

CONTINENTALS AND *COUREURS DE BOIS*:  
THE AMERICAN INVASIONS OF CANADA  
AND ILLINOIS IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

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by

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## ABSTRACT

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Although the American invasion of the francophone British territories of Canada in 1775 and the Illinois Country in 1778 had radically different endings, the course of the invasions were remarkably similar. Each was defensive in nature, intended to preempt attacks on the colony of New York from Canada and the Virginia county of Kentucky from Illinois. Each featured charismatic and gifted commanders, Brigadier General Richard Montgomery in Canada and Lieutenant Colonel George Rogers Clark in the Illinois Country, who understood that a critical part of their respective missions was to win the hearts of the French populace and turn them into allies against the British if possible. Each featured early and relatively easy victories; in bloodless conquests, Montgomery took Montreal and Clark took the French villages of Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes. Each suffered setbacks, as British governor Guy Carleton escaped the Continental occupation of Montreal to lead the defense of Quebec, and British lieutenant governor Henry Hamilton of Detroit organized a counterattack on Vincennes as a base to retake the Illinois Country from Clark. However, Montgomery led a long and fruitless siege of Quebec before dying in a desperate attempt to take the city, while Clark's similar desperation play broke Hamilton's defense of Vincennes and secured a substantial part of the Old Northwest for the nascent United States.

This work is a rare if not unique comparative study of the two invasions. After considering the relative conditions of each in terms of backgrounds, religious atmosphere, Indian relations, and commerce, the actual invasions are examined. The

crucial difference is found to be that the Illinois Country bordered on Spanish possessions, which provided Spain with the opportunity to use its resources and influence to damage its ancient enemy by assisting Clark and his Virginians, while no such aid awaited Montgomery in Canada.

**KEY WORDS:** American Revolution, Canada, Illinois, Spain, Kaskaskia, Cahokia, Quebec, Montreal, George Rogers Clark, Guy Carleton, Hurons, Potawatomi, Roman Catholic Church

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER I: BACKGROUNDS .....	18
CHAPTER II: FAITHS .....	38
CHAPTER III: NATIVE AMERICANS .....	59
CHAPTER IV: COMMERCE .....	78
CHAPTER V: CONFLICTS .....	91
CONCLUSION .....	120
REFERENCES .....	128
VITA .....	133

## INTRODUCTION

There are striking parallels between the American invasions of the conquered French provinces of the British Empire, Canada in 1775 and the *pays des Illinois*, the Illinois Country, in 1778. Each was undertaken as a primarily defensive measure against British exploitation of perceived vulnerabilities along the American frontier. In the case of Canada, the New England colonists feared that the British would take advantage of an easy invasion route down the Richelieu River and Lakes Champlain and George. They would almost certainly bring the Hurons, the Caughanawa, and other allied Native American tribes in tow, and perhaps even French militia, who might have been won over to the side of the British by the concessions of the 1774 Quebec Act.<sup>1</sup> The Virginian settlers of Kentucky, for their part, knew that the British had unleashed hostile Algonquin warriors onto the “dark and bloody ground,” and were convinced that the French towns along the Mississippi served as staging areas for Native raids.<sup>2</sup> Early decisive successes led the commanders of each expedition, Major General Richard Montgomery in Canada and Lieutenant Colonel George Rogers Clark in the Illinois Country, to aspire to the conquest of not only the territories of their respective campaigns, but the hearts and minds of the predominantly French inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> However, the two campaigns ended very differently. Montgomery was killed in a desperate assault on Quebec City on December 31, 1775, leading to Continental forces having abandoned Canada by June of 1776, while Clark became known as the “conqueror of the Illinois” after having forced

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<sup>1</sup> Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774-1776* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2013), Kindle Edition, ch. 5, locs. 1161-1175.

<sup>2</sup> George Rogers Clark, *The Conquest of the Illinois* (Waxkeep Publishing, 2013), Kindle Edition, locs. 264-274.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, ch. 11, loc. 3131; Clarence Walsworth Alvord, *The Illinois Country: 1673-1818* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1922), 327.

the surrender of the last British redoubt in the Illinois Country and taken lieutenant governor Henry Hamilton and his garrison prisoner. In the course of comparing these two campaigns, it will become apparent that the diplomatic, logistical, and economic environments were remarkably similar, but the presence of one critical difference – an accident of geography – was a critical element in the success of the Illinois campaign, as opposed to the invasion of Canada.

Given the paucity of literature comparing the Canadian and Illinois campaigns, the bodies of work on each must be considered separately. Regarding Canada, one must begin with the work against which all future histories of that nation would be defined, the *Histoire du Canada* of François-Xavier Garneau, completed in 1848. Not a classically trained historian, Garneau was attracted to history as a practical endeavor by the work of French historian Jules Michelet, who was in turn a devotee of historical theories of the Italian philologist and philosopher Giambattista Vico, whose *Nuova Scienza* Michelet had translated into French.<sup>4</sup> Vico held that the foundational myths of a nation, formed through a union of primal historical and linguistic facts, were necessary in order to sustain it, and Garneau was not slow to see the possibilities of a Canadian foundational myth based on the historical struggle of the French against the British in Canada to retain its language and culture.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, Garneau's summation of the British motivations of the Quebec Act of 1774, which radically expanded French Catholic freedoms and was cited as a *casus*

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<sup>4</sup> Serge Gagnon, trans. Yves Brunelle, *Quebec and its Historians, 1840 to 1920* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1982), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Giambattista Vico, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 116; Pierre Savard, "François-Xavier Garneau," in Laurier L. LaPierre, ed., *Four O'Clock Lectures: French-Canadian Thinkers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), 23-24.



*bello* in the Declaration of Independence, was that it was meant strictly to keep the French Canadians from joining the Americans, and to soften the attitude of the people toward taxation.<sup>6</sup> When discussing the attitude of the Canadian *habitants*, or peasant farmers, toward the Americans, he noted that “they ever preserved in their hearts that hatred for the British race . . . viewing both alike as one body of turbulent and ambitious oppressors.”<sup>7</sup> Garneau did admit the popularity of the governor, Sir Guy Carleton, but reserved his scorn for the British merchants who had come to Canada to use British law to dispossess the French inhabitants.<sup>8</sup> When speaking of British “malcontents” leaving Quebec during the American siege, Garneau sneered that they retired to their homes “to await the result of the leaguer, and hail it with a cry of *God save the King!* or *The Congress forever!* according to circumstances.”<sup>9</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum is Hilda Neatby, Companion of the Order of Canada and author of *Quebec: The Revolutionary Age, 1760-1791*. As opposed to Garneau’s portrait of cowardly and treacherous British merchants, a manipulative and deceitful metropolitan government in London, and a popular but mistrustful governor, Neatby argues that the British merchant class were made promises that Carleton twisted and ignored instructions from London to deny them.<sup>10</sup> Neatby agrees with Garneau that Carleton planned to establish an autocratic government in Quebec with which he could threaten the Atlantic colonies into submission, but whereas Garneau believed that the ultimate aim was to disenfranchise the French, Neatby accuses him of attempting to

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<sup>6</sup> François-Xavier Garneau, trans. Andrew Bell, *History of Canada from the Time of Its Discovery till the Union Year 1840-41* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1862), 2:128.

<sup>7</sup> Garneau, 2:128.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>10</sup> Hilda Neatby, *Quebec: The Revolutionary Age, 1760-1791* (Toronto: McClellan and Stewart Limited, 1966), 140.

deprive British subjects of their liberties in order to forestall revolution in both Canada and the American colonies and of trying to establish a despotic model for the remainder of the colonies, which was what the southern colonists themselves believed.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Garneau was an overt apostle of French Canada, Neatby repeatedly remarks that a slow drift toward anglicization would have been more just and, ultimately, more humane for the French themselves.<sup>12</sup> Regarding the American invasion, as opposed to Garneau dismissing the British merchants, she points out that Carleton belatedly recognized their value.<sup>13</sup>

Between these poles lie two works of the same name, *Canada and the American Revolution*, one written by George M. Wrong in 1934 and the other by Gustave Lanctot in 1967. Wrong concedes Neatby's point that Carleton's strategy was based on the idea that the only way to keep Canada British was to encourage its French character; unlike Neatby, though, he believed that Carleton's reasoning was both sound and justifiable.<sup>14</sup> Wrong approached the question not so much in terms of equity toward the French as he did British interests in keeping Canada, although he did address the fundamental unfairness of disenfranchising the French Catholics under the Test Act.<sup>15</sup> Lanctot is more sympathetic to the French cause; his criticism, in which he echoes Simon Sanguinet, a Loyalist notary in Montreal at the time of the invasion, is that Carleton was timid and too respectful of British rights to stop the Continental propaganda that preceded the invasion and to take stronger measures against the invaders and their supporters in Canada once

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<sup>11</sup> Neatby, 107-108.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>14</sup> George M. Wrong, *Canada and the American Revolution: The Disruption of the First British Empire* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1968), 281-282

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-232.

the operation began.<sup>16</sup> Lancotot is willing to give Carleton and the British government credit for the Quebec Act, but is critical of the fact that it was so slow in coming that it was issued only on the eve of the Revolution, which led many Canadians to believe the charge that it was intended to rally support for the government against the Atlantic colonists.<sup>17</sup>

In *The Idea of Liberty in Canada during the Age of Atlantic Revolutions*, Michel Ducharme makes the case that in the conflict between a “republican liberty” reminiscent of Hobbes or Rousseau, in which the liberty of a free people was entirely vested in an elected assembly, and a “modern liberty” in which institutions existed to protect individual liberties, the Canadians had preferred modern liberty, which aligned more with the British model of administration.<sup>18</sup> In this telling, the educated classes, having understood that ceding their individual rights to a representative body placed their culture in jeopardy in the future as more and more British subjects arrived, rejected the risks involved in accepting the Continental republican ideal in favor of the more authoritarian model of the British governor and his mostly compliant council that they were certain would protect their individual rights.<sup>19</sup> Without the strong backing of this elite, the Continental invasion could not succeed, although its principles would not be forgotten in future events.

In *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony*, Mark R. Anderson refers to the Continental invasion of Canada as the first American “war of liberation,” presaging

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<sup>16</sup> Gustave Lancotot, *Canada and the American Revolution, 1774-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 86-87.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Ducharme, trans. Peter Feldstein, *The Idea of Liberty in Canada during the Age of Atlantic Revolutions, 1776-1838* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

interventions in Cuba, Latin America, and the Middle East.<sup>20</sup> Unlike any of the above-mentioned authors, Anderson makes the case that the subtext of the invasion was ideological rather than strategic or conquest-oriented.<sup>21</sup> Like Neatby, Anderson is sympathetic toward the largely pro-American British merchant class, making the case that their adherence to what they considered to be British rights was a valid viewpoint that happened to have lost the war, as opposed to immoral or venal, similar to most Tories in the Atlantic colonies during the Revolution.<sup>22</sup> Similar to Garneau, though, Anderson concedes that Carleton made the correct strategic decision to cultivate the French clergy and seigneurs, whom although reduced in stature after the British invasion were still able to hold the French merchants and just enough of the *habitants* fast to the British cause to deny the Continentals the committees of correspondence and the regional elective legislative bodies that would have fully cemented their hold on the parts of the country that they controlled.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding the Illinois Country, Clark's memoirs are the logical place to begin. Although the usual caveats concerning self-interest have to be borne in mind, they are accurate and verifiable in their broad outlines, and have been taken at close to face value by most of the historians that followed him. Clark's objectives in launching the invasion of the Illinois Country are presented straightforwardly: he believed that the British were using the Illinois French to organize and train Indian raiding parties to send into Kentucky, and he intended to stop it by neutralizing any British officials or French

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<sup>20</sup> Anderson, Introduction, loc. 110.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 136.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, Conclusion, loc. 6748.

traders using their influence in that manner.<sup>24</sup> If in the meantime he could convince the French to join with the Americans, so much the better, but by his own account he was uninterested in a “war of liberation” such as Anderson thought the invasion of Canada represented.<sup>25</sup>

Clark’s version of events is uncritically reproduced in the first major historical work on the state of Illinois, written by John Reynolds, the former governor of the state who had prosecuted the Black Hawk War, in 1852.<sup>26</sup> In his magisterial work *The Illinois Country*, written in 1920 as part of a centennial series on the state’s history, Clarence Walsworth Alvord does so as well, but unlike Reynolds he makes use of other sources to present a fully rounded picture of the conquest. Among other details, Alvord points out that Clark knew that he was not entering the Illinois Country with no friends or resources in place; he had a spy, Thomas Bentley, in Kaskaskia, the largest town in the *pays des Illinois*, and a Spanish emissary to the Continental Congress had been made aware of the expedition and had promised assistance from St. Louis upon Clark’s arrival.<sup>27</sup> One account on which Alvord is more sharply critical than is Reynolds is the treatment of the French after the conquest of the Illinois, although even here he does not blame Clark directly. While Reynolds attributes the decline of the French in Illinois to their inability to function at an Anglo-Saxon tempo, Alvord meticulously details the ways in which the French were defrauded and often terrorized by the American administrators and merchants that succeeded Clark.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Clark, ch. 1, loc. 273.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>26</sup> John Reynolds, *The Pioneer History of Illinois* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 1887), 85-86.

<sup>27</sup> Alvord, 324, 330.

<sup>28</sup> Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 125-126; Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 352-353.

One author who takes decided issue with Clark's account, and those who have accepted it as the basis of their own histories, is Richard White, a MacArthur Foundation fellow and author of *The Middle Ground*, which opened an important new perspective on the relations between Europeans and Indians in the *pays des Illinois* and the further reaches of the Old Northwest, around the modern states of Iowa, Michigan, and parts of Indiana and Ohio, as well as the southern portion of Ontario, known collectively as the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>29</sup> White's concept of the middle ground is as much conceptual as it is geographical; it refers to the ways in which language, symbols, and rituals were borrowed and mutually transformed to become a common space through which Europeans, particularly the French but also to lesser extents the British, Spanish, and Americans, could share meaning.<sup>30</sup> In White's telling, Clark's gift was that his experiences with fighting the Shawnee and Miami in Kentucky gave him certain narrow insights into the "middle ground" created by the creative friction in the *pays des Illinois* and the *pays d'en haut* to the north. He was able to transcend the weaknesses of his understanding by reassuming the role of a war leader when he failed to understand or express the intricate diplomacy expected of a chief.<sup>31</sup> His curse was that for all of his diplomatic posturing, he never understood what was required to grow beyond the confines of a war leader, and therefore was not able to consolidate his diplomatic gains, even to the extent of launching an expedition against Detroit, his ultimate objective.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>30</sup> White, xxx-xxxi.

<sup>31</sup> White, 370.

<sup>32</sup> White, 386.

Moreover, according to White, Clark's bitter experiences in Kentucky had rendered him an "Indian hater," incapable of considering the Indians in any capacity other than wild animals or barbaric foes.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, White holds that after some early missteps, the British commanders had begun to learn the intricacies of the middle ground that had been mastered by the French, in large part by learning from the French themselves.<sup>34</sup> Although initially hostile to the British, the Shawnee, Miami, Potawatomi, and the tribes of the old Illinois Confederacy were placated by the patient diplomacy and experienced hands of Sir William Johnson, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Department, and his deputy in the West, George Croghan, and the traditional relationship between "fathers" and "children" that had dominated the history of relations between the French and the Natives was partially suborned by the British.<sup>35</sup> As a result, Hamilton, who like most western officers did not share Carleton's scruples regarding the employment of Native American warriors. He assembled an effective fighting force for the occupation of Vincennes, although he was forced to adopt the tactics of the middle ground to keep his force together.<sup>36</sup> Although the town surrendered without resistance, Hamilton was unable to employ them when Clark struck back, having released them due to the lateness of the season.

Carl Ekberg, professor emeritus of Illinois colonial history at Illinois State University and two-time winner of the Kemper and Leila Williams Prize in Louisiana history, agrees with White's assessment of Clark, calling him an "Indian killer" in his

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 372-374.

work *St. Louis Rising*.<sup>37</sup> Ekberg sharply contrasts Clark's character with that of Louis St. Ange de Bellerive, last commandant of Fort de Chartres and longtime administrator of Spanish St. Louis; Ekberg claims that "the very notion of race as it came to be elaborated in the nineteenth century was alien to St. Ange, as it generally was to all persons of French extraction living in the Illinois Country," presumably in contrast to the encroaching Americans.<sup>38</sup> In *French Roots in the Illinois Country*, he makes the claim that in terms of community and agriculture as well as race, Clark came and went without leaving a permanent mark on French society in the *pays des Illinois*; it was only in the subsequent migrations from the east a few years later that the culture of the Illinois French became undermined.<sup>39</sup>

In Susan Sleeper-Smith's *Indian Women and French Men*, she provides an alternate explanation of Native American behavior during Clark's adventure. Beyond the reluctance of the Potawatomi to become involved in the conflict between the British and the "Long Knives," as the Algonquins called the Virginians of Kentucky, the British had offered a serious affront to the Potawatomi at St. Joseph, a community largely comprised of *métis*, or children of mixed French and native ancestry: they had removed the family of Louis and Marie-Madeleine Chevalier, ostensibly on suspicion of collaboration with hostile Native elements but more likely to supplant their trading operation on behalf of British merchants.<sup>40</sup> Marie-Madeleine Chevalier was a *métis* of considerable regional influence; she had previously been married to a Kaskaskia merchant named

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<sup>37</sup> Carl J. Ekberg and Sharon Person, *St. Louis Rising: The French Regime of Louis St. Ange de Bellerive* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 207.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Carl J. Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country: The Mississippi Frontier in Colonial Times* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 250-251.

<sup>40</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 67.



l'Archevêque, and due largely to her influence, Louis was a successful trader as well. Her daughters in turn had each married other French traders, all of whom were enriched by the connections of *mère et filles* to the Potawatomi and other indigenous Algonquin tribes.<sup>41</sup> Sleeper-Smith describes a far-flung familial trade network reaching from St. Joseph in the *pays d'en haut* to Cahokia in the *pays des Illinois*, largely matriarchal in nature, which pursued its own agenda and played a role that attracted little notice from Europeans but which played an important role in the development of the Illinois campaign.

Two historians of the city of St. Louis, Frederick Fausz in *Founding St. Louis* and Stephen Kling and his collaborators in *The Battle of St. Louis and the Attack on Cahokia*, describe the influence upon events of the Spanish government of the city. Ekberg addresses the Spanish occupation in the wake of the French and Indian War and the *modus vivendi* eventually reached by the French inhabitants and their new Spanish governors, and Alvord noted the communication between the Americans and the Spanish on the eve of Clark's venture, along with the friendship between Clark and the Spanish lieutenant governor Fernando de Leyba. However, Fausz notes the extent to which the war raised the profile of the still young capital of Upper Louisiana, as well as the commercial nexus formed by family alliances across both sides of the Mississippi, which was placed by the Spanish at the service of the Continentals, even though in 1778 the Spanish were still technically a neutral party.<sup>42</sup> For his part, Kling places the Illinois conflict, especially in its later stages, in the context of two major regional campaigns in

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-49.

<sup>42</sup> J. Frederick Fausz, *Founding St. Louis: First City of the New West* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011, Kindle Edition), 160.

which it played a part. The first was the successful attack of Bernardo Galvez, the Spanish governor at New Orleans, upon the British posts of Manchac and Baton Rouge to the north of New Orleans, then upon Mobile and Pensacola, the strongholds of British West Florida, as the Spanish officially entered the war in 1779.<sup>43</sup> The second was the British counterattack, which was designed to recover all of the possessions lost to the Virginians and the Spanish in one fell swoop, and in addition to eliminate the Spanish as a factor in Upper Louisiana by seizing St. Louis and the older settlement of Ste. Genevieve to the south as well.<sup>44</sup> The two authors thus emphasize the nature of the American Revolution in the West as an imperial struggle as well as a war of independence, and remark at some length on the involvement of the Spanish in Clark's invasion.

The present work will weave the two narratives of the American campaigns in Canada and the Illinois Country into a series of comparisons, which will demonstrate the remarkable similarities between the two. First, a broad overview will be given of Canada and the *pays des Illinois* from the fall of New France and the cession of Canada and Louisiana to the British and Spanish in 1763 to the eve of the American Revolution in 1775. It will be shown that in each instance, self-interested and incompetent governance eventually gave way to more humane and enlightened efforts on the part of the British, although this happened more quickly in Quebec than it did the Illinois administrative centers of Fort de Chartres and later the city of Kaskaskia. Initial disdain for what were perceived as castoffs of the former Bourbon empire turned to chagrin as the British

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<sup>43</sup> Stephen L. Kling, Jr., Kristine J. Sjostrom, and Marysia T. Lopez, *The Battle of St. Louis, The Attack on Cahokia, and the American Revolution in the West* (St. Louis: THGC Publishing, 2017), 36-38.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-51.

realized that their new subjects were fleeing for the exits, and as a result the British administrators either tolerated or encouraged French language, culture, and most surprising to the French, religion. Carleton cultivated the seigneurs and the clergy as his interlocutors with the Canadian people, and the later British commandants of the Illinois Country, most notably Captain Hugh Lord, the last British officer stationed there, attempted to do the same with the local merchants standing in for the gentry. However, they found that few were left to speak for them. In the chaotic environment in the Illinois after its cession, the Spanish were able to lure one-third of the French population to the west bank of the Mississippi, including the majority of its wealthier inhabitants.

Next will be considered the state of the Church in the two francophone regions. In Canada, after an early attempt to establish the Test Act barring Catholics from public service along with other instruments of Anglican hegemony, Carleton and the London government began a slow string of concessions that culminated in the Quebec Act of 1774 and its promise of full equality of opportunity for Catholics in Canada. These included permission for a bishop to be installed with the approval of the governor, and in due course Jean-Olivier Briand became bishop of Quebec. Briand well understood his unique position in British dominions, as nowhere else under British rule, including Ireland, was allowed a bishop; moreover, he knew that what London had given it could take away. Accordingly, he became one of the governor's staunchest allies as well as one of his few friends. This may have ensured the prosperity of the Canadian Church, but it also opened Briand and the clergy to charges of overstepping their pastoral bounds and engaging in politics, which ignited a smoldering anticlerical sentiment among the *habitants* in particular. In the Illinois Country, Father Sebastien Meurin, Briand's vicar-

general, upheld his policy; however, due to the Church's purge of the Society of Jesus, he was the sole priest in the region. When help finally did arrive in the form of a young and energetic priest named Pierre Gibault, Meurin found that Gibault was considered by the bishop to be recalcitrant, and Gibault was more often to be found on the Spanish bank of the Mississippi, away from the control of Briand and Meurin, than in the dangerous western hinterlands of his territory. When Clark arrived, he found Gibault to be indispensable in his service, to Briand's chagrin.

From there, relationships with the Native Americans will be examined. Other than a bloodless show of force at the British post of Vincennes on the Wabash River, which had been occupied by the Virginians, and a fruitless attack on St. Louis and Cahokia, the second city of the *pays des Illinois* after Kaskaskia, the Indians played a small role in the hostilities in both Canada and the Illinois Country. For the most part, this was by design; Montgomery, Carleton, and Clark wanted nothing to do with Indian warfare, having each been repulsed by encounters with it at various points of their careers. This was not true of the British lieutenant governors in the west, notably Henry Hamilton at Detroit, Arent de Peyster and Patrick Sinclair at Michilimackinac, and Philippe de Rastel, sieur de Rocheblave, commanding under the British at Kaskaskia. These men had each served for considerable periods of time in the western posts and had grown quite comfortable with the tribes in their vicinities; Rocheblave had been a French trader before his employment with the British, and the others had learned well from the French of their acquaintances. Hamilton in particular was known as the "Hair Buyer" because he was known to pay for the scalps of victims of Indian raids in Kentucky. However, their efforts to stir up resistance to Clark among the Illinois, the Potawatomi,

the Ojibwe, and others were countered by Spanish agents prior to his arrival, and Clark himself dealt with the tribes once upon the scene; Hamilton was forced to come into the *pays d'en haut* himself to recruit the Kickapoo and the Onsetians, and their aid was ultimately of limited effectiveness.

