriors will be slaughtered, your towns and villages ransacked and destroyed; your wives and children carried into captivity, and you may be assured that those who escape the fury of our mighty chiefs shall find no resting place on this side of the great lakes. The warriors of the United States wish not to distress or destroy women and children or old men; and though policy obliges them to retain some in captivity, yet compassion and humanity have induced them to set others at liberty, who will deliver you this talk. Those who are carried off will be left in the care of our great chief and warrior, General St. Clair, near the mouth of the Miami, and opposite the Licking river, where they will be treated with humanity and tenderness. If you wish to recover them repair to that place by the first day of July next, determined with true hearts

to bury the hatchet, and smoke the pipe of peace. They will then be restored to you, and you may again sit down in security, at your old towns, and live in peace and happiness, unmolested by the children of the United States, who will become your friends and protectors, and will be ready to furnish you with all the necessaries you may require; but should you foolishly persist in your warfare, the sons of war will be let loose against you and the hatchet will never be buried until your country is desolated and your people humbled to the dust.

"Given under my hand and seal at the Ouiatanon Town, this 4th day of June, 1791.

"CHARLES SCOTT, *Brigadier General.*"[1]

The official report and address have been quoted at some length in order to throw light on one usually misunderstood point. The principal village destroyed, the one containing the seventy houses, well finished, was not the original Ouiatanon town, as stated by Dillon and others, but the one at the mouth of the Tippecanoe and called Keth-tip-pe-ca-nunk.

In the report this is mentioned as "the most important settlement of the enemy in that quarter of the federal territory." In the address it is styled the "great town," while the one destroyed by Scott is mentioned as the Old Town Ouiatanon.

It will also be noticed that he speaks of destroying the towns near Post Ouiatanon on the fourth, the next day after Wilkinson's return. The fact that Keth-tip-pe-ca-nunk is sometimes called Upper Ouiatanon has probably led Dillon and others into this error.

The first of August of the same year General Wilkinson made a second expedition into this Wabash country. Starting from Fort Washington he directed his course so as to

[1]American State Papers.

strike the Wabash at the mouth of Eel river. He crossed the river and destroyed an Indian town named Kena-pa-com-a-qua, a few miles from the junction of the two rivers, then directed his course to Keth-tip-pe-ca-nunk. Here he destroyed what little had been made in the way of improvement since his visit in June, and then marched to Ouiatanon, forded the river, destroyed whatever of crops were to be found, and returned to the Ohio.

In his report, after detailing the circumstances of the march, he says: "I have destroyed the chief town of the Ouiatanon nation and made prisoners of the sons and daughters of the king. I have burned a respectable Kickapoo village and cut down at least four hundred and thirty acres of corn, chiefly in the milk. The Ouiatanons, left without houses or provisions, must cease to war, and will find active employment to subsist their squaws and children during the impending winter."[1]

After this fearful scourging the subsequent history of the Post Ouiatanon seems enveloped in mystery. The French families took their departure and attached themselves to other settlements. Keth-tip-pe-ca-nunk, before long, becomes the general meeting place of the Indians. It is here that the Prophet locates in 1808, and soon the name is changed to Prophetstown. This was the objective point, when, in 1811, Harrison's campaign against the Indians terminated in the battle of Tippecanoe. The high bluffs on the south side of the river and a little above the old fort still remain. From this eminence General Scott beheld the fort, the Indian towns on the left and farther down the river and the Kickapoo town almost opposite.

Doubtless the white flag he saw was near the ruins of the fort, for, as was their custom, both French and Indians had used a part of this elevation as a burial ground.

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[1]American State Papers.

The chance visitor to the old fort will no longer see the canoe crossing the river nor any of the varied scenes of Indian town and trading settlement. The outlook is upon fertile valleys and cultivated uplands. In place of the warrior going forth to the hunt, or the trader with canoe well laden with peltry, will be seen the busy farmer in the fields, or the quiet fisher angling for the finny denizens of the water that still abound in the Wabash near the mouth of the Wea.