Following that discussion, commercial interests will be considered. One of the critical concerns that Montgomery faced involved the use of Continental paper money in Canada. Due to having been left without recourse when they were forced to accept French paper and were subsequently abandoned by the French, all Canadians as well as the French in Illinois were left with an abhorrence of paper notes. As a result, Montgomery and Benedict Arnold, who led a supplementary expedition from Massachusetts through Maine and into Quebec, had to rely on uncertain shipments of specie from the Continental Congress; the invasion entered a new and ominous phase when the Army's hard money ran out and troops in Montreal started forcing merchants and *habitants* to accept Continental notes. By contrast, the American agent Oliver Pollock, operating out of Spanish New Orleans, was able to assemble plentiful credit and borrowed specie to send upriver to Clark, and Kaskaskia merchants such as Gabriel Cerré and Charles Gratiot were willing to accept Continental notes at face value even though it was common knowledge that they were hyperinflated at the time. Cerré and Gratiot were part of the exclusive merchant clique spanning the river, which the Spanish were encouraging to assist Clark to the best of their ability.

Finally, the conflicts themselves will be examined. With no help from the local Indian tribes, both Montgomery and Clark would be dependent upon both the material and military support of the French, the *habitants* in particular. Each had significant

successes in the beginning; Montgomery quickly secured Chambly and St. John's on the Richelieu River, soon followed by Montreal, while Clark bloodlessly took Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and smaller towns such as Prairie du Rocher and St-Philippe in between the two, along with Vincennes. Each found enthusiastic supporters, but while with Clark they represented a majority of the French, in Montgomery's case it was a relatively small number, the remainder expressing a desire to remain neutral. When each suffered reverses, Carleton escaping to Quebec to lead the city's defense and Hamilton marching from Detroit to seize back Vincennes, they were cognizant of the fact that their own forces were unequal to the task of storming their objectives, and looked to the French. In Montgomery's case, about 500 responded, and these were sufficiently unenthusiastic that he would not commit them to battle. In Clark's case, on the other hand, the number of French volunteers outnumbered his own men, and their presence ensured that the Vincennes *habitants* and many of the Indians would stay out of the fight, whereas the majority of the defenders of Quebec were French militia.

As this summary has shown, the situations in Canada and the Illinois Country shared many features, but there were a few important differences: the small number of French merchants in Kaskaskia as opposed to the large seigneurie in Canada; the willingness of those merchants that remained in the Illinois Country to join the Americans and provide them credit as opposed to the determination of the gentry, clergy, and French bourgeoisie to remain loyal to the British and their rejection of Continental money; and the loyalty of the French to Clark as opposed to Montgomery. In each of these cases, the accident of geography mentioned earlier was a critical factor; in each,

Spain provided the assistance that made Clark's mission a success where Montgomery's was ultimately a failure.

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUNDS

Canada and the *pays des Illinois* shared a dubious distinction: Of the three belligerent powers – Great Britain, the United Colonies, and Spain – that occupied and fought for them, possession of these lands meant less to each of the powers than did denying them to one another. The British had retained possession of Canada and the Illinois Country after the French and Indian War mainly to ensure that their old adversary France did not regain any toehold on the North American continent. The Spanish grudgingly accepted the French “gift” of Louisiana so their once and future enemies the British would not share a border directly on their more valuable western possessions. The French regime itself had barely cast a backward glance at them after the Treaty of Paris, having considered itself fortunate to have kept Guadeloupe and Martinique in the bargain; Voltaire’s judgment of Canada as “*quelques arpents de neige*” – some acres of snow – now seemed more than applicable to the western expanses of the French empire in North America as well.<sup>45</sup>

As regards the Americans, they would have shown little immediate interest in either Canada or the Illinois Country during the Revolutionary War if they had not represented potential or actual staging grounds for invasion by the British or the Indians. The Atlantic colonists had shown scant interest in Canada after the end of the French and Indian War; by 1774 there were just over 1,000 emigrants from the lower colonies, mostly traders and merchants expecting that the British governor would extend them preferential treatment over the French.<sup>46</sup> The Virginians in Kentucky could certainly be

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<sup>45</sup> Voltaire, trans. Philip Littell, *Candide* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1918), 123.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, ch. 2, loc. 423.



land-hungry and acquisitive, but they were already overextended and in a mortal struggle with the Shawnee and the Miami, who from the early stages of the Revolution were sponsored by the British. While Clark remarked upon the desirability of Illinois land while on the march to Kaskaskia, it was desperation to be free of Indian raids rather than the drive for more territory that drove him and his men.<sup>47</sup>

The British and Spanish, as had the French before them, soon found that the cost of the provinces nearly matched their worth, particularly with expensive Indian diplomacy a constant necessity. Being already in possession of Canada at the end of the French and Indian War, the British had already established an *ad hoc* military government, but there was no sense of urgency concerning how the new colony would be governed or integrated into the Empire in the long term; a coherent system of governance was forced to wait until 1774, with the passage of the Quebec Act. The Illinois Country was a puzzle to the British in London, New York, and eventually Quebec City once it was brought under Canadian control by the Quebec Act. Initially, the French villages were left under the control of Louis Bellerive de Saint-Ange, the commandant at Fort de Chartres. He in turn scrupulously upheld the new sovereignty of the British to both the French and Native American populations of the region, most notably during the uprising of several tribes under the Ottawa chieftain Pontiac in 1763. Saint-Ange denied Pontiac supplies or shelter and encouraged his reconciliation with the British.<sup>48</sup> However, Saint-Ange was unable to prevent the French habitants along the Mississippi or Wabash from conspiring with Pontiac and other chiefs suspicious of British intentions and offended by

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<sup>47</sup> William R. Nester, *George Rogers Clark: I Glory in War* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 75.

<sup>48</sup> Ekberg, *St. Louis Rising*, 67-69.

the parsimony of their gifts as opposed to the old French government to thwart British efforts to establish a presence in the Illinois Country.

Accordingly, General Jeffrey Amherst, Gage's predecessor as commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, addressed the problem with a new sense of urgency.<sup>49</sup> Amherst considered several options -- evacuating the French villages to Canada in an inversion of sorts of the Acadian diaspora, or of forcing French colonists to migrate to a single village, presumably Kaskaskia or Vincennes.<sup>50</sup> General Thomas Gage, overall commander of British forces in North America, based in New York, developed a scheme for the government of the Illinois Country, and another one, entitled "*Invitation Serieuse aux Habitants des Illinois*," came directly from the French themselves. It was a sign of the considerable natural progress in self-government made by the *habitants* over the course of their century-old relative isolation from Quebec or New Orleans that they would put such a document forward, although it was ultimately ignored.<sup>51</sup> By default, government devolved to the British Army even after the Quebec Act moved responsibility for the Illinois Country from New York to Quebec City, since no British civil servants were available and no system of local governance could be agreed upon. In the end, from the Conquest to the American Revolution, Canada and the Illinois Country were governed in the same fashion: a military officer governing through a compliant council, mostly French in makeup, comprised of Quebec social elites and militia captains and judges based in Kaskaskia.

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<sup>49</sup> White, 276-277.

<sup>50</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 296.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 293, 298.

Despite such apparent neglect, the British felt an absent-minded responsibility for their “New Subjects.” Carleton’s predecessor at Quebec, Governor James Murray, had left the French secure in their practice of Catholicism, although he simultaneously promoted the “Test Act” that precluded Catholics from serving in government or on juries.<sup>52</sup> Carleton, perceiving both the injustice and long-term impracticability of excluding nearly the entire Canadian population from a supposedly representative government, became a powerful advocate for French Canadians in London, making enemies of the “Old Subjects” in Canada, colonists south of Canada, and many in Parliament and Whitehall in the process. He was also empathetic enough to understand why the concessions he won for the *habitants* in the Quebec Act, such as the continuance of French civil law and the tolerance of a Catholic bishop in an English province, earned so little gratitude from them, frustrating though he found the fact: enough time had not elapsed between the adoption of the Act and the invasion of the Americans for the *habitants* to recognize its benefits.<sup>53</sup> Cold and remote in manner, frequently high-handed and unabashedly paternalistic in his approach, Carleton’s reputation for fairness nevertheless gained support amongst the “New Subjects.” “I shall tell it to General Carleton” became proverbial among the *habitants* of Canada.<sup>54</sup>

Likewise, in the Illinois Country, even corrupt officers such as Wilkins attempted to show some degree of effectiveness. Solicitude was, of course, self-interested; in a letter to Johnson, Gage related, “The Indians as well as the French are removing fast from the Illinois to the new French Settlements on the opposite side of the Mississippi. If this

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<sup>52</sup> Lanctot, 6-7.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.

<sup>54</sup> Paul R. Reynolds, *Guy Carleton: A Biography* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1980), 100.

Emigration continues, we shall have no method to support our new acquired settlement, but by leaving People there to settle on the deserted Lands; for it will not be possible to support our garrisons by sending them Provisions from Pensylvania or Mobile,”<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, with Gage’s permission, Wilkins established a civil court in Ste-Anne, the village just outside the walls of Fort de Chartres, to provide some form of civil government. Although initially stacked with English merchants in an effort to ensure that their credit was repaid, in time this body came to resemble the community, with mostly French judges. This court, along with a similar one set up at Cahokia, represented the highest form of law to the French in the Illinois Country, albeit one periodically suspended under both the British and, after Clark’s conquest, the Virginians when it became too inconvenient for the military authorities.<sup>56</sup>

As in Quebec, the British made a significant concession to the French in that the proceedings of this court would take place in the French language. In May 1770, a document was sent to Wilkins, at that time commandant at Kaskaskia, on behalf of George Wittmer, “merchant at Kaskaskia.” The document was a complaint that the conduct of “the named Jodon” had resulted in 428 livres in peltries having been seized by “the Court of Judicature of the County,” and a request to be reimbursed by “sieur Crohan,” possibly George Croghan, for whom Jodon had presumably worked. Kaskaskia native Daniel Blouin and Montreal merchant Dennis McCracken were named as parties in the suit. Despite being written by an English merchant to the English commandant, the

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas Gage to William Johnson, March 17, 1766, Thomas Gage Papers, SC 538, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

<sup>56</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 266-268.

entire document is written in French, presumably because it would be presented to the court at Kaskaskia.<sup>57</sup>

However, the British, like the French before them, expected that their colonies, including the newly conquered ones, should provide some material benefit to them. In the case of Canada, it was in every respect a captive market; the British controlled its ports, in which only British shipping was allowed. Canada's only overland markets were the British Atlantic colonies and the Illinois Country to the southwest. On the other hand, the Illinois Country had other trading options due to its proximity to the Mississippi River and the Spanish settlements located there. British authorities became worried about their French subjects trading with a potential imperial rival. To ascertain the facts on the ground, Gage organized an expedition comprised of a pair of military engineers, Captain Harry Gordon and Ensign Thomas Hutchins, along with George Croghan and George Morgan; Morgan was a partner in the trading firm of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, who operated out of Kaskaskia. Among the tasks assigned to Gordon and Hutchins was the evaluation of French and Indian trading patterns, and how to bend them to British interests. Gordon's report described one of the alternative markets, using the derogatory sobriquet of *Pain Court* (short of bread) for the town of St. Louis, as follows: "The Village of Pain Court is pleasantly situated on a high ground, which forms the W. Bank of the Mississippi."<sup>58</sup> Speaking of Pierre Laclede, the founder and chief Indian trader of the village, Gordon said that he "takes so good measures, that the whole Trade of the Missouri, that of the Mississippi Northward, & that of the Nations near la Baye,

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<sup>57</sup> George Wittmer to John Wilkins, May 17, 1770, Lyman Draper Collection, Kaskaskia Records, 70:5:19:1, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL.

<sup>58</sup> Journal of Harry Gordon, June 18-December 6, 1766, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

Michigan, & St. Joseph's by the Illinois River is entirely brought to him. He appears to be sensible, clever, & will give us much trouble before We get the parts of this Trade which belong to Us out of their Hands.<sup>59</sup>

Although Spanish merchants demanded higher prices for their wares, they offered French traders access to the lucrative New Orleans market. Speaking of St. Louis and "Misere," a nickname for Ste Genevieve, Gordon explained:

Our possession of the Illinois is only useful at present in one Respect, It shows the Indian Nations our Superiority over the French, to whom they can thence perceive we give Law. This is dearly bought by the Expense it is to Us, & the Inconvenience of supporting it. The French carry on the Trade all round us by Land & by Water. 1<sup>st</sup> up the Mississippi, & to the Lakes by the Ouisconsing, Foxes, Chicagou, & Illinois Rivers. 2<sup>dly</sup> Up the Ohio to the Wabash Indians, & even the small quantity of Skins or Furs that the Kaskasquias & Peioris (who are on our Side) get by hunting is carried under Our Nose to Misere and Pain Court.<sup>60</sup>

To coerce the French into giving a larger share of their commerce to the British, Gordon recommended that "A Garrison at the Illinois River & a Post at LaBaye, will partly prevent the first; and one at Massiac, as has been said, their Intercourse with the People on the Wabash . . ."<sup>61</sup>

Upon receipt of Gordon's journal, Gage forwarded it to Lord Shelburne, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, commenting in an accompanying letter

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<sup>59</sup> Journal of Harry Gordon, June 18-December 6, 1766, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

that “The Traders on the Branches of the Mississippi will never be tempted to bring their Peltry into the British Provinces whilst they get high prices for their Skins at New Orleans . . . nothing then but force can oblige our Traders to bring the produce of their Trade in those parts into our Provinces to be exported to Great Britain, or prevent foreign Traders from intruding upon the Territory belonging to His Majesty.”<sup>62</sup>

Ultimately, Gordon’s recommendations were not enacted due to a lack of resources. The difficulty of incorporating the Illinois Country into the British mercantile system was one reason for the slowly encroaching neglect that took place between Captain Stirling’s arrival at Fort de Chartres in 1765 and Captain Lord’s departure with the last British regulars in 1776. Another reason was the isolation enforced upon French villages along the Mississippi and the Wabash by the terms of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, reinforced by the Quebec Act, which blocked colonial land speculation west of the Appalachians. After the atrocities and the expense of the French and Indian War and Pontiac’s Rebellion, the British government was not anxious to be drawn into any further conflicts with Native Americans. In fact, British public opinion largely blamed land hungry English settlers for these conflicts.<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, British officials quashed the promising British overland trade in the Illinois Country, begun in the waning stages of the French and Indian War, to the detriment of the Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan Company as well as individual speculators including George Washington.<sup>64</sup>

While George Morgan remained heavily involved in Illinois affairs, hoping that the tide would turn, British investment in and emigration to the region were both

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas Gage to Lord Shelburne, February 22, 1767, quoted in note attached to Harry Gordon’s journal, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

<sup>63</sup> White, 319-320.

<sup>64</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 287, 292.

effectively nullified, to the satisfaction of royal governors and commanding officers as well as the government in London. The Quebec Act codified and facilitated this prohibition by not only striking down all colonial land claims west of the Appalachians but gave the Canadian Governor control of the entire Illinois territory. This infuriated inhabitants of the thirteen Atlantic British colonies, who branded the Quebec Act one of the “Intolerable Acts.” As British interests in the region waned, so too did their efforts; by 1776 only fifty regulars remained, and these were finally withdrawn to assist with the defense of Canada.<sup>65</sup>

By contrast, British interest in Canada, and the Canadians, increased over time. The experiences of Chevalier Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry demonstrate how British attitudes toward at least the French elite changed as the occupation progressed. In a letter to Carleton shortly after the general’s appointment as governor of Canada, Léry recalled that Carleton had expressed surprise at the chevalier’s intent to depart Quebec for France and had asked him to explain why. Léry explained that Carleton’s predecessor Murray had insulted a young French officer who had come to inquire about an inheritance of Canadian property that he was to receive, insinuating that he was a spy. When Léry protested, Murray pointed out that Léry had his two children educated in France and was thus under suspicion himself, and declared that he had three days to either have someone from London vouch for him or to leave the colony.<sup>66</sup> Although Murray later relented, attributing his hostility to “excitement,” presumably having been made overwrought by his difficulties in the province, and made known to Léry that it was

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<sup>65</sup> Edward Gay Mason, ed., *Philippe de Rocheblave and Rocheblave Papers* (Chicago: Fergus Printing Company, 1890), 236-237.

<sup>66</sup> Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry to Guy Carleton, September 7, 1767, Fonds Famille Chaussegros de Léry, D311, Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales de Québec, Quebec, QC.



up to him whether or not to remain in Canada “where he was beloved,” he made a point of informing L  ry that “maybe it would happen that arrangements from the Court of London that would not suit me, nor other Canadians, would soon arrive, and that in that case he would give me necessary time to sell my belongings if the arrangements were not to my taste.”<sup>67</sup> Once L  ry informed Murray of his decision to leave, the governor attempted to change his mind, but at that point L  ry had been given ample reasons to doubt his continued welcome in Canada and to plan his return to France.<sup>68</sup>

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1767, Carleton forwarded L  ry’s letter to Lord Shelburne, Secretary of State for the colonies, with an accompanying letter of his own. In it, he remarked that the services that L  ry had already performed for the British, regardless of their efficacy, had “occasioned his being strongly marked by the French Ministers, and that the first Canadian gentleman, who attached himself to the King’s Interests, as soon as he became his Subject, should be obliged to quit his native country, together with his Distress, must afford them matter of Triumph.”<sup>69</sup> After personally vouching for L  ry’s character, he continued:

Besides should His Majesty be graciously pleased to grant his  
Petition, it will serve as a Proof to the Gentlemen of Canada, that they are  
not forever to be excluded from the Service of their present Sovereign; this  
opinion I have endeavoured to remove, as I am thoroughly convinced, it is  
for the British Interests upon this Continent, they should be employed;  
From a Despair of this Sort, I imagine, it must have proceeded, that

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<sup>67</sup> L  ry to Carleton, September 7, 1767.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Guy Carleton to Lord Shelburne, September 24, 1767, in Douglas Brymner, *Report on Candian Archives* (Ottawa: A. Sen  cal, Superintendent of Printing, 1889), 24.

several young Gentlemen, whose Parents remain in this Country, and whose Fortunes they must inherit, have entered into the French Service, as your Lordship may see, by the inclosed Return, the three first are Heirs of three of the best and richest Families in the Province.<sup>70</sup>

The response to Carleton concerning Léry from the metropolitan government must have been favorable, for Léry did stay in Canada and held a number of offices under the British administration. In a later letter to Shelburne, Carleton pointed out that of the seventy or so former French soldiers remaining in Quebec, none of them had entered the service of the British, and was unsparing as to why, writing that “we should only deceive ourselves by supposing, they would be active in the defence of a People, that has deprived them of their Honors, Privileges, Profits and Laws, and in their stead, have introduced much Expense, Chicannery, and confusion, with a Deluge of new Laws unknown and unpublished. Therefore all circumstances considered, while Matters continue in their present State, the most we may hope for from the Gentlemen who remain in the Province, is passive neutrality on all occasions, with a respectful submission to Government, and Deference for the King’s Commission in whatever Hand it may be lodged..”<sup>71</sup>

Carleton went on to explain that the French government, knowing that honor would compel Canadians who had remained to at least remain neutral in any future conflict between France and England, had been attempting to entice the seigneurs back to France. If war broke out again, not only would the seigneurs have extensive knowledge of Canada, but they would easily be able to lead the *habitants*, who would overwhelm the

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<sup>70</sup> Guy Carleton to Lord Shelburne, September 24, 1767, in Brymner, 24.

<sup>71</sup> Guy Carleton to Lord Shelburne, November 25, 1767, in Brymner, 42

government and “Old Subjects” through sheer numbers.<sup>72</sup> While the situation was precarious, Carleton had not given up on the Canadians; even while proposing fortifications to guard against a French incursion or insurrection, he held out the hope that “the Canadians could be interested to take a Part in the defence of the King’s government, a change not impossible to bring about.”<sup>73</sup> The governor’s objective was to establish the seigneurs as a bastion against a possible French attack; as time progressed and the southern colonies became restive, this objective expanded to include an actual Continental invasion.

Although Carleton believed that “the common People are greatly to be influenced by their Seigniors,” the *habitants* proved to be increasingly resistant to British influence.<sup>74</sup> Under the French regime, a seigneur had an easy relationship with the *habitants* on his estate; the rents were low, and the *corvée*, or levy of labor demanded of the *habitants* on behalf of the seigneur, was light, and scrupulously scheduled so as not to interfere with the planting and harvest cycle.<sup>75</sup> Eager to show their devotion to the new British suzerains, however, many seigneurs, particularly the younger members of the seigneurial class and those “Old Subjects” who had purchased seigneuries from those who had returned to France after the French and Indian War, attempted to form militia companies as the menace from the southern colonies became apparent.<sup>76</sup> These attempts aroused the jealousies of the *habitants*; the calling up of the militia had historically been performed by its captains, not the seigneurs. Also, knowing that the seigneurs had largely

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<sup>72</sup> Carleton to Shelburne, November 25, 1767.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Anderson, ch. 2, loc. 523-536.

<sup>76</sup> Lanctot, 82-83.

fallen into the orbit of the British, the *habitants* became concerned that their ultimate disposition might go beyond defending Canada from the *Bastonnais* and toward an invasion of the south, far away from their families and in support of a war in which they had no real stake.<sup>77</sup> These tensions erupted in the spring and summer of 1775; the *habitants* refused to muster for the seigneurs, declaring that they would only respond to their own captains, who had been largely disregarded, or to British regular officers, who were in scarce supply in Canada at the time and were needed by their own units.<sup>78</sup>

When the seigneurs attempted to assert their feudal privileges, the *habitants* threatened them with violence, unwilling to allow their relationship with the seigneurs to be unilaterally redefined and repelled by the idea that they would be required to choose sides in an internecine conflict between factions of a people whom they still feared and despised.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, fearing that if other *habitants* were allowed to join the British, these would be used as justification for penalizing the *habitants* who remained neutral, those who wished to join the militia were forcibly restrained by those who did not.<sup>80</sup> Before the first American soldier entered Canada, the *habitants* were already in open conflict with the government and the seigneurs over the scope of their service.

While the French merchants followed the lead of the seigneurs, British merchants in Montreal in hopes of prospering at the advent of the conversion of Canada to a colony similar to those of the Atlantic seaboard were outraged by the concessions of Murray and the greater ones of Carleton to the French. Many of them, led by Montreal merchant Thomas Walker, were driven to extreme measures by the Quebec Act, which seemed to

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<sup>77</sup> Anderson, ch. 6, loc. 1534, 1588-1598.

<sup>78</sup> Wrong, 282-284.

<sup>79</sup> Anderson, ch. 6, loc. 1588-1598.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 6, loc. 1587.

foreclose any possibility of Protestant, Anglo-American control of Canada. American Patriots stoked this anger and fear, arguing that Canada was a test case for Parliament to suppress all colonial legislatures and exert direct control over the colonies through royal or military governors.<sup>81</sup> Throughout 1775, the Second Continental Congress as well as influential citizens of the Atlantic colonies urged sympathetic “Old Subjects” to form committees of correspondence and to coordinate strategy and planning with the southern colonies.<sup>82</sup>

This proved difficult to accomplish, in large part because the French merchants almost to a man had been prevailed upon by the governor and the seigneurs to remain loyal or at least neutral. Canadians were likewise unwilling to join the Continental Association, a compact between the colonies to boycott British goods.<sup>83</sup> Because the Gulf of St. Lawrence remained controlled by the Royal Navy, Canada was entirely dependent upon trade with the British. Joining the Association would destroy the Canadian economy. Canadian envoys to Congress repeatedly made the point that being released from the obligation to join the Association would greatly enhance the prospects of Canada aligning with the Atlantic colonies. However, Congress maintained that other colonies dependent upon shipping had joined the Association to their disadvantage. It would be hard to explain to them why Canada should be an exception to the policy.<sup>84</sup> As a result, formal committees of correspondence were never created in Canada, although *ad*

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<sup>81</sup> Wrong, 246-248.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, ch. 6, loc. 1533-1548.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 4, loc. 1102.

<sup>84</sup> Anderson, Conclusion, loc. 6863.

*hoc* efforts by sympathizers such as Walker continued, under the watchful but still inactive gaze of the governor at Quebec City.<sup>85</sup>

In Canada, then, the situation on the eve of the American invasion was one in which the provincial elite but not necessarily the rural poor remained mostly loyal to British authorities. The most vocal discontent was localized to the region around the town of Sorel and the southern bank of the St. Lawrence River west of Montreal. The proximity of this region to New York could not only facilitate the transportation of revolutionary ideas northward, but would almost certainly be the first area to be occupied by American forces given an invasion.<sup>86</sup> This fact would prove to be invaluable to the Continental Army in the short term as it entered Canada. While few of the *habitants* joined the invasion force, they stood ready to provide supplies and other assistance, and they certainly did not take up arms on behalf of the government.

However, as with most revolutionary movements, without leaders from the local elite to motivate and inspire them when reversals occurred and success became uncertain, the *habitants* became inclined to make decisions based on the risk to themselves instead of what they had to gain. Once this occurred, the provincial elite, mainly the French bourgeoisie, were able to highlight the difficulties experienced when aiding the invaders, the likelihood of government reprisal if the invasion failed, and the promise of mercy in exchange for repentance.<sup>87</sup>

In the Illinois Country, on the other hand, the seigneurs were a distant memory, and few of the powerful merchants remained to serve as intermediaries. With the

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<sup>85</sup> Lancot, 60.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130.

approach of the British, about one-third of the French inhabitants of the east bank of the Mississippi had removed to the western side, controlled by the Spanish.<sup>88</sup> The primary reason for doing so was that the French historical experience with the British had for the past two hundred years been one of fanatical intolerance of the Catholic faith. They had no reason to expect that the current incoming British overlords would pursue any different policy. On the other hand, the west bank was now controlled by “His Most Catholic Majesty,” Charles III of Spain, who additionally was a cousin of the still fondly-remembered Louis XV. Even though Captain Stirling and his successors would maintain the tolerance that they promised, there was a level of certainty concerning the Spanish that could never be reached by the Protestant British.

However, there was a second, more temporal concern. The Methodist movement in Britain had made major strides in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Prominent Methodists such as founder John Wesley and politician William Wilberforce had moved the British electorate decisively against the institution of slavery and in favor of its abolition. The wealthier and better-educated merchants of the *pays des Illinois*, with their business and familial connections to Canada, would have been aware of this, and by extension so would the *habitants*.

Slavery was a commonplace institution among the French in Illinois, although not nearly as widespread as among the French in Lower Louisiana or the Caribbean or the English in the southern colonies of the Atlantic seaboard. Merchants and wealthier *habitants* might own five slaves or less to help with household tasks or those related to the fur trade, although there were one or two exceptions that might own up to 65.

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<sup>88</sup> Alvord, 265-266.

*Habitants* of lesser means might own one, with whom they would toil in the common fields.<sup>89</sup> Again, the British protested that they had no intention of interfering with slavery as they had found it on their arrival in the Illinois Country, but many of the French, especially the more affluent, decided to take advantage of the known quantity on the other side of the river.<sup>90</sup> Spain had no issue with African slaves; there was a prohibition against Native American slaves, called *panis* by the French due to their early encounters with the Osage selling Pawnee captives, but after 1763 the number of *panis* had decreased among the French in general as those who died or were manumitted were not replaced, and those that remained could be overlooked by the mostly French administrators employed by the Spanish.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, the Spanish were aggressive in courting Illinois French support. Both Spanish and British officials knew that if the *habitant* population on the British side were greatly reduced, it would become difficult for the British to sustain garrisons without the foodstuffs and other goods supplied by the community. Moreover, the primary value of Upper Louisiana to the Spanish was as a buffer to protect against British incursions. However, such a buffer would be of limited value if it were underpopulated, and the Spanish had no means to substantially populate it themselves. A large population of loyal French *habitants* might provide the protection sought by Spain.

Accordingly, the Spanish commandants at St. Louis offered generous parcels of land to potential settlers.<sup>92</sup> Along with choice land parcels came the ability to freely move goods through the Spanish port of New Orleans. When Spanish officials

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<sup>89</sup> Ekberg, *French Roots*, 152-153.

<sup>90</sup> James F. Davis, *Frontier Illinois* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 59.

<sup>91</sup> Fausz, 131.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.



occasionally closed the port, the *habitants* and merchants of the British side would have to employ middlemen in St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve in order to gain access to those markets. Finally, the inhabitants of British Illinois could be assured of a system of governance with which they were intimately familiar. Although there was a Spanish lieutenant-governor in St. Louis and commandant at Ste. Genevieve, these were inclined to rule with a very light hand, and to allow the most influential French – Louis de Saint-Ange in St. Louis and Francois Vallé in Ste. Genevieve – to handle the daily affairs of the community.<sup>93</sup> Especially as successive British commandants showed wildly varying degrees of competence and honesty, this continuity was highly appealing to the fundamentally conservative French population.

The departure of the French social elite that could have served as intermediaries between the British and the traders and *habitants* was especially significant because as with Canada, there was a small group of British traders that had migrated to the *pays des Illinois* that had not left after the Royal Proclamation of 1763 prohibited land speculation. George Morgan was one of these, but he had decided to settle into the community, be helpful to the British, and bide his time, at least until he entered into a dispute with Wilkins and left the region in 1770.<sup>94</sup> Others, much like Thomas Walker in Montreal, were not so patient. On March 31, 1777, a trader named Daniel Murray, acting as agent for another merchant named Thomas Bentley, addressed a letter to Carleton which detailed numerous complaints against Rocheblave. Among these were that “we your Humble Petitioners, and his Majesty’s most Faithful Subjects find to our bitter Grief our Liberties Trampled upon and Justice in all cases Refused us, and when we presume to

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<sup>93</sup> Fausz, 128, 151; Ekberg, *French Roots*, 131.

<sup>94</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 284.

argue on Such injustice, the Said De Rocheblave cuts the matter Short by Informing us that Such is the Laws in France which he orders us to Follow.”<sup>95</sup> Murray went on to accuse Rocheblave of “daily imposing upon us by denying us the Justice which by law and Equity we have a right to Demand at his hands both for the Security of our Property as well as our Persons, neither of which we look upon to be safe under our Government as Englishmen and English Laws are to our very great Mortification dispised by the public in General and appears to be so by him the said Rocheblave in particular.”<sup>96</sup> Much as with the similar complaints made by Walker and the other English merchants in Montreal, Carleton was disinclined to take the side of the “Old Subjects.” There is no indication that he replied to the letter, and shortly afterward Bentley was arrested by order of Hamilton in Detroit upon being accused by Rocheblave of conspiring with the Americans.<sup>97</sup>

As in Canada, the embittered English merchants were susceptible to the allure of a government that would be truly “English” and representative in nature, and not privilege the French over them. While Rocheblave could not prove conclusively that Bentley had conspired with Continental agents, the evidence strongly suggested that he had met with a Virginian trader named Benjamin Linn. A true opportunist, Linn had reconnoitered the Illinois Country for months and used this information to secure a place in Clark’s 1775 expedition. In a letter to Haldimand in 1780 written from Williamsburg after his capture, Rocheblave lamented, “It is his [Bentley’s] cabal and that of the Spaniards that led the

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<sup>95</sup> Daniel Murray to Guy Carleton, March 31, 1777, in Clarence Alvord, ed., *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Volume V, Virginia Series, Volume II: Kaskaskia Records, 1778-1790* (Springfield, IL: Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, 1909), 4.

<sup>96</sup> Murray to Carleton, in Alvord, 4-5.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Bentley to Daniel Murray, August 1, 1777, in Alvord, *Kaskaskia Records*, 9.

Americans to the Mississippi.”<sup>98</sup> The Spanish “cabal” had effected its plans in part by luring the British commandant’s allies opposed to Bentley’s group away from British Illinois; as will be seen, the Spanish government in St. Louis and New Orleans would become more directly involved. In the meantime, in both Canada and the Illinois Country, a French population still wary of its British rulers and a small nucleus of anti-Ministerial British merchants awaited the approach of the Americans.

In sum, Canada and the *pays des Illinois* were in very similar circumstances between the end of the French and Indian War and the beginning of the American Revolution, which is not surprising since in cultural, if not political respects, they were in many ways two different regions of the same country. Both societies struggled with the effects of occupation, and with trying to determine the best way to respond to an ancient enemy making some startling new overtures. In Canada, the French “New Subjects” had little choice but to guardedly trust their new masters and see what developed, for short of returning to France, which by then would have been nearly as alien to them as was British governance, they had nowhere else to go. In the Illinois Country, on the other hand, the French always had an option in the form of a friendly neighboring power just on the other side of the Mississippi, and soon would be presented with an unlooked-for alternative to British rule in their homeland as well.

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<sup>98</sup> Philippe Castel de Rocheblave to Frederick Haldimand, September 9, 1780, in Alvord, *Kaskaskia Papers*, 179.

## CHAPTER II

### FAITHS

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, any conflict between England and France was certain to involve a powerful religious subtext. Since the English break with Rome and the establishment of the Protestant Church of England in 1520, the French and Spanish crowns posed as champions of the Catholic Faith against the English heretics. In turn, the English were unremittingly hostile to the “papists” of the Bourbon monarchy, which encompassed both France and Spain since the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1714. This aspect of the British-French rivalry only intensified in North America. The Puritans had settled New England largely because the Anglican Church itself had proven to be too “Romish” for them. The radical Calvinism of the New Englanders clashed sharply with the reactionary Catholicism of the French Canadians, which would have seemed backward and medieval even to their countrymen currently experiencing the Enlightenment in France, with frequent and vicious combat between the two as a result. At the conclusion of the French and Indian War, consequently, the French in Canada and in Illinois fully expected occupying British officials to suppress their religion if not outright expel them, as had been the fate of their Acadian brethren earlier in the war. Although they were mistaken in these assumptions, it took some time for the British to even partially allay such suspicions.<sup>99</sup>

As the American Revolution grew closer, Enlightenment ideals of tolerance were frequently at war with the long-habituated suspicion of Catholicism endemic among the Continentals. This suspicion was whipped into white-hot rage by the passage of the

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<sup>99</sup> Wrong, 31.

Quebec Act in 1774, which granted religious freedom to Catholics in Canada and sanctioned the selection of a bishop in Quebec. This, combined with the establishment of a colonial government for Canada with a royal governor and a council but without any kind of elected legislature, convinced the Atlantic colonists that a despotic union of Church and State was coming to fruition in Canada that could be used to suppress any Continental effort to defend their liberties, and possibly even as a model that the Ministry could apply to the southern colonies.<sup>100</sup>

As an example of the volatile nature of religious relations in the Atlantic colonies, the colony of Maryland had been founded by Cecilius Calvert, second Lord Baltimore, as a refuge for Catholics. The first Attorney General of Maryland was Charles Carroll, grandfather of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, who would later play a substantial role in the Continental occupation of Canada.<sup>101</sup> However, in 1688, the very year that Carroll arrived in Maryland, Baltimore's patron, James II, was overthrown by his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange, in the Glorious Revolution. Shortly afterward, Baltimore's brother, who ruled in his stead, was overthrown by Protestant partisans, and Carroll was briefly imprisoned.<sup>102</sup> As a result, by the time of Carroll of Carrollton, the former Catholic haven was dominated by a Protestant legislature that had made Anglicanism its official religion and passed legislation barring Catholics from holding office and outlawing the Catholic education of children. This forced him to seek his education in Paris, although enrolling in Catholic schools in Europe was also forbidden.<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless, Carroll quickly

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<sup>100</sup> Wrong, 248.

<sup>101</sup> Joseph Gurn, *Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 1737-1832* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1932), 4-5.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

declared for the Continental cause upon hearing of the siege of Boston in 1775, even though he and his fellow Catholics had suffered indignities under the colonists, and the Quebec Act might have given him reason to hope for better under direct British rule.<sup>104</sup> His entry into public life had been to take the side of the Maryland House of Burgesses against the royal governor in the matter of the schedule of fees due to provincial officials; the legislature had voted to lower the fees upon their renewal, but Governor Eden had prorogued it and declared that the current schedule would be maintained. Carroll engaged in a public debate through the newspapers with Daniel Dulany, the Provincial Secretary, who did not scruple to invoke anti-Catholic prejudice in his attacks on Carroll.<sup>105</sup> However, public opinion held Carroll to be the victor, and his engagement in this issue went far toward informing his views and actions concerning the controversy in Boston.<sup>106</sup>

If the Atlantic colonists were outraged by the concessions made to Catholics by the Quebec Act, the “Old Subjects” in Canada itself were even more so. It was they who stood to lose what they had come to regard as English liberties and were in danger of becoming a religious minority in a country that they had come to see as their own. The transplants from the southern colonies were particularly angered that the Test Act that might have excluded the French Catholic “New Subjects” from any part of the governance of the colony and given mastery of it to them was evaded and eventually ignored.<sup>107</sup> Their anger found an outlet in late 1774, when they defaced a statue of George III in Montreal by placing a miter and rosary of potatoes on it and writing the

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<sup>104</sup> Gurn, 48.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-37.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>107</sup> Reynolds, *Carleton*, 40-41.

words “*Voilà le Pape de Canada et le sot Anglais*” – “Behold the Pope of Canada and the English Fool.”<sup>108</sup> Despite blandishments and threats, no one would admit to having done it, but Carleton and his council were well aware that the French had no reason to attack the English king, and moreover would not have offered insult to the Pope.<sup>109</sup>

In the fall of 1774, Congress sent open letters to the people of Canada and of Great Britain to lay out their grievances against the British government. One such pamphlet was printed in French by Continental sympathizer Fleury Mesplet, and eventually included in its entirety by Canadian notary and loyalist Simon Sanguinet in his eyewitness account of the American invasion. Congress began by paying tribute to the “courageous and glorious resistance” that the French had displayed during the French and Indian War, and declared that “as bravery and greatness of soul are naturally conjoined, we expected that our courageous enemies would become our sincere friends [translation author’s].”<sup>110</sup> After repeatedly citing the baron de Montesquieu in support of a divided government and natural rights, the letter went on to address religious issues, “But what are you offered in their place by the last act of Parliament?” railed the pamphlet. “Liberty of conscience for your religion: no, God gave you that, and the temporal Powers with whom you were and are engaged, have strongly stated that you would have full enjoyment of it: if divine and human laws could safeguard that liberty from the despotic whims of the wicked, it was already aroused.”<sup>111</sup> Later, Congress remonstrated with the Canadians:

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<sup>108</sup> Wrong, 279.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>110</sup> Letter of Congress to the Inhabitants of Canada, October 26, 1774, in Hospice-Anthelme-Jean-Baptiste Verreau, *Invasion du Canada: Collection de Memoires, Recueillis et Annotes* (Montreal : Eusébe Senécal, 1873), 4.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

We know too well the nobility of feeling that distinguishes your nation, to think that you would refrain from forming friendly relationships with us due to prejudices to which a difference of religion might give birth. You know that liberty is of a nature so excellent that it renders all who attach themselves to it above all of these petty weaknesses. You have very convincing proof of these truths in the example of the Swiss cantons, which although they are made up of Catholic and Protestant states, live together in peace and in good reason.<sup>112</sup>

In this address, Congress expressed its willingness to work to form a multicultural, interdenominational union, respecting the Catholicism of its northernmost prospective member.

However, the letter of Congress to the king's subjects in Britain displayed a somewhat darker attitude toward Catholicism. In that letter, Congress inveighed against the Quebec Act as having "recognized the Catholic religion . . . and, ignoring the antagonistic faith of the old colonies, their laws and government, set up civil and spiritual tyranny in Canada, to the great danger of the neighboring provinces."<sup>113</sup> Driving the point home, the letter continued, "Nor can we express our astonishment that a British parliament should ever consent to establish in that colony a religion that often drenched your island in blood, and has disseminated impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder, and rebellion, through every part of the world."<sup>114</sup> In this letter, it was clear that the Atlantic colonists had not softened as much toward Catholicism as had been represented to the

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<sup>112</sup> Congress to Canadians, Verreau, 16.

<sup>113</sup> Letter of Congress to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, September 5, 1774, in Garneau, 125.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*



Canadians, although the historians François-Xavier Garneau and Mark Anderson concur that the contrasting tones of the two letters probably reflect the awareness of Congress concerning the attitudes of their respective audiences at least as much as any overt prejudice. Nevertheless, both historians also agree that it was naïve of Congress to assume that the letter to Britain would not be published in Canada; the British government in London and Quebec made a point of doing so, and of highlighting the vitriolic tone with which Congress referred to the Catholic faith. Garneau and Sanguinet agree that the fumbling duplicity of Congress in this instance was a critical blow to later American efforts to ingratiate themselves to the Canadians during the invasion, although Anderson is skeptical of the ultimate impact.

While the English and French colonists engaged in the perennial battle of Protestants against Catholics, the Catholic Church itself was experiencing turmoil in Canada. Although the British allowed Briand's predecessor, Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand, to continue on in his post after the occupation of Quebec, upon his death it was by no means certain that a successor would be allowed to assume office. In fact, Canada was without a bishop for nearly six years before Briand ascended to the bishop's seat. During that time, a small but vibrant strain of Jansenism, a variety of Catholic theology and practice that resembled Calvinism and that had existed in the Canadian Church since shortly after its inception, became popular amongst French Catholic church officials.<sup>115</sup> While the Church in Canada remained powerfully ultramontane, many Canadians began to wonder if a bishop in Quebec was necessary. For instance, Thomas Maseres, the Attorney-General of Quebec, embarked on a project in the 1850s to

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<sup>115</sup> Robert Choquette, *Canada's Religions: A Historical Introduction* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), 104.

assimilate the French Canadians into British culture and the Church of England. He interviewed various priests to determine the strength of their opposition and discovered that many of them would have been happy to have remained with a vicar-general nominated by a synod of the Canadian clergy, with the synod having overall control of the Canadian Church.<sup>116</sup> This idea had been proposed by Rome in 1765 as a counter to a scheme of the Canadian Church and the British government to elect a bishop, which Rome would not allow. The plan had found some adherents among those of the clergy not anxious to find themselves again under the potentially heavy hand of a bishop.<sup>117</sup>

As the Continental invasion approached, Briand discovered that this spirit had not departed. In a 1775 letter to a priest in the parish of St-Thomas, Briand lamented:

This is the religion that we profess, and the religion of their fathers that they have preserved and transmitted to them until now, but their children will not keep it for long, if they have not lost it already, because I judge and I will argue against my own interest that their conduct at least is truly heretical, and they are truly imbued with the heresy of the *Bastonnais* Presbyterians who deny the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>118</sup>

The traditional deference to the bishop among both the clergy and the laity had frayed considerably under the British, particularly in the six years that had elapsed between Pontbriand and Briand. Ironically, this came despite the efforts of the British themselves, who realized that the dignity of the episcopal see would be useful in

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<sup>116</sup> Neatby, 119.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>118</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to Father Curtable, September 25, 1775, Copies de Lettres, 4:589, Archives de l'Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

constructing a working relationship between the State and the Church, even at the risk of tolerating a certain amount of “popery.”<sup>119</sup>

A general attitude of defiance among many of the *habitants* was in evidence as early as 1768, just two years after Briand had become bishop. With the cessation of incoming priests from France, the supply in Canada had become tight, and Briand was forced to consolidate parishes. One of the parishes on the Île-Jésus just north of Montreal, Sainte Rose de Lima, had been informed by the bishop that they were to merge with the parish of Saint Vincent de Paul. Sainte Rose parishioners had in turn strongly objected, declaring that they would refuse to accept his orders to abandon their beloved church. Briand’s response betrayed his shock: “I was surprised, my very dear children, by your request; it contains an explicit disobedience. You have accused me of injustice and prejudice. I cannot believe that you believe these sentiments of me, and when, against my inclination, I accepted the heavy burden of the episcopate, I never imagined that I would encounter such intransigence in the Canadian people.”<sup>120</sup> He went on to explain why he had made his decision, but even in doing so, he expressed his incredulity: “I am not obliged to give you my reasons due to this imperious imputation.”<sup>121</sup> When the parish refused to unite with St-Vincent de Paul, Briand struck back with an interdict, angrily writing, “I no longer consider them Christians. Do not talk to me about it anymore. Let them follow their evil feelings, let them do what they want; I no longer regard them as being of my flock.”<sup>122</sup> He soon thought better of the interdict, sending the

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<sup>119</sup> Neatby, 109.

<sup>120</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to *habitants* of Ste-Rose, September 26, 1768, Copies de Lettres, 3:468, Archives de l’Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand, Copies de Lettres, vol. 3, 274, Archives de l’Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

*cure* of Ste-Rose a letter the next day venting his hostility at one particularly recalcitrant parishioner. However, Briand still fulminated over the slight, making an interesting remark in light of how he would be perceived later: “It will not do that they think that English liberty permits them to do anything or to disobey.”<sup>123</sup>

The declining respect shown toward the clergy, and in particular the bishop, was accelerated by the perception that they were acting as agents of Carleton and his masters in London. In the above referenced letter to Curtable at St-Thomas, Briand complained, “My authority is no more respected than yours: they say of me, as of you, that I am English.”<sup>124</sup> Briand strongly defended himself against this charge, telling Curtable, “I am in effect English, you must be, they must be too, since they have sworn it and all natural, divine, and human laws command it. But not I, nor you, nor they must be of the English religion.”<sup>125</sup> Briand expounded on this theme in a letter to the *cure* at the parish of St-Michel, where a parishioner had called out in the middle of celebrating a feast day that “there had been preaching for the English for too long”:

Father LeFranc conformed to natural religion and to the doctrine of our Savior and of his apostle St. Paul, the Doctor of the Nations, who taught due obedience to temporal powers. [The parishioner] has not only been deficient with regard to his king, his oath, and proper subordination, but also in the respect due to the temple of the Lord where no layman

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<sup>123</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to *curé* of Ste-Rose, September 27, 1768, Copies de Lettres, 3:435, Archives de l’Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>124</sup> Briand to Curtable, September 25, 1775.

<sup>125</sup> Briand to Curtable, September 25, 1775.

ought to speak, the respect due to the Word of God, and to the ministers whom he has anointed.<sup>126</sup>

After threatening the parish with an interdict suspending all liturgical and pastoral tasks within its borders if the malefactor was not identified to the priest, Briand went on, “They say that the priests preach war; no, that is not what I preach, but rather obedience and subordination, and fidelity to oaths and to their king to whom they promised this . . . I reproach them only for their ingratitude and their small amount of recognition.”<sup>127</sup>

In Canada, then, the Americans invaded as the clergy and the Canadian laity were redefining their relationship with one another. The shock of the conquest combined with the long absence of a dominant Catholic leader had allowed the *habitants* to develop a skeptical attitude toward the bishop and priests, although they remained fervently Catholic and the threat of interdict of regions or excommunication of persons still weighed heavily upon them. Even some of the clergy had been infected by ideas of rational inquiry and personal freedom of conscience that penetrated Canada from abroad, whether from Enlightenment France or even Protestant New England as commercial and political ties slowly developed. During the Continental invasion, these fractures would prove to be of more consequence than would the classic rivalry between the Québécois Catholics and New England Puritans.

In the Illinois Country, on the other hand, the first shock of religious change had very little to do with the British: it came with the suppression of the Jesuit order in 1763. Even though it had become apparent that the region would be given to the British in the

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<sup>126</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to *curé* of St-Michel parish, September 1, 1775, Copies de Lettres, 4:585, Archives de l'Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

Treaty of Paris, the French government ordered its governor in Louisiana to not only execute the suppression in New Orleans prior to its occupation by the British, but to make sure that it was done in the *pays des Illinois* as well. From nearly the beginning of French occupation of the Illinois Country, an arrangement had existed wherein the Jesuits were responsible for religious instruction throughout most of the region, including Kaskaskia and Vincennes, but that the Seminary of Foreign Missions in Quebec would be responsible for Cahokia. However, on September 24, 1763, Pierre-Joseph Neyons de Villiers, the last commandant of Fort de Chartres under the Bourbon monarchy, ordered the Jesuits bound over for banishment and their property sold, a process that was apparently executed with considerable severity.<sup>128</sup>

As a result, the villages served by the Jesuits were left without any priests as the Society was forcibly removed, but in addition, the Seminarian at Cahokia, Jacques-Francois Forget Duverger, decided to depart as well, leaving the entire *pays des Illinois* momentarily without priests.<sup>129</sup> When the Jesuits reached New Orleans on their way back to France, however, Sebastien Meurin requested permission to return to Kaskaskia, even though he would be without any sort of support and entirely dependent upon the community. The Superior Council at New Orleans allowed him to return, but given that New Orleans was now technically Spanish, Meurin not only lost his Jesuit identity, as Spain had also suppressed the Jesuits, but could only take up residence on the Spanish side of the Mississippi, at Ste. Genevieve. Moreover, he was separated from the diocese

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<sup>128</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 268.

<sup>129</sup> Betty Burnett, *A Time of Favor: The Story of the Catholic Family of Southern Illinois* (St. Louis: Patrice Press, 1987), 13.

of Quebec, being required to report to the head of the Capuchin monastery at New Orleans.<sup>130</sup>

At this time, Meurin was approaching sixty and in ill health due to his lengthy travails in the Illinois Country, having served among the Natives in the then-malarial climate since 1742. He was required to live in Ste. Genevieve, but the bulk of his ministry was on the British side of the river, in the French villages and among the Native American tribes, forcing him to make innumerable river crossings at a time when ferries were a rough and dangerous mode of travel. In the course of his travels in British Illinois, he frequently had trouble with supplies; the French on the eastern bank of the Mississippi and the Wabash often evaded their obligations by claiming that they had no duty to support a “Spanish” priest.<sup>131</sup>

Meurin had been a favorite of Briand, who was not overly sympathetic to the suppression of the Jesuits. When the papacy finally followed the lead of the great Catholic powers and issued its own ban on the order, Briand had no choice but to follow suit. However, he promptly formed another order under his own jurisdiction, using the same mode of dress and employing Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*, and inviting the Jesuits in Quebec to join.<sup>132</sup> As the formal orders to dissolve the order came while Carleton was in England, he felt obligated to explain his actions to lieutenant governor Hector-Théophile Cramahé, who approved wholeheartedly. Remarkably, Briand was able to suppress the papal bulls of dissolution and sponsor his own quasi-Jesuit order without attracting the notice of Rome.<sup>133</sup> When, shortly after assuming office, Briand learned that

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<sup>130</sup> Burnett, 13.

<sup>131</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 270.

<sup>132</sup> Neatby, 116-117.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-117.

Meurin had returned to the Illinois Country, he responded immediately [translation author's]:

I cannot express to you enough the joy I felt to learn by Jaunay that a Jesuit had been restored to the unhappy countries of the Illinois and the Mississippi. Since Providence without regard to my unworthiness has charged me with the heavy and formidable burden of the episcopate of Quebec, I have been terribly worried about the poor Christians of your districts . . . Yes, your presence in those places

fills me with consolation because I hope that you would like to care for those abandoned people. A thousand times I bless our Lord that inspired in the English goodness and veneration for you, and to authorize your ministry.<sup>134</sup>

In the same letter, Briand appointed Meurin vicar-general for the western region of British North America, which eased the burden of ministering to the Mississippi villages in the short term but caused its own issues.<sup>135</sup> Meurin's new jurisdiction was geographically immense, a problem that Briand acknowledged in his letter. As events would show, the care of such a territory would be draining even for a much younger, healthier man.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, Rocheblave, who at the time was the Spanish commandant at Ste. Genevieve, took umbrage at Meurin's departure; he denounced the old priest as a British spy and ordered his arrest, from which Meurin narrowly escaped.

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<sup>134</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to Sebastien Meurin, February 1767, Copies de Lettres, 3:533, Archives de l'Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*



Meurin continually implored Briand for more priests, but Briand was already facing unrest in Canada due to not having enough priests to man the existing parishes; while Meurin wanted four priests, Briand finally sent one. The priest, Pierre Gibault, was a young man recently out of seminary, who had spent some time in his youth travelling the *pays d'en haut* to the north of the *pays des Illinois*, and who might have been involved in some engagements in the French and Indian War.<sup>137</sup> In a letter to Etienne Marchand, the former vicar-general of Quebec, Briand reported his decision [translation author's]:

I am sending M. Gibault to the Illinois, he is well-resolved to undertake this good work. I have spoken with M. Meurin, because he wants a leader there, to whom I could give all of his powers, and I truly believe that [Gibault] is one of the most capable men in the Diocese. He has spirit, moderation, and a fear of God. I know of no fault in him, because the idle talk that does not become him is not inherent in him, and by ingratiating himself and adapting to circumstances, he will avoid it.<sup>138</sup>

Gibault left for the Illinois Country in June of 1768, with his mother and sister in tow; his sister would later marry Timothé de Montbrun, who would later serve for a time as a Virginian lieutenant-governor of Kaskaskia.<sup>139</sup>

Briand did not send Gibault to the region lightly, as can be seen by his mention of “idle talk.” In his letter to Meurin announcing Gibault’s arrival, he expressed repeated concerns about whether the younger priest would fulfill all of the bishop’s expectations,

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<sup>137</sup> Donnelly, 34-35.

<sup>138</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to Etienne Marchand, January 30, 1768, Copies de Lettres, 3:406, Archives de l'Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>139</sup> Donnelly, 39.

and in his lengthy letter to Gibault just prior to his departure, Briand loaded him down with advice and repeatedly directed him to follow Meurin's guidance.<sup>140</sup> Part of this caution would be only natural, as Gibault had been one of the first graduates of the seminary since the Conquest and his course of study had been truncated at two years; moreover, the region would be new to him, while Meurin had been there for over twenty years.<sup>141</sup> However, the frankly dismissive tone with which Gibault described Meurin, combined with the plaintive nature of his correspondence with Briand, made it clear that Gibault was a young man in a hurry. Gibault told Briand that Meurin had entered a "second infancy" and that his sternness with the villagers had considerably alienated them, an attack against which Briand pushed back:

You must think twice before going against the advice of Father Meurin in defiance of your instructions; his way of writing and reporting does not indicate a man having returned to childhood. We must not allow ourselves to be prejudiced or shocked by men that are only a little Christian, as you have done with me in times past and continue to do. It is never good to give into harshness, but this name is often given to firmness; softness that abandons the interests of God is treated as prudence, but it is only a prudence to the flesh, the enemy of God, says St. Paul – follow my advice and keep to the middle. Father Meurin has two virtues that are offended by the vice of avarice; he is defended by the qualities of a man and of one having taken vows. I fear that the reports that you have

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<sup>140</sup> Donnelly., 36-37.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

received are based on the impious sentiments engendered among Christians by their enemies.<sup>142</sup>

Briand was not likely to forget that Meurin had placed himself in considerable discomfort and risk to minister to the forsaken French and Native villages in Illinois and was certainly not going to be pushed into hasty action by a neophyte priest.

Gibault established himself in Kaskaskia and threw himself energetically into his new assignment. For all of his rancor toward Meurin, the older priest did not interfere with Gibault, preferring to live in a state of semi-retirement at the village of Prairie du Rocher, just north of Kaskaskia.<sup>143</sup> As late as 1772, Gibault still complained to Briand about Meurin, stating in the course of lamenting that “you do not yet grant a priest to the Cahokias; at least one of us could take care of the Illinois on the interior, but only I go out, because once more it is believed that Father Meurin is dead, at least everyone except for his small village, of which half come to me. More and more infirm, he is not useful to me,” although he did concede that “all in God speak of his good example and his respectable age.”<sup>144</sup> Gibault had reason to complain, for now he was responsible for the vast territory assigned to Meurin. Indeed, his already substantial burden was increased by the fact that he had reconciled with Rocheblave in Ste. Genevieve, who in turn interceded with Pedro Piernas, the Spanish lieutenant-governor in St. Louis. Now, Gibault was forced to perform services on both sides of the Mississippi.<sup>145</sup> Beyond even this increased responsibility, Gibault was approached by British commandant John

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<sup>142</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to Pierre Gibault, August 13, 1769, Copies de Lettres, 3:603, Archives de l'Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>143</sup> Donnelly, 43-44.

<sup>144</sup> Pierre Gibault to Jean-Olivier Briand, June 20, 1772, États-Unis, folio 6, 28, Archives de l'Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>145</sup> Donnelly, 50-51.

Wilkins shortly after his arrival in 1768 to minister to Irish troops who had recently been placed under English command at Kaskaskia. Although the death rate among the Irish in the alien Midwestern climate kept Gibault busy with administering extreme unction, a benefit was that performing this service made him indispensable to Wilkins and the succeeding commandants, which resulted in him being treated by the British with a benign neglect.<sup>146</sup>

Through all of Gibault's travails, Briand's primary concern was to prompt the younger priest to visit parishioners among the Natives and at Vincennes on the Wabash. Typical was the exhortation in a 1770 letter to Gibault: "If it were possible to make an apostolic excursion to Post Vincennes, you could make a great harvest there: if there were only one of the elect there, he deserves this approach from you, and the people of your post should lend themselves to it with joy and sacrifice everything, for the Lord their Father would hold nothing back from his children."<sup>147</sup> Accordingly, Gibault made four extensive tours of the Illinois Country between his arrival in 1768-1775, moving among the Indian villages, Vincennes, and as far north as Michilimackinac, braving danger from the elements and potentially hostile Native Americans, by whom he was held three times by the year 1772.<sup>148</sup>

Further, Briand's letters to Gibault reveal politeness but also a sense of trepidation. One letter began, "I always receive, my dear Gibault, with a new tenderness of the heart the letters that you write me." Yet Briand also admitted to being concerned

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<sup>146</sup> Donnelly, 49.

<sup>147</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to Pierre Gibault, March 22, 1770, Copies de Lettres, 4:91, Archives de l'Archdiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

<sup>148</sup> Donnelly, 54.

with Gibault's "idle talk" and had asked Meurin to keep a close eye on him.<sup>149</sup> Likewise in a letter that began, "Your letter, my dear Gibault, pulled me away from worry and caused me untold joy," Briand shortly afterward went on to complain: "It is after these considerations that I had a real sadness of the soul upon learning at Montreal in the course of my visits that you had left with your mother and one of your sisters or parents. You should not have done so without consulting me or my grand-vicar (Etienne Montgolfier of Montreal); perhaps, if you had told me about your plan, I would not have sent you in the place of another priest that wanted to go."<sup>150</sup> Gibault apparently responded hotly to this, for in a subsequent letter Briand admonished his colleague, "You have not taken the sense of the reproaches that I made to you on the subject of your mother and your sister; I was not angry that they went with you, nor am I that they stay there."<sup>151</sup> Misunderstandings and slights like these continued throughout Briand's and Gibault's correspondence.

Finally, in a letter dated October 5, 1775, Gibault let his superior know that he had reached his limit:

But now my body is weakened by those sufferings and I can no longer accomplish what both you and I would wish. I am now forty years old. Never sparing myself, I have often had poor food and frequently went hungry, traveling on foot day and night, exposed to all sorts of weather and in every season. Worst of all is the mental anxiety, being a stranger in a country of libertines, exposed to all the calumnies which the

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<sup>149</sup> Briand to Gibault, March 22, 1770.

<sup>150</sup> Briand to Gibault, August 13, 1769.

<sup>151</sup> Jean-Olivier Briand to Pierre Gibault, August 16, 1770, Copies de Lettres, 4:143, Archives de l'Archidiocèse de Québec, Québec, QC.

irreligious and impious could invent, having my every action, even the most well-intentioned, misinterpreted and misrepresented to you . . . For all of these and other reasons, I ask you to let me leave the Illinois.”<sup>152</sup>

Briand responded by contacting Meurin to ask about the situation. Meurin replied with a litany of complaints about Gibault compiled from the *habitants* and about which he claimed to have had no prior knowledge. Such charges included Gibault playing at sports with the younger men, inciting jealousies among the women, and staying up late drinking and playing cards. Moreover, Meurin reported that Gibault had soured on the *habitants* in general, complaining to Meurin about them and constantly stating his desire to leave.<sup>153</sup> Before Briand could take any action, Meurin died on February 23, 1777.<sup>154</sup>

As a result of Meurin’s death, Gibault was left as Briand’s vicar-general in the west, and the only priest in British Illinois. He had been under a cloud since his departure from Canada ten years previous. Briand’s reference to “idle talk” was thought by his biographer Donnelly to refer to gossip, but this would be an odd thing on which the bishop might obsess. It seems more likely that Gibault, a young man caught up in the relatively metropolitan environment of Quebec, may have expressed some sympathy for the anti-episcopal opinions swirling around the Canadian capital at that time. Certainly, the entirety of his career, from its beginning under Briand through the American occupation of Kaskaskia and beyond, indicates a tendency to push back against clerical authority. However, there is no concomitant record of any similar tendency to fight civil authority, other than litigating the case of the Seminary of Foreign Missions regarding the

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<sup>152</sup> Pierre Gibault to Jean-Olivier Briand, October 9, 1775, in Donnelly, 57.

<sup>153</sup> Donnelly, 59-60.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

church in Cahokia that Father Forget Duverger had abandoned. While the accusations of drinking and card-playing suggest that he was hardly an observant Jansenist, it seems that he may have acquired some of their sentiments concerning the episcopal hierarchy, which would only have been strengthened by the natural desire of a younger man to escape the confines of his elders' guidance.

Interestingly, one early success enjoyed by Gibault was his reconciliation with Rocheblave at Ste. Genevieve, and subsequently Piernas in St. Louis. There was no reason on the surface why Gibault could accomplish this while Meurin could not; Gibault was a diocesan priest under the bishop of Quebec, exactly as Meurin was. Donnelly speculates that Rocheblave's change of heart was brought about by the birth of his son, and the consequent necessity of finding a priest to baptize the boy.<sup>155</sup> While this might explain Rocheblave's concession, it would hardly explain that of Piernas, who would have had to have concurred with Rocheblave's initial decision to treat Meurin as a spy. A more likely explanation is that it was known by everyone that Meurin enjoyed the confidence of Briand and would almost certainly never do anything against the bishop's interests, or by extension those of England. If Rocheblave and Piernas, on the other hand, had reason to believe that Gibault might not be so attached to Briand, it might have been in their best interests to accommodate the young priest. Having someone who would at least listen to Spanish entreaties might be useful to Spain, or in the event, possibly her Continental allies.

Canada's clergy was split by ecclesiastical politics and doctrinal issues in the years between the Conquest and the American invasion, but the promise of British

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<sup>155</sup> Donnelly, 58.

tolerance against the history of sectarian conflict with New England and the ambiguity of Continental declarations led them to almost entirely unite with their bishop. In the Illinois Country, on the other hand, the clerical situation was far more dependent on personalities, with a distant bishop and an exhausted, alienated vicar-general who had most likely been primed by resentments in Quebec and blandishments by Spanish Louisiana to reason with an American invader, and at any rate was left with little to lose by doing so.



### CHAPTER III

#### NATIVE AMERICANS

Native Americans represented an interesting conundrum when addressing the period of the American Revolution in both Canada and the Illinois Country. In each conflict, issues surrounding the Native Americans were important as contributors to the conflict. In each conflict, planning for Indian intervention, or striving to avoid Indian intervention, obsessed commanders on both sides. Further, in each conflict, a great deal of time and resources were expended upon Native diplomacy by both the Continentals and the British. However, in each conflict, the Native Americans had almost no impact on either the battles or the outcome. In part, this was attributable to deft European and American diplomacy, as all of the participants had already had extensive dealings with the Native American tribes over time, including the Spanish, who exerted their influence across the Mississippi. However, the various Native American chiefs themselves knew their negotiating partners well, and for the most part had little interest in an internecine European conflict, being more interested in what they could gain from allowing the Europeans to buy their neutrality. Henry Hamilton, the British lieutenant governor of Detroit, was briefly able to engage the sympathy of some of the tribes long-term, but circumstances conspired to render their assistance mostly ineffective. Their direct involvement was limited to skirmishes at the end of the Canadian campaign and an attempt to wrest control of the Illinois Country from the Americans and the Spanish, an effort almost completely unsupported by the British themselves.

Of all of the colonial powers in North America, France had gone farthest toward reaching a permanent *modus vivendi* with the Native tribes. Each of the major French

zones of control had experienced an early war with various Native tribes. In Canada, Samuel de Champlain made the decision to ally with the Hurons against the Iroquois, a decision that would lead to the nearly complete annihilation of the Hurons and decades of war between the French and the Iroquois as the British predictably allied with the Iroquois; the carnage finally reached a partial halt with the Great Peace of 1701.<sup>1</sup> In the Illinois Country, the Fox and Sauk nations moved against the French settlers in 1712 in a series of wars that lasted until 1728, when the French, along with allied tribes such as the Illinois Confederacy, the Kickapoo, and the Potawatomi, moved to shatter the Fox tribe.<sup>2</sup> In Louisiana, the Natchez ambushed and destroyed the French community at Fort Rosalie near the modern city of Natchez, Mississippi; again, the French replied with overwhelming force, destroying the Natchez tribe and forcing the few survivors to live among the Creeks and Chickasaw.<sup>3</sup> A more serious conflict occurred later with the Chickasaw, who were more widespread and better-supplied than the Natchez; this conflict lasted intermittently until the cession of Louisiana to Spain. In its most dramatic encounter, in 1736, the French marines and militia and their Illinois allies were drawn into a disastrous campaign planned by Louisiana governor the sieur de Bienville against the Chickasaw, in which the commandants of Vincennes and Fort de Chartres each lost his life.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of settling these wars, the French and Native Americans learned to operate on what historian Richard White called a “middle ground,” an area where Native and European traditions and law could find mutually acceptable expressions that could

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<sup>1</sup> Garneau, 1:156, 363.

<sup>2</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 146-165.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

coexist.<sup>5</sup> This “middle ground” was facilitated by the fact that unlike the English settlers, the French had little interest in agriculture; they were for the most part traders and trappers, who had a very small footprint when compared to the English.<sup>6</sup> Even when agricultural villages such as Trois-Rivières in Canada and Kaskaskia in the Illinois Country did arise, they were highly compact, with the villages in the *pays des Illinois* in particular founded on the premise of common fields and the commons, an area where all members of the community could graze their livestock and gather wood.<sup>7</sup> In this system, there was little competition for land between the French and the Native Americans, and as the French communities remained relatively small, competition for resources was also limited.

Moreover, with their small numbers and their attachment to villages, unlike the English plantation style of farming, French civilization in North America was similar to that of the Native Americans. Although infrequent in Canada, in the *pays des Illinois* almost every French settlement had an Illinois settlement nearby; indeed, the French villages of Kaskaskia and Cahokia were named for the nearby Illinois tribes of each. In the earliest stages of the French presence the villages had been contiguous, but after the Fox wars in the 1720s the commandants at Fort de Chartres required the Illinois tribes to move their villages a certain number of miles from the French settlements.<sup>8</sup> Even in Canada, the French and Native populations took care not to encroach on the territory of the other, and competition for land and resources was nearly non-existent. The French had earlier established a simpler form of the “middle ground” among the Iroquoian

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<sup>5</sup> White, 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 341-342.

<sup>7</sup> Ekberg, *French Roots*, 91-92.

<sup>8</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 172.

peoples of the eastern Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Valley such as the Hurons, Petuns, and Wyandots in which the French governor at Quebec assumed the role of “Onontio,” the “father” of the alliance, who maintained his position with the generous distribution of presents; after 1701, this system preserved the peace between Native Americans and the French in Canada.

On the part of the Algonquin peoples encountered by the French in the *pays d'en haut* and *pays des Illinois*, there were other factors involved that made the establishment of the “middle ground” possible. These had suffered severe depredations from diseases contracted from exposure to Europeans, as had the remainder of the Native American peoples of North America. Additionally, beyond the typical losses due to regional warfare, the Illinois Confederacy and other Algonquin peoples such as the Fox, Mascoutens, and Potawatomi, had suffered invasion from the imperialistic Iroquois to the east which had inflicted enormous losses.<sup>9</sup> This had two effects: the Algonquins lacked the strength to repel the French had they wanted to, and in fact came to depend upon a French alliance for survival; and the tribes that did survive frequently had to merge to have a chance of defending themselves, so they had to loosen their chains of authority and mediate their customs.<sup>10</sup> This cultural flexibility served them well in the development of the “middle ground” with the French.

The basis for all interaction between the French and the Native Americans was the fur trade. Typically, the Native Americans would trap or hunt fur-bearing animals, then bring the furs, or “peltries,” to either Indian or French trading posts, where French traders would exchange trade goods for the valuable skins before bringing them back to

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<sup>9</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 37-38.

<sup>10</sup> White, 57.

Montreal for resale. Some of the French would attempt to acquire the furs directly, but as the Native Americans considered hunting grounds to be proprietary and were not interested in competitors, doing so was dangerous. The colonial government in Quebec issued a certain number of *congés*, or trading licenses, but as the number of French in Canada and the surrounding territory increased, these were frequently ignored.<sup>11</sup> As a rule, legitimate traders possessing a *congé* were called *voyageurs*, while poachers were called *coureurs de bois*, or “wood runners,” although these terms became largely interchangeable over time.<sup>12</sup>

As these men made contact with the various Indian tribes, they found that sexual liaisons were considered to be social lubricants to form trading relationships; in addition, they found that Native American marriage customs were elastic compared to traditional Catholic marriage.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the ratio of women to men in Canada and the Illinois Country was quite small, especially in the early days of New France, so the traders were anxious to conduct these liaisons. Marriage “in the fashion of the country” was at first denounced by the Jesuits, who were typically the first Europeans in any tribal area, as a threat to morals. Yet the government in Quebec, realizing that the French population in New France was small and mostly male, tacitly encouraged such arrangements.<sup>14</sup> In the 1720s, these positions became reversed. The Jesuits encountered a great deal of success in converting Native women to at least a nominal form of Catholicism; this increased the value of virginity, and in limited fashion empowered women in Native villages, for whom the sexual strictures of the new religion transmuted into power to refuse partners

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<sup>11</sup> White, 108.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Sleeper-Smith, 4, 28.

<sup>14</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 219-220.

and narrow the field of acceptable mates. Moreover, the host of female Catholic saints provided them with role models for resisting pressure to conform to traditional roles, and their cults provided a focus around which the new female converts could bond.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the Jesuits, who had originally hoped that Christian French men would help them convert the mass of Native Americans by their example, now began to encourage French men to pursue Native women, confident that the piety of the women would force the men to acceptable behavior. On the other hand, the Quebec and New Orleans governments, realizing that a substantial number of *métis* voluntarily chose to remain with their tribes, a decision frequently made by the French men themselves, began to restrict marriages between French men and Native women so as not to depopulate the colony.<sup>16</sup>

Nonetheless, whether or not they were considered legitimate by French clergy or colonial officials, these unions and their children formed lasting kin networks between the French and various Native tribes, which exerted influence over communities of both peoples.<sup>17</sup>

This, then, was the world that the British entered when they acquired the possessions of the former New France: a highly interconnected milieu, held together by hybrid customs worked out over a century and by familial relationships in many cases going back nearly that long. The British, on the other hand, had relied on their superior technological abilities to produce higher-quality trade goods at lower prices to attach Native allies to them. This strategy was useful in coaxing many tribes into neutrality during the wars between Britain and France, but the voracious British appetite for land engendered by the plantation farming system was a significant obstacle to forming long-

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<sup>15</sup> Sleeper-Smith, 26.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

lasting relationships with the Native Americans. Moreover, British colonial society was more structured and segregated than was that of the French. Few of the British could subsume their identity into Native society for even short periods of time.<sup>18</sup>

At the conclusion of the French and Indian War, Native Americans realized that with the final departure of French military forces, there no longer existed a European counterweight to British power in North America, the existence of which had been crucial to maintaining relations with different tribes.<sup>19</sup> Becoming frightened by the sudden prospect of British domination, the Native Americans began a policy of armed resistance, creating an alliance under Ottawa chief Pontiac in 1763. Besides the fear of being forced from their lands, the tribes of the *pays d'en haut* and the Ohio Valley had been deeply offended by the British policy of converting the generous gifts of the French into fairly parsimonious payment for services rendered; moreover, they strongly suspected the British of cheating their hunters by plying them with alcohol, which had been strictly against the policy of the French.<sup>20</sup> In large part due to Pontiac's recognition that the center of power in the Algonquin world had shifted from the tribes to the villages where warriors of many tribes held the chiefs of individual tribes in less esteem, which allowed him to quickly gather warriors without alerting the British, Pontiac's Rebellion nearly succeeded in seizing all of the British posts in the *pays d'en haut*, which would have made it difficult for the British to project power in the region.<sup>21</sup> However, the critical forts at Detroit, Fort Pitt, and Niagara held out, and the uprising collapsed, partially because the British were able to quickly take back the lost forts from those

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<sup>18</sup> White, 327.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>20</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 259-260.

<sup>21</sup> White, 275.

locations, but also because by embracing the role the British thrust upon him as a ruler of the tribes rather than as a traditional chief, Pontiac alienated the warriors and lost their respect.<sup>22</sup> Another more deadly series of conflicts began as Virginia settlers began to move through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky at the conclusion of the French and Indian War; this area was a prized Native hunting ground, and the Shawnee and Miami peoples rose up to defend them. Over the course of the next forty years, Kentucky would become known as the “dark and bloody ground,” bedeviling British and Americans alike.<sup>23</sup>

It was this state of affairs that led to the halt to land speculation west of the Appalachian Mountains in the Royal Proclamation of 1763: the British had wearied of fighting the Native Americans during the French and Indian War, and the metropolitan government was perfectly content to leave Indian lands to the Indians. However, the burgeoning English population was overwhelming the space available in the old colonies to provide plantation-style farms, and poverty in the cities and in the rural areas was high. As a result, with nothing to lose, settlers flooded into Kentucky, flagrantly defying the Proclamation.<sup>24</sup> Speculators such as the Loyal Land Company and private men of means such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were effectively blocked from legally parceling land in Kentucky by the Proclamation and subsequent Acts of Parliament confirming it, but little could be done to prevent settlers in the backcountry from gathering up their goods and moving west, even though they understood that their claims

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<sup>22</sup> White., 288.

<sup>23</sup> Nester, 33.

<sup>24</sup> White, 319.



to the land would be void if the Proclamation were ever revoked.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the Proclamation had done nothing to establish the western borders of the colonies, or to establish who was responsible for its enforcement. As a result, in 1774, the royal governor of Virginia launched an invasion of Shawnee hunting grounds in what became known as Lord Dunmore's War.<sup>26</sup> The Quebec Act was in part an attempt to restore order by granting jurisdiction over all of "Indian Country" to the governor and council of Quebec, but the colonists were not to be deprived of their farm land. Thus, it was the issue of western lands as much as concerns over "popery" or rule by fiat that caused colonists to include amongst the other "Intolerable Acts."

The attitude of the regular British army concerning Native warfare had been shaped by the French and Indian War. In particular, British military officials sought to overcome the mistakes made during the siege of Fort William Henry, in which after having been granted safe conduct by commanding French general Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, much of the English garrison and its support staff was massacred by the Indian allies of the French, with Montcalm and his officers unable to restrain the warriors.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the British certainly had no desire to fight Indian warriors; in addition, most senior British officers had little desire to fight alongside the tribes, whom they considered unpredictable and barbaric. This attitude did not entirely filter down to the junior officers, especially those who commanded posts in the west, in close proximity to Native Americans. The willingness of men such as Henry Hamilton in Detroit and

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<sup>25</sup> Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 9, 30.

<sup>26</sup> White., 363.

<sup>27</sup> David Preston, *Braddock's Defeat: The Battle of the Monongahela and the Road to Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, Kindle Edition), 298.

Arent de Peyster in Michilimackinac to make use of Indian warriors, as opposed to Carleton's reluctance to do so, would represent an important distinction between the campaign in Canada in 1775 and that in the Illinois Country in 1778.

After Pontiac's Rebellion, the British slowly came to understand the value of the relationships between the French and the Native Americans and began to leverage similar relationships between different tribes and the British Crown. The British superintendent for Indian affairs, Sir William Johnson, proved to be adept at managing these relationships, as was his deputy, George Croghan. However, it was not long before the British discovered what the French had long known: maintaining good relations with the various Native tribes required a large expense in trade goods.<sup>28</sup> As the British Ministry was more focused on the economic value of the colonies and less on the religious and geopolitical missions of the French, the royal governors, constantly called to account by the Lords of Trade and the Ministry, were frequently parsimonious with these gifts, which in turn caused the Native Americans to doubt the sincerity of British negotiators.<sup>29</sup> As the American Revolution approached, the British had managed to form a working relationship with many of the western tribes by returning the number of presents they distributed to nearly the level of the former French regime, but it never reached the depth of the Native ties with the French, due largely to lacking the kinship component. This lack of depth would be reflected in their constancy in warfare, particularly on extended campaigns.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> White, 256.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

In Canada, both the Continental and British leadership had the same goal: to deny the enemy the use of Indian warriors, but otherwise to keep them neutral. This goal was not shared by Sir Guy Johnson, who had succeeded his uncle as Superintendent of Indian Affairs and proposed a more formal military alliance with the Native tribes.<sup>31</sup> However, Carleton had served as a field-grade officer in the French and Indian War and retained bitter memories of Indian warfare. He furthermore held a paternalistic idea of the Atlantic colonists as wayward children of the Empire rather than true enemies and as such refused to entertain the idea. At one point, 1500 Iroquois warriors offered their services to the governor, but Carleton refused politely, thanking them, distributing the gifts to them that had been intended by London to purchase their active military assistance, and requesting their continued non-intervention.<sup>32</sup> While his communications with London and with Thomas Gage, commander of British troops in the Atlantic colonies, in New York indicated that he based this decision on the unreliability of the Native Americans, he made his personal opinion clear in private correspondence: “I would not even suffer a Savage to pass the frontier, though often urged to let them loose on the Rebel Provinces, lest cruelties might have been committed, and for fear the innocent might have suffered with the guilty.”<sup>33</sup>

On the part of the Continentals, the leadership seemed to assume from the outset that most Indian involvement in the Canada campaign would be on the behalf of the British, so its efforts were almost entirely focused on persuading the Native Americans to remain uninvolved. Ethan Allen, the Vermont colonel of militia, considered it to have

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<sup>31</sup> Reynolds, *Carleton*, 62.

<sup>32</sup> Neatby, 147; Reynolds, *Carleton*, 63.

<sup>33</sup> Reynolds, *Carleton*, 64.

been a diplomatic coup to have persuaded the Native Americans of the Montreal region not to join Carleton. However, most Canadian tribes had already decided to remain neutral, and at any rate the British governor would not have asked for nor accepted their assistance.<sup>34</sup> As a result, except for individuals employed as couriers or for reconnaissance, the Native presence had little effect on the contest in Canada at any point in which the outcome was in doubt.

By contrast, the proximate cause of the Virginian invasion of Illinois was the tangled relationship between the Native Americans (primarily the Shawnee, the Miami, and the Potawatomi nations), the British, and the English backcountry settlers in Kentucky. Like Carleton, Hamilton, the lieutenant-governor at Detroit, had served in the British Army during the French and Indian War; unlike Carleton, he had served most of his subsequent career in the western regions of British North America, in daily contact with Native Americans. As a result, he had developed a more nuanced view of their methods than had the reserved and courtly Carleton.

Moreover, in 1777 Lord George Germain became Secretary of State for the colonies. Germain was determined to take a more active hand in colonial affairs than had his predecessor, Lord Dartmouth, and in addition was a bitter personal enemy of Carleton.<sup>35</sup> On March 26 of that year, Germain sent Carleton an order on behalf of the king to command Hamilton to assemble the Native warriors in his district for war, carefully worded to allow Carleton no room for maneuver; this, among other factors, caused the violent split between Carleton and Germain that resulted in Carleton's

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<sup>34</sup> Anderson, ch. 8, locs. 2072-2087.

<sup>35</sup> Reynolds, *Carleton*, 111.

replacement as governor of Canada later in the year. Nonetheless, Carleton's hand was forced, and he relayed the order to Hamilton.<sup>36</sup>

The situation in Kentucky regarding both Native Americans and the English settlers had only become more complicated since the end of Lord Dunmore's War. This could be seen in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in November of 1768, signed by the British and the Six Iroquois Nations.<sup>37</sup> In this document, the Iroquois League, who technically retained control over Shawnee and Miami lands (although they no longer had the ability in practice to rule these lands), had sold their rights to Kentucky for a massive load of trade goods. This was an easy deal for the Iroquois since they had no enforceable claim on the territory anyway.<sup>38</sup> The Shawnee and the Miami refused to recognize the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which had resulted in Lord Dunmore's War, in which some but not all of the Shawnee villages had surrendered their rights to Kentucky to the Virginians.

To cloud matters further, the Cherokee, who also had some hunting rights to the area, had sold their claims to Kentucky in the Treaty of Hard Labor in October of 1768, which in any case they could not have held against the Shawnee, let alone the Virginians.<sup>39</sup> In all of these negotiations, the majority of the Shawnee, particularly those of the village of Chillicothe, protested that they had neither been represented nor had agreed to any of these terms, and when their protests were ignored resorted to large-scale raids.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Nester, 55; Reynolds, *Carleton*, 116.

<sup>37</sup> Richard D. Blackmon, *Dark and Bloody Ground: The American Revolution Along the Southern Frontier* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2012, Kindle Edition), 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Blackmon, 9.

These raids increased in frequency and ferocity as Hamilton in Detroit began rewarding attacks by the various tribes on the Kentucky settlements, offering some money for scalps and more for prisoners.<sup>41</sup> The Shawnee war chief Blackfish led raids against the country surrounding Harrodsburg and Boonesborough from March to May 1777.<sup>42</sup> In late June 1777, Hamilton called a council of warriors from not only the Shawnee and Miami peoples of the north bank of the Ohio, but also the nations of the *pays d'en haut* that centered around Detroit, among which were the Potawatomi, the Ottawa, and the Ojibwe.<sup>43</sup> By September of 1777, Hamilton claimed to have over 1100 Native warriors engaged in raids against the Kentucky settlers, several times the number of Virginians fit for militia duty.<sup>44</sup> Fortunately for the Patriot cause, Clark had ascended to the leadership of Kentucky's militia forces. He proved to be an able organizer and strategist, and was further aided by the arrival of a company of Virginia militia under the command of Colonel John Bowman in that September. The Kentucky settlers had survived the year of 1777, but Clark knew that defense against such odds was impossible in the long term. He suspected that there would be few further reinforcements from Virginia in time to affect the outcome.

Desperately casting about for some means of relief, Clark began to think about the Illinois Country. Having done business at Vincennes in the past, he knew that the French were on intimate terms with the Native Americans. To his military mind it would make sense for the British to use remote posts that were known and familiar for their Native American allies and under British control as staging grounds for the attacks that were

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<sup>41</sup> Nester, 103.

<sup>42</sup> Blackmon, 111.

<sup>43</sup> Nester, 55.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

crushing Kentucky. In a letter to a Continental official in Williamsburg, most likely Patrick Henry, Clark made the case for an invasion:

On the commencement of the present war, the [British] troops were called off to reinforce Detroit, which is about three hundred miles from it – leaving the fort and all its stores in care of one Roseblack [Rocheblave] as commandant of the place, with instructions to influence as many Indians as possible to invade the Colonies . . . Roseblock who acted as Governor, by large presents engaged the Waubash Indians to invade the frontiers of Kentucky; was daily treating with other Nations, giving large presents and offering them great rewards for scalps.<sup>45</sup>

Clark concluded darkly, “I am sensible that the case stands thus – that either take the town of Kuskuskies, or in less than a twelve month send an army against the Indians on Wabash, which will cost ten times as much, and not be of half the service.”<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, Rocheblave, who had since moved across the Mississippi from Ste. Genevieve after a dispute with the Spanish lieutenant-governor in St. Louis. Promoted to commandant of Kaskaskia by the departing Hugh Lord in 1776, Rocheblave may indeed have had it in mind to recruit Native warriors to help defend Kaskaskia. He had considerable experience with the Native Americans, dating back to the French and Indian War, and did not scruple to employ them against the Virginians. However, he found himself unable to do so; the Native tribes in the region seemed uninterested in his entreaties. Much of this reticence must be attributed to a general antipathy toward the

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<sup>45</sup> George Rogers Clark to unknown, 1777, in Clarence Alvord, ed., *Virginia Series vol 3: George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771-1781* (Springfield, IL: Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, 1912), 31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

British, dating back to Pontiac's Rebellion, and the sense among Native Americans that any conflict that caused exclusively British casualties need not concern them. In correspondence with his superiors in Detroit, Quebec, and even London, though, Rocheblave had another culprit in mind:

It has been necessary for me to break up the designs and evil intentions of our neighbors, the Spaniards, and to dissipate the injurious impression they have sought to give the savages against the present government, in seeking to renew the small degree of inclination they have had for the old, and to give from time to time something to the vast tribes who inhabit our boundless forests.<sup>47</sup>

In a letter to Haldimand, Rocheblave related an incident that he felt demonstrated conclusively that the Spanish had been conspiring with the Native Americans to aid the Americans: "Four months ago, after the arrival of the boats from New Orleans, the Spaniards sent off by night three men to carry letters to Fort Pitt. They spread the story that they were going to hunt on the Beautiful [Ohio] River. Although I did not credit the report, I have only recently been assured of the fact by two savages who met them."<sup>48</sup> Rocheblave had served for several years as a commandant under the Spanish government at St. Louis prior to assuming his post at Kaskaskia. Although the dispute that drove him across the Mississippi may have inclined Rocheblave to exaggerate Spanish perfidy, it is also true that few would have been in a better position to understand Spanish designs on the British bank of the Mississippi.

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<sup>47</sup> Philippe de Rocheblave to Lord George Germain, January 22, 1778, in Mason, 267.

<sup>48</sup> Philippe de Rocheblave to Frederick Haldimand, February 8, 1778, George Rogers Clark Papers, Lyman C. Draper Manuscripts, 4-116, Illinois History and Lincoln Collection, University of Illinois Library, Urbana, IL.



Unaware that Rocheblave had been unsuccessful in acquiring Native support for Kaskaskia, after some deliberation during which Clark himself made the journey to Williamsburg to present his plan. Virginia governor Patrick Henry and his council approved Clark's venture on January 2, 1778.<sup>49</sup> Clark was given secret orders to raise seven companies of militia with which to march upon Kaskaskia. He was even ordered not to tell General Edward Hand at Fort Pitt about the mission, even though Clark was to request transports for his men. Henry provided Clark with an anodyne set of orders to pass to Hand.<sup>50</sup> In the official orders, issued the next day, the connection back to the Native Americans was made stark:

As some Indian Tribes to the westward of the Mississippi have lately without any provocations massacred many of the Inhabitants of the Frontiers of this Commonwealth in the most cruel & barbarous Manner & it is intended to revenge the Injury & punish the Aggressors by carrying the War into their own Country . . . We think it just & reasonable that each Volunteer entering as a common Soldier in this Expedition, should be allowed three hundred Acres of Land & the Officers in the usual proportion, out of the Lands which may be conquered in the Country now in the possession of the said Indians, so as not to interfere with the Claims of any friendly Indians, or of any people willing to become Subjects of this Commonwealth.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Patrick Henry to George Rogers Clark, January 2, 1778, George Rogers Clark Papers, Draper Manuscripts, 18-147.

<sup>50</sup> Patrick Henry to Edward Hand, January 2, 1778, in Alvord, *George Rogers Clark Papers*, 36.

<sup>51</sup> George Whythe, George Mason, and Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, January 3, 1778, in Alvord, *George Rogers Clark Papers*, 37-38.

Since in the event there were no wars against any of the Native nations in the course of Clark's campaign in the Illinois Country, the promised reward caused some confusion at the conclusion of the Revolution.

Continued Native raids on Kentucky forced Clark to continually modify his plans. He had initially planned to recruit the bulk of his force from the Kentucky militias. However, with the number of Native warriors arriving from the *pay d'en haut* ever increasing, he decided against leaving the settlements defenseless. Not wanting to split the militias so evenly that both the invasion and defense forces were insufficiently manned, Clark decided to take only one and one-half companies – about 75 men – from Kentucky, and hope that recruitment from Virginia would make up the difference.<sup>52</sup> Even with the new recruits, however, Clark's invasion force only came up to four companies in total, which again forced him to alter his plans.<sup>53</sup> He had expected to march against Vincennes first, as it was the closest and richest target. However, knowing that Vincennes had a militia of four hundred men and was situated within easy reach of several allied Indian villages, he decided to first strike French villages on the Mississippi, since although they had more men in total, they were more spread out and less likely to be able to quickly assemble a defense.<sup>54</sup>

It is uncertain how critical a factor the influence of the *habitants* with the various Native tribes was on the eve of the invasion. At the end of the French and Indian War, the *habitants* conspired with various tribes to hinder the approach of the British to Fort de Chartres and Kaskaskia, even defying the last vestiges of French authority to do so. The

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<sup>52</sup> Clark, loc. 344.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 372.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 372.

kinship ties of the *habitants* with the Native Americans, particularly the Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River region, were strong enough that after the British attack on Cahokia was repulsed in 1780, forces from Cahokia marched on British trading posts to avenge wrongs done to *métis* relatives at St. Joseph. In turn, after the Revolution those ties were still strong enough that a daughter of those St. Joseph relatives living in Cahokia was able to convince a Native raiding party against attempting to massacre the American inhabitants of the town.<sup>55</sup> Yet no Native Americans other than those from the Illinois tribes themselves – the Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Peoria – were noted by Clark until they came to Cahokia at his invitation. It is possible that most of the warriors that could have come to Cahokia's defense were already committed in Kentucky. More likely, however, the *habitants* themselves were simply complacent. The French and Indian War had raged around them for seven years. The tribes had contributed troops to the defense of France, and yet the war had not touched them until a year after its conclusion. They had long since grown used to the benign neglect of the great powers, an assumption that was about to prove no longer operative.

Still, though, an urgent appeal for rescue by the *habitants* to their Indian friends and family would most likely be heeded. Clark fretted about releasing such an appeal until well after he had secured the villages and defeated Hamilton at Vincennes. In the end, the Native Americans did not participate in the conflicts either in Canada or the Illinois Country, but the shadow they cast was the fulcrum around which Clark's entire campaign swung, and their presence was hardly less felt by Montgomery or Carleton.

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<sup>55</sup> Sleeper-Smith, 66-67; Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 168-169.

## CHAPTER IV

### COMMERCE

As demonstrated by the fact that “worthless as a Continental” became idiomatic during the Revolution, money was a constant source of concern for the Continental Congress. With little power to tax and having lost access to the reserves of the Bank of England, Continental paper money was indeed worthless in a world of specie. What hard currency the fledgling government had available to it had to be carefully husbanded and spent; foreign governments and firms were under no obligation to accept Continental dollars, and generally did not. With little money to spend procuring domestic goods and establishing supply chains and depots, undertaking foreign invasions, which the operations in Canada and the Illinois Country represented, were risky financial ventures. There was no guarantee that French merchants and farmers would accept Continental paper money without a resort to force, and to force them to accept the money would most likely drive even sympathizers back into the arms of the British.

For the French colonists in North America in particular, paper currency was especially odious. During the French and Indian War, the French government had forced paper *livres* onto their colonists as a wartime measure; having nearly bankrupted the national treasury in the global Seven Years’ War of which the French and Indian War was a relatively small part, the metropolitan government was prepared to engage in extreme measures to remain solvent. Further, having lost the war and its North American possessions along with it, the French ministers of finance were not especially responsive to the complaints of their now-former colonies. In June of 1764, a royal decree fixed the terms by which the outstanding debts to the Canadian French would be repaid: of a total

debt of 83,000,000 *livres*, only 37,606,000 would be repaid, with the remainder in default.<sup>1</sup> One debt, in particular, incurred at 15,958,729 *livres*, was unilaterally reduced by approximately sixty percent, to 6,655,000 *livres*.<sup>2</sup> As the king represented the court of final appeal, and there was little the British could do to force the French to pay anything once both sides agreed to the terms of peace, the Canadian economy collapsed.<sup>3</sup> Having worked for years to regain their solvency, the Canadians remained determined that they would not be left in this position again, particularly the French mercantile class. The merchants and wealthier *habitants* in the *pays des Illinois* were not immune to the effect of this massive default, although the impact to that class was less visible in the Illinois Country because the majority of the wealthier inhabitants immediately moved to St. Louis.

As the invasion of Canada approached in 1775, Congress was not unaware of these problems, nor were their enemies in Canada or Britain. Through July and August 1775, the pro-government *Quebec Gazette* printed two letters, one French-language letter from “Le Canadien Patriote” and one English-language letter from “An English Farmer.” Both sought to inspire reticent *bourgeois* and *habitants* to more actively support the cause of the governor. Each of these letters portrayed a scenario wherein an invading Continental army, running low on food at the approach of winter, would force Canadian farmers to accept “Philadelphia” notes. The fact that such currency could not be spent on overseas goods was of particular concern to the Canadians. The mercantilist system pursued by both Britain and France had hindered the development of Canadian

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<sup>1</sup> Lanctot, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, ch. 3, loc. 674.

manufacture, as most finished goods had to come from Britain so that the Canadian markets would be effectively starved.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, there were still merchants, especially in the Montreal region, that were willing to accept Continental dollars on a temporary basis if necessary. For the most part, these were the British “Old Subjects” that had come to Canada anxious for the opportunities that they imagined would arise from dominating the political scene of an Anglicized Canada, only to be thwarted by Murray, Carleton, and the ministry of Lord North in London. Foremost among these was Thomas Walker, an English-born merchant who came to Montreal in 1763 after ten years in Boston to engage in the fur trade.<sup>5</sup> He quickly entered Canadian politics by being elected as a justice of the peace, benefitting from the fact that as the Test Act remained in force in Canada, only Protestants were eligible to vote. Walker betrayed his Yankee sentiments by consistently ruling against the military, particularly in cases where they were billeted amongst Montreal citizens.<sup>6</sup> The antagonism between Walker and Montreal commandant Ralph Butler exploded in the fall of 1764, when a civil magistrate claimed to have reserved a room in a fine guest house in which an army captain named Payne was billeted; when Payne refused to give up the billet, Walker ordered the captain arrested.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after that, Walker advised Montreal residents to refuse firewood and bedclothes to any troops that were quartered in their homes.<sup>8</sup> Furious, some of the soldiers in the city attacked Walker on the night of December 10, 1764, seriously battering him and cutting off his ear.<sup>9</sup> The case inflamed

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 6, loc. 1675.

<sup>5</sup> Wrong, 63.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, ch. 3, loc. 719.

<sup>7</sup> Wrong, 64.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

the entire citizenry of Montreal. Murray investigated but did nothing to intervene. However, upon succeeding Murray, the more severe but fair-minded Carleton had the perpetrators arrested in the dead of night, although only one indictment was delivered and that officer was found not guilty.<sup>10</sup>

Already inclined toward the boisterous populism typical of Boston, Walker became embittered toward the military government at Quebec and toward the French-Canadian establishment that supported it. He became the center of an anti-government “British Party” that was at constant odds with the pro-government “French Party.” The news of the assault, known as the “Thomas Walker Affair,” spread beyond Canada and attracted the notice of Patriot leaders in New York and Boston.<sup>11</sup> In the view of the British Party, the “Old Subjects” had been led to believe by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 that British law, including the Test Act, would eventually rule in Quebec, and that the military government was temporary. The outraged Old Subjects argued that they would have migrated to Canada had they realized that the Ministry would be so slow to institute proper British laws and institutions.<sup>12</sup> The passage of the Quebec Act in 1774 appalled them, and they continued to petition the Crown. The embittered British residents of Canada also began writing letters to New York newspapers so as not to fully commit themselves to any action.<sup>13</sup>

British colonists along the Atlantic seaboard protested the Quebec Act on several grounds. The Act placed all British territory west of the Appalachians within the jurisdiction of Canada, which was bad enough from the Continental perspective.

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<sup>10</sup> Wrong, 65-66.

<sup>11</sup> Wrong, 65.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, ch.3, loc. 782.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 4, loc. 928.

However, the subsequent Quebec Revenue Act attempted to solve the Canadian revenue problem by placing an import duty on rum and molasses coming into Canada. As British colonists in the “old thirteen” colonies paid a much higher rate for their imported sugar they deeply resented the perceived Parliamentary bias in favor of Canada <sup>14</sup>

French authorities had forbidden the sale of rum to Native Americans in the fur trade. Following the French and Indian War, British officials allowed the practice. Rum quickly became the primary trade good for the British in the fur trade, but the restrictions of the Quebec Revenue Act meant that any Atlantic colonist that went into “Indian Country” to trade with Native Americans not only had to pay duties that Canadians did not, but that to reach a Canadian customs house, he frequently had to go one hundred or more miles out of his way.<sup>15</sup> The New York Assembly claimed that the two acts taken together had destroyed the New York fur trade.<sup>16</sup> This may not only have been true but may not have been inadvertent on the part of the government in London, as one of the primary purposes of the Quebec Act was to reduce the chance of conflict with the Indians. From the government’s perspective, the fewer Europeans and the less rum were present among the tribes, the more likely would be the desired policy outcome.

The first overt act of cooperation between the “Old Subjects” in Canada and the lower thirteen colonies came in September of 1774, when, along with a note of sympathy, Quebec merchant Jonas Clarke Minot sent a load of grain to Boston. Collected by British merchants in Quebec, the grain proved vital to Bostonians blockaded by the Royal Navy in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party.<sup>17</sup> Over the ensuing months, the relationships

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<sup>14</sup> Neatby, 133.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, ch. 3, loc. 890.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 4, loc. 903.



between the northern and southern British merchants deepened. Although the Canadians remained cautious about the Patriot prospects if an armed conflict arose, and Canadian merchants were still deeply skeptical of the Continental Association and its embargo on British trade, it was at least clear that the Continentals had allies to the north.<sup>18</sup>

Commerce in the form of the fur trade was also an early point of contention between the eastern and western stretches of Britain's newly-expanded North American empire, which to some degree bled over into relations between Canada and the Atlantic colonies. With Spain in control of New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi as well as the newly ascendant trading center of St. Louis directly across the river from Cahokia, the French in the *pays des Illinois* had every incentive to trade with Spanish merchants as opposed to making the long trek to Montreal or the arduous upstream journey to Fort Pitt. Moreover, the fur traders of the Illinois Country and Upper Louisiana had long-standing ties of friendship, and often kinship, with the tribes to their north and west. This meant that the product of a huge fur-rich region was funneled through Spanish instead of British ports.

With British forces now in control of the St. Lawrence, British Canadian merchants possessing a decisive advantage over the Spanish and French in the quantity and price of the trade goods available to them. Despite their newfound economic advantages, though, the tangled skein of overlapping British authority hindered and nearly ruined the British merchant community in Canada. Murray and later Carleton at Quebec were sympathetic to their plight, but between the end of the French and Indian War in 1763 and the passage of the Quebec Act in 1774, many of the best hunting

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 4, loc. 928.

grounds were under the authority of Governor Thomas Gage and Superintendent of Indian Affairs Sir William Johnson in New York. These regions were subject to stringent regulations, the most difficult being that traders were required to trade at posts instead of among the tribes.<sup>19</sup> With the traders on the Spanish side of the Mississippi unbound by any such consideration and the *coureurs du bois* from Cahokia and Kaskaskia flatly ignoring Parliamentary restrictions and trading with the Indians in their villages, this represented a crushing impediment to the Canadian fur trade.<sup>20</sup> Finally, in 1766, Carleton appealed to the Lords of Trade in London. He bitterly and eloquently made the case that New York merchants were ruining both themselves and Montreal traders by trying to handicap the latter with impracticable regulations. Gage eventually came to agree with Carleton.<sup>21</sup> The attention brought to the French villages on the east bank of the Mississippi was not entirely welcome, as Murray and the Earl of Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the colonies until 1772, considered plans to move the *habitants* out of the region entirely and back to Canada. They hoped to thus resolve the trade issues and to remove them as a potential flashpoint for war with the Indians.<sup>22</sup> Fortunately for them, however, Murray and Hillsborough were replaced by Carleton and the Earl of Dartmouth, who were swayed both by considerations of mercy and the arguments of the French villagers' cousins in Montreal. Murray and Hillsborough came to see the *voyageurs* of the Illinois Country as valuable assets in the internecine trade war between Montreal and

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<sup>19</sup> Neatby, 69.

<sup>20</sup> Neatby, 69-70.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 69-70.

<sup>22</sup> Wrong, 243-244.

New York, provided that they could be convinced to shift at least some of their commerce from Louisiana to Canada.<sup>23</sup>

As in Montreal and Quebec, the beginnings of revolutionary sentiment in the Illinois Country were to be found among the few British merchants whose dreams of land speculation profits had been crushed by the Quebec Act. Chief among these were brothers Daniel and William Murray, who had entered the Illinois Country as speculators and remained as traders. Richard Winston, who had lived in the area since he had been sent by the Bayton, Wharton, and Morgan Company just after the French and Indian War, in 1766 likewise proved a leading voice for British merchants in the Illinois Country. Thomas Bentley, a storekeeper who had maintained a shop in Manchac, just north of New Orleans, before coming to Kaskaskia and marrying into the prominent Beauvais family, also became an ally.<sup>24</sup> As mentioned before, these men found themselves in immediate conflict with Rocheblave and finding the British authorities in Quebec and New York uninterested in their complaints; became receptive to Patriot arguments radiating out from Boston and New York. According to Rocheblave, this culminated in a meeting between agents of Bentley and of Clark, where in addition to trade, Clark's men were able to ascertain how many armed men defended Kaskaskia the strength and morale of the military forces guarding Kaskaskia. Such accusations led to Bentley's arrest and detention for several years at Detroit.<sup>25</sup> In his memoirs, Clark mentioned having sent spies into the Illinois Country a year or so before he moved against the villages, and named Winston and Daniel Murray as his first friendly contacts at Kaskaskia when he

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 245-246.

<sup>24</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 320-321, 346; Mason, 34n.

<sup>25</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 322.

occupied the town. He never connected the reconnaissance mission directly with the British merchants; however, given their immediate defection to Clark, Rocheblave's suspicions seem credible.<sup>26</sup>

While the British merchants in Canada swung rapidly toward the Continental cause, their more numerous and prosperous French counterparts were more cautious. Unlike their brethren in Montreal and Quebec, the French merchants in the *pays des Illinois* had lived through years of neglect, mismanagement, and corruption on the part of their new British masters; while Quebec had Carleton, Kaskaskia had Wilkins. While French merchants had little love for either British soldiers or colonists, there remained nascent commercial ties between Kentucky and the Illinois villages. Moreover, French Canadians retained memories of the bloodthirsty *Bastonnais*, the term by which all Atlantic colonists were known to them.<sup>27</sup> Knowing that war might well be coming, and with no natural loyalties on either side, the French merchants supported the side that most closely aligned with their business interests.

One such merchant was Charles Gratiot, a French-speaking Protestant from Lausanne, Switzerland. London educated, he left to seek employment in Canada at eighteen in 1765. Nine years later, Gratiot moved to Cahokia to manage his Montreal partners' affairs.<sup>28</sup> Gratiot's correspondence displays considerable *sang-froid* in its juxtaposition of commercial and wartime affairs, as in this undated fragment, perhaps talking about his wife:

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<sup>26</sup> Clark, ch. 1 loc. 278, ch. 3 locs. 440-449.

<sup>27</sup> Alvord, 322.

<sup>28</sup> Reynolds, 305-306.

“ . . . follows without seeing me, no more than my friends, exposed to dangers to which the scourges of war often lead. She fears that the storm, perceived by all, is not ready to dissipate. At any rate, I wish to engage them in commerce, for them to come every autumn to bring goods from market in New Orleans . . . ”<sup>29</sup>

Throughout his wartime correspondence, Gratiot spoke of the war as a regrettable imposition on his affairs and plans. In a March 1778 letter to his Montreal partner William Hay, Gratiot wrote of arrangements he had made for a trade expedition to New Orleans (translation by archivist):

It is very easy to arrange the plan I propose . . . unless this unfortunate war should continue as there is too much appearance. The Rebels have taken a boat loaded with goods in the Ohio, belonging to an Inhabitant of this side, and took it and crew to New Orleans. Several of my friends from that city have assured me that all the vessels belonging to the Bostonians were admitted into the ports of the French and Spanish, that they are openly protected by the two nations, they obtain all they want of ammunition or anything else necessary, which proves how long the war will endure.<sup>30</sup>

While not displaying much sympathy for the British government, Gratiot was annoyed that the Continentals were interfering with commerce, as evidenced by his use of “rebels” and “*Bastonnais*,” and his obvious irritation that the Spanish in New Orleans

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Gratiot, undated, Charles Gratiot Papers, Library and Research Center, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Gratiot to William Hay, March 22, 1778, Charles Gratiot Papers, Library and Research Center, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

were allowing them to prolong the war. His attitude toward the war did not appear to change much after Clark seized Kaskaskia and Cahokia; he wrote his father in 1779 that “I wait but for peace between America and England, and a treaty of commerce between them . . . The English side of this country is taken by the Americans since July last. I much fear that Canada will experience the same fate in the course of the winter; this might occasion us much injury, in that we could not send our peltries to England.”<sup>31</sup> This was well after he had declared for the Americans and put his considerable resources completely at Clark’s disposal. While it was true that, as governor and historian John Reynolds put it, “the spirit of his dear native Switzerland burned strong in his heart for liberty,” Gratiot’s correspondence makes it clear that his business interests at least informed every move he made.<sup>32</sup>

Of greater wealth and prominence was Gabriel Cerré, who had moved to Kaskaskia in 1755 and had amassed a considerable fortune by eschewing the easier trade route to New Orleans in favor of the more arduous trek to Montreal, which for much of his career he conducted personally.<sup>33</sup> Cerré and fellow trader Louis Viviat were seen as the leaders of the French faction supporting Rocheblave against the cabal of British merchants in Kaskaskia. Having received reports of this, most likely from Bentley’s agents, Clark saw Cerré as pivotal in securing the loyalties of the Kaskaskia merchants and *habitants*.<sup>34</sup> While it had been reported to Clark that Cerré was one of his “most inveterate enemies,” Clark also indicated that he had reason to believe that Cerré could be

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<sup>31</sup> Charles Gratiot to M. Gratiot, 1779, Charles Gratiot Papers, Library and Research Center, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

<sup>32</sup> Reynolds, 307.

<sup>33</sup> James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1981), 48.

<sup>34</sup> Alvord, 320; Clark, ch. 3 loc. 438.

persuaded to join the Continental cause.<sup>35</sup> To be certain, Clark considered Cerré as a leader of the Rocheblave party, Rocheblave having describing him to Henry Hamilton in Detroit as “an honest merchant” trusted with important business.<sup>36</sup> In April of that year, Cerré’s attorney delivered a letter to Rocheblave on behalf of a tutor for recently orphaned children. The tutor asked that she is kept in her position, and that Cerré is appointed as guardian of the children, with control over their shares of the parents’ estate. Rocheblave responded immediately by writing in the letter’s margin that he could not approve the arrangement. Cerré could choose another tutor, but would be required to subrogate any power over the children’s affairs to the tutor and to “enjoin him to watch over the interests of the minors in the shares that [the previous tutor] had desired.”<sup>37</sup> Given this implied lack of trust, it was quite possible that the relationship between Rocheblave and Cerré had deteriorated somewhat. Certainly, the episode illustrated that, as with Gratiot, business considerations were a powerful factor in Cerré’s motivations.

Gratiot and Cerré eventually shared an interesting familial connection: Gratiot married the sister of Auguste Chouteau, who along with Pierre Laclede had founded St. Louis and rapidly became one of its wealthiest inhabitants. Chouteau married Cerré’s daughter married Chouteau in 1786.<sup>38</sup> Cerré had been smuggling in St. Louis for some time. Given that Gratiot married Victoire Chouteau only three weeks after his move to St. Louis, it is a reasonable assumption that he too had been engaged in similar commerce for some length of time.<sup>39</sup> Among their other ventures, the Chouteau family maintained a

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<sup>35</sup> Clark, ch. 3 loc. 438.

<sup>36</sup> Rocheblave to Hamiton, May 8, 1778, in Mason, p. 262.

<sup>37</sup> M. Delisle to Rocheblave, April 25, 1778, annotated by Rocheblave, April 25, 1778, Papin Family Papers, Library and Research Center, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

<sup>38</sup> Primm, 49-50.

<sup>39</sup> Primm., 48, 50.

“continental store” that eventually, at the behest of Spanish colonial officials, became an entrepot through which flowed goods from New Orleans to Clark’s invasion force.<sup>40</sup> The Cahokia and Kaskaskia merchants thus enjoyed close relations with the Chouteaus, whom in turn served the confidants of successive Spanish lieutenant-governors in St. Louis. Given that Spanish interests lay with the Continentals in their struggle with Great Britain, it seems likely that both Gratiot and Cerré were keenly aware of the considerable advantages that would accrue to them if they facilitated Spanish strategy by aligning themselves with the Virginians when they eventually made their move.

On the eve of war, then, British merchants in both Canada and the *pays des Illinois*, weary of French collusion with their own government, formed the nucleus of pro-Continental sentiment. The attitude of the French *bourgeoisie*, on the other hand, was markedly different in both regions. While the French merchants in Montreal and Quebec were a besieged and weakened minority who felt dependent upon British protection, traders in Kaskaskia and Cahokia were still largely masters of their fate. As in so many other areas, the proximity of another imperial power provided the Illinois French with options unavailable to their northern cousins. In the coming conflict, many seemingly sudden decisions made by the French traders become more comprehensible by bearing this relationship in mind.

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<sup>40</sup> Fausz, 160.



## CHAPTER V

### CONFLICTS

The seizure of Fort Ticonderoga by the Continentals on May 10, 1775, was the first action of the war with Immediate implications for Canada. Commanding the junctions of Lakes Champlain and George between New York and Vermont, the fort was crucial in controlling traffic between Canada and the colonies to the south. In Quebec, Carleton had recognized the critical strategic importance of the location and had implored both Thomas Gage at New York and the metropolitan government in London to reinforce it, to no avail.<sup>251</sup> The leaders of the Continental Congress shared Carleton's appraisal and reacted rapidly to the situation. Their first concerns were defensive and logistical. American leaders wanted to cut off a potential British assault from the northeast and seize the fort's cannons for the Patriot cause.<sup>252</sup>

However, Continental Army officers such as Benedict Arnold were also motivated by intelligence gathered by a Continental agent named John Brown, who had visited Montreal in the spring of 1775. Brown had reported that the "British Party" in Montreal was strongly sympathetic to the American cause. However, the British merchants were cowed by Carleton and concerned that a premature declaration of independence by their southern neighbors would provoke the French into an open alliance with the governor.<sup>253</sup> Brown, though, remained convinced that the "Old Subjects" in Montreal would enthusiastically participate in an American occupation and that the *habitants* would quickly submit to American military force.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Wrong, 280.

<sup>252</sup> Anderson, ch. 5, loc. 1167; Reynolds, *Carleton*, 59.

<sup>253</sup> Wrong, 280.

<sup>254</sup> Anderson, ch. 4, locs. 1103-1118.

Accordingly, Silas Deane in Connecticut and Benedict Arnold in Massachusetts organized expeditions to take the fort. The troops dispatched by Deane soon joined with a small company under Brown and a larger force of “Green Mountain Boys” led by Ethan Allen; this force was already on the march when it was met by Arnold and aide James Easton. Working in uneasy concert, Allen and Arnold led the combined 300-man force against the fort. They caught the small, fifty-man British garrison completely by surprise and captured not merely Fort Ticonderoga but also the nearby fort of Crown Point.<sup>255</sup>

Both Allen and Arnold were daring and ambitious commanders. With Brown along to provide intelligence on the situation in Montreal, they could not resist the temptation to advance quickly across Lake George and Lake Champlain and along the Richelieu River in a steady march towards Montreal. As if they needed further incentive, Continental forces who had seized the town of Skenesborough, at the southern tip of Lake Champlain, reported that British forces were outfitting an armed sloop to reassert British control over the lake system.<sup>256</sup> British forces had docked the sloop at the fort of St. John’s, on the Richelieu River; to take or destroy it would constitute an invasion of Canada. However, neither Allen nor Arnold blinked at the prospect. In fact, Allen could barely contain his men from marching northward, and Arnold informed Thomas Walker to expect American forces in Montreal shortly.<sup>257</sup>

Having seized a schooner from a retired British officer, Allen and Arnold moved into position downriver from St. John’s. On May 18 Arnold landed a force of 35 men to raid the fort, seize the armed sloop, and sink the remainder of the docked watercraft.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Anderson, ch. 5, locs. 1197-1208.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 5, locs. 1221-1233.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Anderson., ch. 5, loc. 1248.

At this point, the difference between Arnold's boldness and Allen's recklessness became apparent. Realizing how far the company had moved ahead of its supply line, Arnold planned to fall back to Ticonderoga and use his newly acquired ships to guard the lake system against British incursion while the Continental Congress and military command determined a more systematic strategy for dealing with Canada.<sup>259</sup> However, Allen, intoxicated by his recent successes, brushed aside Arnold's warnings and returned to St. John's with a 90-man force. This warning proved to be prescient. The commander of the Montreal Garrison had already ordered Major Charles Preston to reinforce St. John's, and only a timely warning allowed the Green Mountain Boys to escape the British regulars.<sup>260</sup>

Carleton was informed of these actions on May 20, 1775, by Moses Hazen, a British reserve officer, land speculator, and seigneur who would later defect to the Continental cause. Two days later, the governor moved to Montreal to assume command of the city's defense.<sup>261</sup> Although the local seigneurs and the French merchants rallied to Carleton, the "Old Subjects" were largely sympathetic to the Americans. Carleton was even more chagrined when, despite his efforts to appease the "New Subjects," the *habitants* refused to report. Carleton fumed at their ingratitude but tempered his anger with the recognition that the timing of the Quebec Act allowed "Old Subjects" to claim its true aim was to reconcile French Canadians to the possibility of serving under arms against the Americans.<sup>262</sup> As mentioned earlier, Carleton's requests to Bishop Briand to use his episcopal and pastoral authority to motivate the *habitants* were mainly effective in causing them to lose respect for the clergy, seeing them as creatures of the British.

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<sup>259</sup> Wrong, 281.

<sup>260</sup> Neatby, 147.

<sup>261</sup> Anderson, ch. 5, loc. 1306.

<sup>262</sup> Lanctot, 54.

Priests were held in awe by the French in general and the *habitants* in particular in the performance of their office, but their isolation from France and years without a bishop had engendered an independent streak among the French Canadians. They developed the widespread opinion that the proper sphere of the clergy was in spiritual affairs, and they were not prepared to tolerate much interference by the priests in political affairs. At length, through a combination of mildness toward the *habitants*, pleas from the clergy and French gentry, and threats toward the British merchants – at one point threatening to burn Montreal before Continental forces could arrive and withdraw to Quebec – Carleton was able to muster companies of militia in almost every district of Canada. However, Carleton remained so uncertain of his troops' loyalty that he delayed organizing them into an active battalion.<sup>263</sup>

In the meantime, aware that Carleton only possessed 800 soldiers to defend all of Canada, Congress authorized General Philip Schuyler to order Brigadier General Richard Montgomery to move up the lake system toward St. John's, Chambly, and ultimately Montreal.<sup>264</sup> Moreover, George Washington, who had tirelessly promoted the invasion of Canada as necessary to deprive the British of a significant base of operations, informed Schuyler that Benedict Arnold was preparing a thousand men to march from Massachusetts through Maine to strike at Quebec from the east. Arnold would ultimately command this force.<sup>265</sup> At the end of August, Montgomery, prompted by reports that the British were preparing two war sloops to contest American control of the lake system, marched north. After skirmishing with Canadian and Native American

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<sup>263</sup> Lanctot, 58-59.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-64.

<sup>265</sup> Wrong, 286; Anderson, ch. 7, loc. 1953.

forces, Montgomery secured a base on the Île-aux-Noix at the source of the Richelieu River.<sup>266</sup>

From their new base of operations, the Continentals pursued two avenues of attack, one military and one in the realm of public relations. The initial military focus was on the forts at St. John's and Chambly, which was further north on the Richelieu River where it narrowed as it approached the St. Lawrence. Initially lacking sufficient artillery to threaten even the relatively dilapidated forts, the American army roamed the territory between the two, harassing St. John's in particular. The first significant skirmish occurred on September 17, when a 200-man British force in pursuit of a Continental raiding party fell afoul of a 400-man Continental detachment under Colonel Timothy Bedel, which forced the British to fall back to St. John's.<sup>267</sup> Holding his ground, Bedel sent John Brown, now a major, and a 40-man reconnaissance unit to scout out the approaches to Montreal itself, where they stumbled across a seigneur and a party of militia and Indians with a supply caravan bound for St. John's. Brown's troops forced the militia to flight and seized the supplies.<sup>268</sup> When word spread of this encounter, panic began to grip Montreal citizens as they realized that the Continentals were on the verge of controlling the southern shore of the St. Lawrence River.

In the meantime, the Americans sought to recruit the *habitants* by distributing a circular amongst the residents of the village of Chambly and the surrounding areas calling them to join the Continentals and defend their liberty.<sup>269</sup> Schuyler and Montgomery were aided in this endeavor by James Livingston, a Chambly merchant of

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<sup>266</sup> Anderson, ch. 7, loc. 1978; ch. 8, loc. 2042.

<sup>267</sup> Anderson, ch. 8, loc. 2180.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 8, loc. 2195.

<sup>269</sup> Wrong, 287.

New York birth who had been in contact with the Americans since the taking of Ticonderoga.<sup>270</sup> The Americans were initially pleased with the attitude of the *habitants*; they were cordial to the troops and eagerly sold them supplies in return for payments in gold specie which the Continental Congress had given Montgomery.<sup>271</sup> However, it soon became apparent that the *habitants*, for the most part, had little interest in entering the Continental service. The French Canadians remained skeptical of the Americans' chances against the British and preferred to remain neutral. Noticing this, local Indians likewise demurred and withdrew to their villages.<sup>272</sup> Livingston, assisted by Ethan Allen, finally succeeded in recruiting a small force; while Livingston numbered it at 300, the Loyalist Montreal notary Simon Sanguinet placed it at no more than 50. Rumors among the *habitants* reported in Montreal estimated it at 150, which was probably closer to the truth.<sup>273</sup> Even at that, Allen had to make extravagant promises to bind the Canadians to his side, which he was largely unable to fulfill.<sup>274</sup>

For his part, Carleton had finally been able to assemble a 120-man militia unit under the seigneur de Longueuil. These were recruited through the combined influence of the other seigneurs, the clergy, and, most critically, the French merchants of Montreal, whom up to this point Carleton had largely disregarded.<sup>275</sup> This force was able to reinforce St. John's and make it impregnable to Continental attack. Their appearance was even enough of a shock to the residents of the Richelieu valley that one parish, St-Denis, sought and promptly received a pardon from Carleton for siding with the

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<sup>270</sup> Anderson, ch. 7, loc 1875.

<sup>271</sup> Lanctot, 65.

<sup>272</sup> Lanctot, 65.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66; Anderson, ch. 8, loc. 2139.

<sup>274</sup> Lanctot, 66.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

Americans.<sup>276</sup> Indeed, things seemed to be looking up for the beleaguered British governor. On September 25, Ethan Allen, reckless as ever and led to believe that he would have significant Canadian militia support, decided to turn a recruiting trip to the town of Longueuil, directly across the St. Lawrence from Montreal, into an all-out assault on the city.<sup>277</sup> However, the militia support failed to materialize, and Allen was left only with his own force combined with John Brown's small detachment. Their 120-man unit was promptly overwhelmed by a force of British regulars and Loyalist Canadian militia under Prescott. British forces captured Allen and placed him in irons.<sup>278</sup> Moreover, Île-de-Noix turned out to be a less than ideal location for a semi-permanent camp. Nearly 500 men, including General Schuyler, had to be sent back to New York to recover from illnesses contracted in the marshy surroundings. This left Montgomery as the sole operational American field commander on the ground in Canada.<sup>279</sup> Further, Montgomery was coming uncomfortably close to the end of the hard currency with which he had been provided, causing him to have to skimp on supplies for his troops.<sup>280</sup> With St. John's holding out with the aid of the Montreal militia company, the Continental invasion was in danger of stalling just before the brutal Canadian winter began. Furthermore, Carleton remained firmly in control of Montreal and, in fact, finally ordered the arrest of Thomas Walker, who had been communicating and coordinating activities with Montgomery since the American invasion of Canada.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Simon Sanguinet, *Le Témoin Oculaire de la Guerre des Bastonnais en Canada*, in Verreau, 43-44.

<sup>277</sup> Neatby, 149.

<sup>278</sup> Wrong, 288.

<sup>279</sup> Neatby, 149.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*; Anderson, ch. 9, loc. 2479.

<sup>281</sup> Neatby., 148.

However, Carleton's control of Montreal was undone by the complacency of Major Preston, the commandant at Fort St. John's, and the timidity of Major Stopford, in charge at Fort Chambly. After Preston had retaken the fort from Allen, the armed schooner *Royal Savage* docked on the river beside the fort. However, the schooner was not in fighting condition, serving mainly as a floating battery. Preston made no move to maintain or improve the ship, even though it could have largely prevented Continental troop movement had it been able to patrol.<sup>282</sup> Finally, on October 16, the schooner capsized, affording Livingston the opportunity to slip two artillery pieces downriver past the fort to rendezvous with a force under John Brown and Jeremiah Duggan, Livingston's second-in-command, at Fort Chambly.<sup>283</sup> Carleton had been slow to follow up on his defeat of Allen outside Montreal, which depressed morale among the *habitants* and made them more receptive to the pleas of the Continentals. Duggan had finally recruited the 300 *habitants* that Livingston had initially claimed.<sup>284</sup> With this augmented force, Stopford was induced to surrender Fort Chambly after a siege of about two days. Incredibly, in that time, he had not thought to throw his gunpowder into the river or to spike his cannon, which represented a godsend to the Continentals.<sup>285</sup> With supply worries resolved for the moment, Montgomery assembled his forces at St. John's, where Preston was forced to surrender on November 3.<sup>286</sup> The road to Montreal now lay wide open. Carleton along with his regulars withdrew from the city on November 10 while American forces rushed to Sorel to cut them off from Quebec.

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<sup>282</sup> Wrong, 289.

<sup>283</sup> Anderson, ch. 9, loc. 2509.

<sup>284</sup> Anderson, ch. 9, loc. 2509.

<sup>285</sup> Wrong, 290.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-291.



What followed was a wild jumble of chance, farce, and determination in the face of sobering odds. The indefatigable John Brown had intercepted the Quebec-bound British flotilla carrying the retreating British soldiers from Montreal at Sorel, where it had encountered crosswinds that had run several ships aground. Having ingeniously convinced a credulous British officer that he had one battery in place at the mouth of the Richelieu River and another consisting of 32-pounders *en route*, when in fact the Continentals had no heavy artillery and even the limited guns at his disposal had not yet arrived, he induced Prescott to surrender the entire squadron. Amazingly, the officer did not even insist on inspecting the guns, and Prescott failed to ask if he had seen them.<sup>287</sup>

However, although the ships were invaluable in the later assault on Quebec, the grand prize had eluded the clever major. After encountering the forward battery at Sorel, the ship captains had urged the governor to continue toward Quebec on his own to avoid capture. One of them, an enterprising Frenchman named Bouchette, volunteered to smuggle him past the American blockade in a rowboat.<sup>288</sup> Carleton, Bouchette, and two British soldiers made their way past Continental encampments on either side of the St. Lawrence posted specifically to catch them by lying in the bottom of the boat and paddling up the great river with their hands to minimize noise.<sup>289</sup> The foursome crept into the outskirts of Trois-Rivières, about halfway between Montreal and Quebec, to stay the night in the home of a French Loyalist. An American scouting party occupied the house but Carleton was able to slip out disguised as a *habitant*.<sup>290</sup> Finally, a British ship picked up Carleton's group and took them into Quebec, landing on November 19. In a final

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<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 291-292.

<sup>288</sup> Anderson, ch. 11, loc. 3086.

<sup>289</sup> Wrong, 292.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

twist of timing, they arrived five days after the second Continental army, led by Benedict Arnold from Massachusetts (and comprised of 800 of the originally planned 1000 troops), reached the Plains of Abraham and Quebec's city walls.<sup>291</sup> Even had Arnold known who was on the ship, he had no way to attack British warships on the water. The failure of the Continentals to capture Carleton was a crippling blow to their enterprise, for he was a commander uniquely suited to the turn that the campaign had taken.

Indeed, had Carleton appeared in Quebec any later than he did, Canada might have been lost regardless. Arnold's appearance badly startled the lieutenant-governor, Hector-Théophile Cramahé, and his military advisor, Colonel Allen MacLean of the Royal Highland Emigrants. Like Carleton, Cramahé was sufficiently mistrustful of the Canadians that he would not authorize a sortie against Arnold's force, even at its most vulnerable when fording the St. Lawrence.<sup>292</sup> Arnold's force had barely survived its trek along the Kennebec River in Maine and the Chaudière in southern Quebec, battling and frequently succumbing to frostbite and starvation. The conditions were so severe that after Arnold's second-in-command, Colonel Roger Enos, led a significant portion of the detachment back to Massachusetts; he was acquitted of desertion by a later court-martial convened upon his return.<sup>293</sup> However, Arnold and his men were saved by *habitants* from the first villages they encountered, who fed them and went so far as to rescue those whom Arnold had no choice but to leave by the wayside as his troops barely had the strength to push themselves forward.<sup>294</sup> When this ragged force finally arrived in front of the city gates, though, it was only the resolve of the French working classes to stand by their local

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<sup>291</sup> Lanctot, 101.

<sup>292</sup> Wrong, 296.

<sup>293</sup> Wrong, 295.

<sup>294</sup> Neatby, 151.

French and British leaders that prevented the Continental partisans in the merchant class from sending out terms of surrender.<sup>295</sup> Heartened by the show of support, Cramahé and MacLean resolved to defend the city to the end, even though Admiral Lord Howe of the Royal Navy warned them that due to conditions on the St. Lawrence he could not bring them aid until spring.<sup>296</sup> Lacking both strong local pro-American sentiment and any sort of artillery or siege equipment, Arnold withdrew to the nearby town of Pointe-aux-Trembles. He sent word to Montgomery in Montreal that a siege would be necessary. However, Arnold held out hope that his sympathizers within the capital could find a way to open the gates for the waiting Continental forces.<sup>297</sup>

Carleton removed this option immediately upon his arrival. Having been accused of having lost the *habitants* due to having overly indulged the rights of the “Old Subject” turncoats and allowing them to spread propaganda through the countryside, he was determined not to lose Quebec in the same manner. Carleton was especially concerned after being informed by Cramahé of Continental sympathizers who had tried to surrender the city.<sup>298</sup> Carleton declared martial law and ordered any eligible male not willing to join the militia by December 1 to leave the city with their families or be arrested as a spy. By this time about 170 “Old Subjects” and a few Canadians had left, but Carleton’s proclamation added motivation induced 53 more Canadians to join the militia rather than leave the city..<sup>299</sup> Finally, he ordered all boats and ships, including the warships HMS *Lizard* and *Hunter*, docked for the winter and ordered the crews to help defend the city.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Lanctot, 100.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>297</sup> Wrong, 298.

<sup>298</sup> Sanguinet, in Verreau, 69.

<sup>299</sup> Lanctot, 103.

<sup>300</sup> Reynolds, *Carleton*, 78.

His energy galvanized Quebec's defenses, and his patience in not engaging in sorties and in continuing to fight with the French militia gave the besieging Americans no openings to take Quebec.

Montgomery arrived at Pointe-aux-Trembles on December 5 with every resource that he felt Brigadier General David Wooster, left in command at Montreal, could spare. For instance, he brought along the troop transports captured from Prescott at Sorel. However, the St. Lawrence had frozen at Quebec, so there was no opportunity to use them in landings against the city.<sup>301</sup> Between Arnold and Montgomery, they had between 1200 and 1300 Continental troops and militia, along with around 500 Canadian militia. Yet as with Carleton, Montgomery was so uncertain of the *habitants'* loyalty that he declined to use them in any offensive capacity.<sup>302</sup> This placed the Continental forces at parity with the approximately 1750 soldiers available to Carleton in the city. These numbers gave Carleton the decided advantage because Carleton could rely on his Canadian militia to the extent that Montgomery could not. Montgomery might have been able to compensate somewhat for his numerical disadvantage with sufficient artillery, but what he had at his disposal was too light for besieging a walled city, and beyond that, the frozen ground would not permit his gunners to secure their batteries.<sup>303</sup> As if these logistical difficulties were not enough, smallpox began to rage through the camp. Conditions became so bad that Americans started to deliberately expose themselves to the virus to become ill and be sent back to New York.<sup>304</sup> Above all loomed the January 1, 1776 enlistment deadline for many Continental soldiers. While Montgomery would have

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>302</sup> Wrong, 298.

<sup>303</sup> Lanctot, 105.

<sup>304</sup> Wrong, 300.

been within his rights to order the militia terms extended, he had little faith that the majority of his troops would not just ignore him and go home.<sup>305</sup>

Regarding foodstuffs, the *habitants* outside the city were either sympathetic to the Americans or did not wish to antagonize them by trying to evade the siege. City defenders could not forage the countryside for supplies while Montgomery's army was relatively well-supplied.<sup>306</sup> However, Cramahé had foreseen these problems and laid in enough supplies to see Quebec through a winter siege, if not comfortably. In the meantime, both Montgomery and Arnold had nearly run through their stores of cash, and their supporters in Montreal were likewise becoming overdrawn.<sup>307</sup> Long-term, the invaders had neither the specie to sustain themselves nor the superior force necessary to extract enough supplies from the *habitants* by force, which would have been needed to get them to accept Continental paper money.

Bereft of options, and realizing that the situation in Quebec would change radically once the Royal Navy could reach the city in the spring, Montgomery decided to undertake a desperate full-scale assault on Quebec. On December 31, he divided his forces in a three-pronged attack. Livingston, the Canadian militia colonel, led his men in a feint on one of the gates to the city. Simultaneously Arnold attempted to climb the steep road that led to the Upper City of Quebec. On a third front, Montgomery led an assault on the Lower City along the narrow approach from Wolfe's Cove, where the famed general of the French and Indian War had landed his men in preparation for his assault on the city in 1759.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Lanctot, 104.

<sup>306</sup> Wrong, 209.

<sup>307</sup> Reynolds, *Carleton*, 77.

<sup>308</sup> Anderson, ch. 14, loc. 3771.

The attack was a disaster. Carleton had prepared blockhouses and barricades concealing cannon loaded with grapeshot at both approaches to the city. Furthermore, Montgomery was killed, and Arnold severely wounded within the first minutes of the assault. The few Continental soldiers that managed to evade the barricades and spill into the city were quickly mopped up by the regulars and the militia.<sup>309</sup> Livingston's force of *habitants* performed better than expected, but their lack of equipment and training left them with no realistic chance of seriously threatening the walls. The lack of overall command and control likewise left them with no way of knowing whom or where to reinforce. As a result, most of the unit was quickly taken, prisoner.<sup>310</sup> Remarkably, despite his injury and with nearly 500 of his soldiers killed or taken prisoner, Arnold managed to organize a retreat.<sup>311</sup>

Despite the severity of this blow, the Continentals were not ready to write off Canada as a loss. They still held Montreal and even threatened Quebec. If the *habitants* could help improve their supply situation, they could reinforce their defensive positions in the spring. However, General Wooster, whom Montgomery had left as commandant of Montreal, was not as adept as Montgomery in handling the Canadians. In response to renewed Loyalist activity in the wake of Montgomery's defeat, Wooster had several prominent Loyalists arrested, holding most at Fort Chambly but sending a few to New York. This contrasted uncomfortably with Carleton's gentle treatment of Continental sympathizers and, not for the first time, left the Americans vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy.<sup>312</sup> Moreover, the Connecticut native and graduate of Yale College, at that time

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<sup>309</sup> Lanctot, 106-107.

<sup>310</sup> Anderson, ch. 14, loc.3826.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 3840; Lanctot, 107.

<sup>312</sup> Sanguinet, in Verreau, 93-94.

a bastion of Puritanism, had little patience for the Catholic faith to begin with, and was rapidly frustrated by the unwillingness of French Catholic clergy to promote the American cause. While there is no evidence that he acted against any priests, he publicly threatened to treat recalcitrant priests as British agents.<sup>313</sup> As every political actor involved had predicted, this inflamed the passions of the French. While the *habitants* felt entitled to chastise their priests for overstepping their bounds, it was an entirely different matter for the Protestant *Bastonnais* to threaten them with harm. Above all, though, the chronic lack of hard currency hindered Wooster from assembling supplies for the army at Quebec, a problem made more acute by the arrival of New York troops in Montreal. When the *habitants* and French merchants balked at taking Continental notes, the Yorkers simply took what goods they needed, thus squandering the goodwill that Montgomery had so meticulously cultivated.<sup>314</sup>

As word spread of Montgomery's death and Wooster's severity, the attitude of the *habitants* hardened against the Continentals. Carleton's gentle treatment of both the *habitants* and captured Continental troops served to improve his reputation amongst French and British Canadians. With the arrival of British reinforcements in May of 1776 and the failure of the commission sent by Congress to engage the citizens of Montreal in establishing a popular government, the Americans fell back from Canada and reached Lake Champlain in late June 1776.

Much like the invasion of Canada, Clark's 1778 Illinois expedition was preceded and facilitated by a water campaign. This conflict was waged by Captain James Willing against British settlements on the lower Mississippi River. Leaving Fort Pitt on January

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<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>314</sup> Neatby, 152.

11, 1778, Willing and 26 men embarked down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Their intent was to seize the Natchez District of British West Florida, including the towns of Natchez and Manchac, and then move on to take the significant towns of the Tombigbee District – Mobile and the capital of Pensacola.<sup>315</sup> In a July 4, 1778 letter to Haldimand, Rocheblave reported that Willing had recruited “three hundred rogues,” seized or destroyed over 1.5 million piastres in goods and “destroyed English Arkansas, which is no longer anything but a desert.”<sup>316</sup>

After having ravaged the British settlements on the lower Mississippi, Willing followed Congress’s instructions to march to New Orleans, purchase a large number of supplies and entice the Spanish governor, Bernardo Galvez, to support his planned expedition to the Florida settlements. While in New Orleans, Willing lost control of his men, who spent most of their time there in drunken brawling and debauchery. As a result, Galvez politely put off Willing. Only after Spain had formally declared war on Britain would Galvez himself lead a Spanish expedition to take Mobile and Pensacola.<sup>317</sup> Rocheblave wrote to Haldimand with malicious satisfaction that Willing’s rapaciousness, along with his duplicity in refusing to pay some of his crew, resulted in the loss of the territory that he had taken. The men Willing had recruited, slipped back to Natchez and Manchac and helped the British settlers kill or eject the men that Willing had left to hold the towns.<sup>318</sup> Willing’s adventure was not completely without consequence, though; he surprised and captured an 18-gun frigate that could have been deployed to the Illinois

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<sup>315</sup> Nester, 68.

<sup>316</sup> Rocheblave to Haldimand, July 4, 1778, Lyman Draper Collection, George Rogers Clark Papers, 4:127, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL.

<sup>317</sup> Nester, 97.

<sup>318</sup> Rocheblave to Haldimand, July 4, 1778



Country. He also seized a large cache of supplies which he sent to St. Louis in anticipation of further campaigns in the spring.<sup>319</sup>

Just after having approved Willing's expedition, on January 12, 1778 Clark received official ratification of his plan to invade the Illinois Country in the form of orders in council from Williamsburg: "You are to proceed with all convenient speed to enroll seven companies of Soldiers to consist of fifty men each, to be officered in the usual manner & armed most properly for the Enterprize & with this done attack the British post at Kaskaskia."<sup>320</sup> The mission was to be kept a secret to prevent Illinois villagers from mustering, or even more dangerously from contacting their allies among the Illinois Confederacy and other Algonquin tribes, such as the Piankeshaw. Accordingly, Clark's troops were not to be told of their true destination until the march began. Not even General Edward Hand, in command at Fort Pitt where Clark's expedition was outfitted, was to be informed.<sup>321</sup>

Clark encountered difficulties with recruitment, the more so since he was not at liberty to discuss the actual object of his mission, only that it was meant to protect Kentucky. As a result, men from Pennsylvania and Virginia refused to join, preferring to remain to defend their own colonies.<sup>322</sup> He sent messengers and money to Kentucky, and soon received word that Captains Joseph Bowman and Leonard Helm had each raised one as well.<sup>323</sup> Major William Smith reported that he had raised four additional companies. Yet upon Clark's arrival in Kentucky, he discovered that Smith had received

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<sup>319</sup> *Ibid*; James Willing to Commercial Committee of Congress, July 29, 1778, Lyman Draper Collection, George Rogers Clark Papers, 23:245, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL.

<sup>320</sup> Virginia to George Rogers Clark, January 12, 1778, Lyman Draper Collection, George Rogers Clark Papers, 18:147, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL.

<sup>321</sup> Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 91.

<sup>322</sup> Clark, ch. 2, loc. 304.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid*.

orders to reinforce eastern Virginia and could only spare one company under Captain James Dillard. As a result, the 350 men for which the operation had been planned had been reduced to 150.<sup>324</sup> Clark moved his men to Corn Island, on the Ohio just downriver of modern-day Louisville, for training. The seclusion of the island provided secrecy and made desertion difficult. Despite these precautions, Clark was required to spend a few days tracking down a small band of deserters that had found a spot in the river where they could wade ashore.<sup>325</sup>

Clark's initial intention was to start by taking Vincennes, which was in the center of Indian activity at it related to Kentucky. However, with his reduced numbers and knowing that Vincennes had 400 militia under arms, he decided that it was less risky to begin with the towns along the Mississippi.<sup>326</sup> Clark reasoned that there were fewer large Indian villages in the *pays des Illinois* who might come to the aid of the French and British. Also, if things went badly, his force could find refuge across the Mississippi in Spanish territory.<sup>327</sup> Accordingly, Clark and his men started out for the Illinois Country under cover of darkness on June 24, 1778. They landed at the ruins of the old French Fort Massac, forty miles upriver of the Ohio's juncture with the Mississippi.<sup>328</sup> Clark ruled out making the voyage entirely on water as the journey up the Mississippi would be arduous, and they would almost certainly be seen.<sup>329</sup>

After making their way inland from Fort Massac, Clark realized that his immediate difficulty would be finding his way to Kaskaskia, his first destination. There

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<sup>324</sup> Clark, ch. 2, loc. 323; Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 91.

<sup>325</sup> Clark, ch. 2, loc. 361.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 371.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 92.

<sup>329</sup> Nester, 73.

was a well-traveled road from Vincennes to Kaskaskia, but the French-era road from Fort Massac was long gone. Fortunately for Clark, he ran into a hunting party led by John Duff, who claimed knowledge of Kaskaskia and offered to lead him there.<sup>330</sup> Curiously, in the 1790s there were stories of a counterfeiter and river pirate named Duff that had operated out of Cave-in-Rock, slightly upriver from Fort Massac. As such, it is possible that this encounter was less random chance than a reconnaissance mission on Duff's part to determine the identity of Clark's troops.<sup>331</sup> It might even be suspected that Clark had a previous arrangement with Duff, although Clark refers in his account to "their surprise having been owing to lack of knowledge who we were."<sup>332</sup> At any rate, Clark selected one of Duff's party, a man named Saunders, to guide him to Kaskaskia. Even for an experienced hunter, the way from Fort Massac to Kaskaskia was not easy to find in the largely featureless prairie. At one point, Clark, suspecting that Saunders might be a double-agent, threatened to have him shot if he failed to quickly locate the trail again.<sup>333</sup> Eventually, on July 4, 1788, the guide finally delivered Clark and his men to their destination.

On the night of July 4, having ascertained that there were no Indian parties in the village, Clark and his men slipped across the Kaskaskia River and took up positions around the town. Moving quickly, they then burst in on Rocheblave and his wife in their bedroom and placed him under arrest while ordering the townspeople to stay in their homes.<sup>334</sup> Through the next day, Clark treated the villagers brusquely, shackling a few

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<sup>330</sup> Clark, ch. 2, loc. 381.

<sup>331</sup> Otto A. Rothert, *The Outlaws of Cave-In-Rock: Historical Accounts of the Famous Highwaymen and River Pirates who Operated in Pioneer Days* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1924), 273.

<sup>332</sup> Clark, ch. 2, loc. 381.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3 loc. 411.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3, locs. 421-430.

militia leaders and only reluctantly allowing a meeting at the church. After the church meeting, Father Gibault and a few of the leading townspeople approached Clark nervously and asked that if they were to be expelled and if so, would they be allowed to pack a few necessities and leave unharmed.<sup>335</sup> Having brought the townspeople to a sense of despair, Clark delivered a tour-de-force performance, demanding to know why the villagers thought that Americans were so savage as to kill and plunder indiscriminately? He assured Father Gibault and the other town leaders that everyone in the village was at liberty to depart except for the household of Gabriel Cerré. The French trader, who was in St. Louis preparing for a trading mission to Fort Michilimackinac at the time of Clark's arrival, was known to be one of the former commandant's supporters. Clark then played his trump card: the news, delivered to him immediately before his departure from Kentucky, that France had entered into a formal alliance with the colonies.<sup>336</sup>

The effect on the townspeople was electric. Not only did they enthusiastically align themselves with Clark and the Continental cause, but Gibault and other prominent men offered their services as ambassadors. They rode with Clark's men to Prairie du Rocher, St-Philippe, Cahokia, and ultimately as far as Vincennes on the Wabash to convince the *habitants* to throw in their lot with the Americans. Motivated by concern for his family and mercantile interests, Cerré returned to Kaskaskia and surrendered to American forces. After vigorous questioning, Clark announced he was satisfied with Cerré's loyalty. Not surprisingly, Cerré quickly offered his services and stores to Clark.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3, locs. 458-468.

<sup>336</sup> Clark, ch. 3, locs. 458-478.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3, locs. 516-535.

In the space of a few weeks, Clark had occupied British Illinois from the Mississippi to the Wabash with less than 200 men, and without firing a shot in anger.

Although busy dealing with French settlers on the Lower Mississippi, Clark did not neglect the region's Indian tribes. The Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Peoria would follow the lead of their French friends and relatives. Kaskaskia chief Jean-Baptiste Ducoigne would become a friend and staunch ally to Clark. But tribes such as the Potawatomi, the Winnebagos, the Sauk, and the Ojibwe would require some convincing. Accordingly, Clark held a council of the chiefs at Cahokia in the fall of 1778, where he put every lesson he had learned in years of Indian warfare in Kentucky to use.<sup>338</sup> He gave the assembled chiefs an explanation for the state of war between the colonies and Britain and demanded that they immediately declare whether or not they were at war with the Continentals. His skillful presentation overawed the Indians into protestations of friendship and promises of neutrality, although there was an attempt by a small group of Winnebagos paid by British agents to capture Clark at his Cahokia headquarters.<sup>339</sup>

This at least was Clark's account of the seizure of the *pays des Illinois*. The details were largely corroborated by other reports, including eyewitnesses that provided their testimony to later historians such as John Reynolds. However, it may not have been a complete record, as Clark was writing for posterity and was conscious of his image as a hardened man of action. In looking more closely at his account, it may be that Clark's victories were the result of careful groundwork being laid well beforehand. Clark had spoken of the alternative of retreating to the Spanish bank of the Mississippi if Kaskaskia were more vigorously defended than anticipated. In fact, upon reaching Kaskaskia, Clark

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<sup>338</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 330-331.

<sup>339</sup> Clark, ch.4, locs. 631-930.

immediately sent word to Oliver Pollock in New Orleans to draw upon American credit and to inquire after the American stores sent to St. Louis in the wake of the Willing expedition.<sup>340</sup> These orders indicate that Clark remained in contact with the Spanish, even if at arm's length. In particular, given the known sensitivity of the Spanish to unauthorized incursions of their territory, Clark would not have contemplated making a retreat into Spanish Louisiana if he were not sure of Spanish support.

Although depicted by Clark as helpless ingenues, Gibault and Cerré were formidable individuals. Gibault had sustained a lengthy conflict with his bishop and Cerré, as noted earlier, was still in the habit as a middle-aged man of personally directing his caravans over the dangerous and challenging route from Kaskaskia to Montreal. In Gibault's case in particular, Briand had suspended priests for merely providing the sacraments to rebellious *habitants*. Gibault could expect severe episcopal sanctions for the material support of Continental forces that he was preparing to provide. Both were also in constant contact with Spanish government officials in St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve. Clark himself noted that a request for Cerré's safe-conduct came from de Leyba in St. Louis and was counter-signed by most of the merchants in the city.<sup>341</sup> The extravagant lengths to which Cerré, Gibault, and even Charles Gratiot went to assist Clark, along with the seeming willingness of their decisions, could thus in large part be explained regarding Spanish influence. Clark's mastery of the drama that unfolded in Kaskaskia is undisputed, but if he had advance knowledge of the motives of some of the key players, it would have made playing his role much easier.

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<sup>340</sup> Nester, 98.

<sup>341</sup> Clark, ch. 3, locs. 554-564.

Even concerning his Indian diplomacy, Clark benefited from the fact that the Spanish had set the stage. As noted previously, Rocheblave had long and consistently warned Hamilton in Detroit, Gage in New York, and Carleton and Haldimand in Quebec that the Spanish had been sending agents upriver and even across the Mississippi to agitate the Indians against British interests. In this context, the following remark by Clark takes on added significance: “The friendly correspondence between the Spaniards and ourselves was also much to our advantage since everything the Indians heard from them was favorable to us.”<sup>342</sup> If Richard White was correct in assessing that Clark’s use of the imagery of the middle ground was inept and wrong-footed, the long and patient work by the Spanish might have gone a long way toward mitigating whatever damage was done.

The British made two attempts to dislodge the Continentals from the *pays des Illinois*. One was organized almost immediately upon receiving news of the fall of the Illinois Country. On October 8, 1778, Henry Hamilton departed Detroit with around thirty British regulars and fifty Canadian militia, along with a gunboat that capsized almost immediately upon launch.<sup>343</sup> While *en route*, Hamilton stopped to meet with the chiefs of the various Indian nations along the way. In his negotiations with different chiefs, Hamilton displayed a diplomatic suavity born of years of trade that Clark could hardly hope to match. At one point, Hamilton praised and encouraged the loyalty of the Onset Indian tribe toward the Great Spirit, even though the ritual lighting of fires might have revealed their location. Contrary to his fearsome reputation as the “Hair-Buyer” for

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<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 4, loc. 757.

<sup>343</sup> Henry Hamilton’s Journal, Lyman Draper Collection, George Rogers Clark Papers, 45:77, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL.

paying bounties to Indian warriors for scalps, Hamilton also encouraged humanity toward captives.<sup>344</sup> Hamilton's efforts resulted in the attachment of about 400 Indians to his force, and on December 17, he entered Vincennes without resistance, taking Captain Helm and his company prisoner.<sup>345</sup>

Hamilton intended to move immediately upon Kaskaskia. However, his men were sufficiently exhausted by the cold and icy trek from Detroit to Vincennes that he determined to lay in for the winter in Vincennes, and move on the Mississippi villages after receiving supplies and reinforcements in the spring. In the meantime, Hamilton ordered that no one was allowed in or out of Vincennes.<sup>346</sup> However, his hopes of quietly passing the winter in the Illinois Country without Clark's knowledge were dashed when a British patrol apprehended Francis Vigo, an Italian merchant based in St. Louis, whom Clark had retained to deliver supplies to Helm's company and to report back on conditions in Vincennes. As Vigo was a Spanish subject and there was no conclusive proof of his spying for Clark, Hamilton was forced to release him with orders not to report anything of what he had seen in Vincennes on his return journey to St. Louis.<sup>347</sup> Vigo agreed and carried out his pledge to the letter; however, upon reaching St. Louis and conferring with de Leyba, he immediately set out for Kaskaskia to report to Clark.<sup>348</sup>

Like Montgomery in 1775, Clark had a pair of bad options before him. He could either wait for better conditions and allow the British time to reinforce or he could make a desperate gamble and attack in the worst conditions. Like Montgomery, Clark chose the

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<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 45:87.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> Nester, 111.

<sup>347</sup> Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 101.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*



more hazardous course. Such an assault would have been impossible for Clark's force alone, which after leaving behind minimal garrisons for Kaskaskia and Cahokia numbered under one hundred men. Fortunately for Clark, the French militia in both towns responded enthusiastically to his call for volunteers, which boosted his force to 170 troops. Marching across the cold prairie in the dead of winter, Clark and his force found the Wabash River and its tributaries flooded well over their banks and were forced to wade through miles of near-freezing water to gain their destination.<sup>349</sup>

Once at Vincennes, Clark found to his chagrin that the keelboat that he sent ahead, named *Willing* after his southern benefactor, had not arrived with his supplies or his cannon. Clark was forced to conduct a siege of Fort Sackville, outside of Vincennes, with no artillery.<sup>350</sup> However, Clark had at least three advantages over Montgomery. The first was that Fort Sackville and Vincennes, unlike Quebec, had no high, imposing walls, which meant that all points of the fort were accessible to small arms fire. The second, related to the first, was that Clark had some sharpshooters that were experts with the Kentucky long rifle. This negated Hamilton's advantage in artillery, as Clark's snipers would shoot Hamilton's artillerymen through the gunports of the fort every time they saw movement in one of them, and before long no one would accept the duty of manning the guns.<sup>351</sup> Finally, and crucially, neither the Canadian militia nor the *habitants* of Vincennes would form the backbone of the resistance to the invaders.

Indeed, the leaders of the local militia showed Clark caches of weapons hidden when Hamilton had ordered the townspeople disarmed, and the *habitants* remained in

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<sup>349</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 332-333.

<sup>350</sup> Nester, 140.

<sup>351</sup> Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 105.

their homes and made no attempt to supply the garrison.<sup>352</sup> Moreover, not expecting trouble during the winter, Hamilton had released the Indians that had accompanied him to Vincennes. As such, Hamilton only retained his regulars and the French militia, and the militia was not enthusiastic about firing on friends and family from Illinois.<sup>353</sup>

After days of sustained fusillades from the Continentals, Hamilton's last hope of timely reinforcements was dashed when a party of Ottawa warriors allied with the British was intercepted by Clark's men, lined up near the fort, and tomahawked to death, according to Hamilton by Clark personally.<sup>354</sup> With only a month's supply left in the fort and Clark promising to slaughter the garrison if it continued to resist, a promise graphically reinforced by the fate of the Ottawa warriors, Hamilton sued for terms. He surrendered the fort on February 25, 1779.<sup>355</sup> The French militia was paroled and allowed to return to Detroit, but Hamilton and the British regulars, along with Rocheblave at Kaskaskia, were sent as prisoners to Williamsburg.

The second attempt to reclaim the Illinois Country came in 1780, as part of an ambitious campaign devised by Lord George Germain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies.<sup>356</sup> On February 17, Patrick Sinclair, lieutenant governor at Michilimackinac, sent Captain Emmanuel Hesse to the portage between the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers just north of modern Madison, Wisconsin, to gather the local tribes into an attack force. Three other British regulars joined him, followed by a small group of Canadian traders and militia, and war parties of Ojibwe under Chief Matchekewis and

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<sup>352</sup> Nester, 140.

<sup>353</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 332.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>356</sup> Kling *et al.*, 35-36.

Sioux under Chief Wapasha.<sup>357</sup> This force was to move down the Fox and Mississippi Rivers and split just north of St. Louis. The Ojibwe along with trader Jean-Marie Ducharme, would then move east to attack Cahokia. At the same time the British regulars and the Sioux, along with trader Joseph Calve and a war party of Sauk and Fox picked up from their main town of Saukenuk, would continue down the western bank to attack St. Louis.<sup>358</sup> A third party, under Captain Charles-Michel de Langlade, was to assemble at the Chicago portage and travel down the Illinois River to rendezvous with the main force. However, a Potawatomi tribe under Chief Blackbird, who was partial to the Illinois French, prevented Langlade's force from reaching the mouth of Illinois until after the battle was over.<sup>359</sup>

On April 6, a messenger from Fort San Carlos at the mouth of the Missouri River appeared in St. Louis to inform de Leyba, the Spanish lieutenant governor, that an attack in force was approaching down the Mississippi.<sup>360</sup> At about the same time, on April 11, Gratiot left Cahokia to hand-deliver an urgent message from prominent citizens of the town to Clark, who at the time was overseeing the construction of Fort Jefferson at the juncture of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The Cahokia leaders had been receiving reports of the war party from traders since that February, and feared that an attack was imminent unless he arrived with troops to defend the city.<sup>361</sup> Clark rushed back to Cahokia, while de Leyba had artillery pieces and militia brought up from Ste. Genevieve and ordered a rudimentary Martello tower erected at the western edge of the city as a

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<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 60, 96, 118.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 52, 160-162.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>361</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 349.

simple battery, along with entrenchments that almost surrounded the city.<sup>362</sup> Clark conferred with de Leyba in St. Louis upon his arrival on May 25, but the meeting mainly allowed each to give the other moral support. Despite a close friendship that had developed between the two since their first meeting shortly after Clark's arrival in Kaskaskia, neither had any resources available to help the other.<sup>363</sup>

The attacks came the day after Clark reached Cahokia. In each case, the assaults began with Indians killing anyone they encountered in the large common fields that surrounded both towns.<sup>364</sup> In St. Louis, the cannon from Ste. Genevieve had been mounted on top of the Martello tower. While the age of the pieces and their awkward angle prevented them from inflicting many casualties, the unexpected artillery barrage blunted the ferocity of the initial Sioux, Sauk, and Fox attack.<sup>365</sup> The Indians swarmed the entrenchments, but only found one point weak enough to exploit. By the time it was discovered, though, Calve and the Sauk and Fox, who had only reluctantly joined the expedition, had fallen back. The Sioux lacked the numbers to exploit the opening and had to fall back as well.<sup>366</sup> In Cahokia, there were no similar fortifications, but a large stone building behind the Church of the Holy Family provided cover to which Clark's men could fall back after a defensive volley. After the initial attack was blunted, the Ojibwe, who had been promised easy plunder, melted away.<sup>367</sup> Numerous random attacks against the Illinois towns would be undertaken over the next year or so, but after May of 1780,

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<sup>362</sup> Kling *et al.*, 84-85, 112.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-116.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 96, 116.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>367</sup> Kling *et al.*, 119.

the British were unable to challenge American suzerainty over the *pays des Illinois* seriously.

## CONCLUSION

Richard Montgomery and George Rogers Clark each began an invasion of a largely unknown environment in order to prevent an enemy from using its resources against their fledgling nation. Although waged in different theaters hundreds of miles apart, the course of those invasions followed very similar lines. In each case, there was an initially tentative and fearful reaction from the inhabitants in both regions, followed by a warm welcome and easy successes by both Continental forces. In each case, there was a sudden reversal of fortune as British civilian and military leaders executed skillful countermoves. Both Montgomery and Clark approached the point of desperation, and each gambled everything on a single roll of the dice. Yet Montgomery was cut down in the opening moments of an ignominious defeat, most likely at the hands of one of the men he believed he had come to liberate from tyranny, while Clark lived to become the hero of Illinois.

This work has examined the cultural and political background of each of these invasions, separated by only three years, to determine the single factor among many that was most responsible for this outcome. In each respect examined, the most outstanding difference between Montgomery's invasion of Canada and Clark's invasion of the *pays des Illinois* has been the looming presence in the latter of an imperial power inimical to Britain's interests, and that power's willingness to adopt the maxim that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

It was certainly the case from the end of the French and Indian War onward that Britain, France, and Spain recognized that the state of their relations was what in modern terms could be considered a "strategic pause." Given the humiliating and crippling terms

of the Treaty of Paris (1763) which ended that war, revenge would be topmost on the minds of the two defeated Bourbon powers. This attitude might reasonably be expected to persist among the subjects of France left under the dominion of the British victors, especially in Canada, where General Wolfe's razing of the Quebec countryside in an effort to pacify the *habitants* and the expulsion of Acadian settlers were still fresh memories. However, in the absence of any alternatives and with the generally compassionate rule by Murray and Carleton, French Canadians slowly began to accept their new reality. Despite the fact that several British officials on the Lower Mississippi commandants had been haughty and corrupt, it might be expected that the *habitants* along the Mississippi would eventually do the same, especially since they had not directly suffered the pains of war as had the Canadians. The fact that Clark was able to exploit the still lingering resentment of Louisiana settlers towards British authorities is a testament to the fact that unlike in Canada, most of the natural interlocutors between the British and the French "New Subjects," the wealthy landowners and merchants, were enticed away by the Spanish in St. Louis. These, in turn, kept up a constant whispering campaign on behalf of the Spanish against the British to those Louisiana settlers who remained.

The backbone of British support in Quebec was the clergy, which had expected to be suppressed under the militantly Protestant British but had been pleasantly surprised the generous accommodations offered by British colonial officials. Being new to Canada and not completely understanding the changes in the Catholic world since the English Reformation in 1520, the British assumed that the dispensation to allow a bishop in Quebec would be universally appreciated, especially by the clergy. However, the years

of freedom that the priests had experienced prior to the appointment of Bishop Briand, combined with the Jansenist strain that had penetrated even the traditionalist stronghold of Quebec, caused many to feel oppressed by the resumption of traditional Catholic order. One of the malcontents, Pierre Gibault, had been sent to the *pays des Illinois*. While the Spanish were no less religiously orthodox than were the French Canadians, the nearest bishop to St. Louis was in Havana. As such, Church officials had less control over the French Catholic population of Spanish Louisiana. As a result, Gibault would have been inclined to serve Spanish interests even if Clark had not personally charmed him. With the colonies having even less patience for the Catholic hierarchy than Britain itself, Gibault doubtless anticipated that he would continue to enjoy the freedom that had prevailed in Canada prior to Briand's appointment and that he currently enjoyed in Spanish Upper Louisiana. It hardly seems like a coincidence that Gibault moved permanently to the Spanish side of the Mississippi shortly after John Carroll was appointed Bishop of Baltimore in 1790 and formed a close working relationship with the same Briand that had tried to ostracize him during his 1775 Montreal stay.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, with Father Meurin in semi-retirement, the clergy was no more available as interlocutors for the British than were the French merchants or the long-gone Illinois seigneurs.

Indian military involvement in both invasions was minimal. Those tribes that participated in the conflicts usually did so out of choice. In general, tribal leaders had no desire to become involved in a war that did not concern them. Both Montgomery and Carleton were disinclined to employ Native American warriors in combat in Canada. In

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore (1735-1815)* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1922), 88.



the *pays des Illinois*, Clark primarily declined to recruit Indians out of practical considerations of trying to distinguish Indian friend from foe in the heat of battle.<sup>2</sup> The exception to this reluctance was the group of officers in command in the western reaches of British North America: Hamilton in Detroit, Captain Arent de Peyster in Michilimackinac, and Rocheblave in Kaskaskia. These men had served on the frontier for years and often worked with Native Americans in their respective spheres of influence but found themselves hindered in their ability to do so against the Americans. Rocheblave repeated his explanation for Native American reluctance fight the American to anyone who would listen: the Spanish had been using French agents trusted by the Indians to dissuade them from helping the British. It took Hamilton's personal intervention on a tour of the region between Detroit and Vincennes to gain any ground with local tribes, but Clark's arrival in January of 1776 hindered any future British-Indian collaboration. The northern tribes – the Sioux, Ojibwe, Sauk, and Fox – finally took a direct hand in the war in 1780, but again to little effect. By this time the Spanish had successfully cut off the British from their traditional Indian auxiliaries.

In the realm of commerce, both Canada and the Illinois Country had British “Old Subject” merchants that chafed at restrictions which they perceived favored the French. “New Subject” merchants likewise saw the British as the only actors capable of imposing the sort of stability necessary for commerce to flourish. Indeed, Gabriel Cerré had early on earned his reputation as one of British commandant Rocheblave's strongest supporters. However, one critical difference between the commercial environments of Canada and Illinois made it thinkable for merchants in the latter to prefer the unknown to

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<sup>2</sup> Clark, ch. 6, loc. 1299.

the known. The French merchants in Quebec and Montreal were utterly dependent upon London as a market for their goods, whereas it was easier for French merchants in Kaskaskia and Cahokia to trade with St. Louis and New Orleans than any British town or post. With Spain aligned with the Continentals, it was simply good business sense to come to terms with the Americans, as the Spanish officials in St. Louis and French friends and their relatives in St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve doubtless frequently argued.

When the conflict finally came, the Spanish tested the limits of neutrality before finally committing to the conflict in 1779. During the invasion of the Illinois Country, Spain let it be known that Clark could retreat to Spanish territory in the event that he was defeated at Kaskaskia, although few likely knew better than de Leyba how unlikely that event was to occur. Spain provided credit through Oliver Pollock to Clark and allowed the Continentals to use St. Louis as an entrepot for war goods. It was a Spanish subject, Francis Vigo, that reconnoitered Vincennes and brought back word of its capture to Clark, with the explicit blessing of the lieutenant governor in St. Louis. Spain used the influence of its prominent French citizens, primarily the Chouteaus, to prevail upon Cerré and Gratiot to extend Clark virtually unlimited credit as well. Oddly enough, the Spanish were able to provide perhaps their greatest help to the Americans by the exposure of St. Louis to the threat of invasion, which diverted substantial British resources away from Cahokia and the remainder of the villages on the east bank of the Mississippi. By contrast, Montgomery in Canada had no avenue of retreat other than back to New York, no agents with complete freedom of movement, and above all no limitless credit. He was on his own, in a hard country that only accepted hard currency.

To be sure, there were other factors involved that distinguished the Canadian campaign from that of the Illinois Country. Montgomery's invasion was conceived and executed as a project of the Continental Congress, whereas Clark's was commissioned by the State of Virginia. This meant that Montgomery was at least initially far better-financed but was also more closely monitored and pressured by politicians than was Clark. As mentioned earlier, Quebec was far more formidable as a fortress than was Fort Sackville. Carleton and Hamilton were certainly different as commanders. Carleton would have been no more likely than was Hamilton to launch an attack against Kaskaskia after a hard march in mid-November, but if he had retained the services of the Indians at all, the cautious Carleton would almost certainly have kept the main body near to hand, not trusting the weather as his only shield.

If the involvement of Spain was the critical factor, it must be said that the lack of a third interested party was arguably to the long-term benefit of the French in Canada. Their Illinois brethren rapidly tired of the chaos that grew in the wake of brutal and corrupt American administrators, worse than those that the British had ever provided, and the massive influx of American farmers, merchants, and land speculators into Canada.<sup>3</sup> Those who were able moved to St. Louis, but with the Louisiana Purchase it proved only a temporary refuge. By the 1840s French influence waned in St. Louis as well as the Illinois villages. In the modern day, only small pockets of French culture and language remain in the Midwest, in remote areas such as the Illinois village of Prairie du Rocher and Missouri's Old Mines region.<sup>4</sup> In Canada, by contrast, Carleton's accommodation policy persisted through the years, and now Montreal is second only to Paris in terms of

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<sup>3</sup> Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 408.

<sup>4</sup> Fausz, 193.

the largest francophone cities in the world. Montgomery's vision of a free French people in Canada finally arrived, although not nearly in the form he imagined.

Despite the friendship between Clark and de Leyba, which ended with the latter's death shortly after the battle of St. Louis in 1780, the Spanish did not aid the Americans out of any love for them or their cause. Their purpose was to strike at Britain; once that was accomplished, their attitude toward the new nation swiftly changed. Shortly after the war, the Spanish prohibited American river travel to New Orleans as they had done with the British previously, although the prohibition was rarely enforced against Illinois merchants.<sup>5</sup> In early 1781, Spanish officials received an unusual call from Cahokia for assistance in a matter concerning their friends and relatives to the north. After Clark's departure in the wake of the battle of Cahokia, relationships between his lieutenants and the French had deteriorated rapidly. The Spanish accordingly launched an attack against Fort St. Joseph in conjunction with the Potawatomi under Chief Blackbird and planted the Spanish flag there. This was presumably done to establish a Spanish claim to portions of the Old Northwest, which caused some discomfiture at the peace negotiations at the end of the Revolution, although nothing ultimately came of it.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, in 1796 Zenon Trudeau, lieutenant governor at St. Louis, convinced New Orleans governor Esteban Miro to allow him to solve the problem of the underpopulation of Spanish Upper Louisiana when compared to the burgeoning population of Kentucky by inducing Americans to move to the Spanish side of the Mississippi. Given the generous land grants available, many pioneers became Spanish subjects, including Daniel

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<sup>5</sup> Fausz, 402-403.

<sup>6</sup> Kling *et al.*, 180-181.

Boone and his family.<sup>7</sup> Boone shared Thomas Jefferson's opinion that importing Anglo-Americans would hasten the end of Spanish Louisiana rather than delay it. Yet such speculation was rendered moot by Jefferson himself in executing the Louisiana Purchase in 1804.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of motives and future conflicts, though, Spain's intervention on behalf of Clark and the colonies would change the shape of history. Without it, the nascent United States might very well have been negotiating its western border at the eastern edge of Indiana instead of the Mississippi, and Kentucky may have been surrounded to the north by Britain and to the south by Spain. As things stood, the United States gained the broad frontier it needed to begin its push westward.

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Morgan, *Boone: A Biography* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2007), 390.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

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## VITA

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### **EDUCATION**

Master of Arts student in History at Sam Houston State University, August 2015-present. Thesis title: “Continental and *Coueurs de Bois*: The American Invasions of Canada and Illinois in the Revolutionary War.”

Master of Business Administration, Upper Iowa University, Fayette, Iowa.

Bachelor of Arts, History, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, Illinois.

Associate of Arts, Belleville Area College, Belleville, Illinois.

### **ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT**

Instructor, Department of History, Blackburn University, Carlinville, Illinois, August-December 1989. Responsibilities included preparing for and teaching freshman-level history classes, assigning grades, tutoring.

Graduate Assistant, Department of History, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, Illinois, August 1988-June 1989. Responsibilities Included grading papers, tutoring, proctoring exams.

### **ACADEMIC AWARDS**

Weiss Graduate Award for Historical Writing, 2004, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, Illinois.

Phi Theta Kappa, May 1987.