

Great Things Have Been Done by a Few Men: Operational Art in Clark's Illinois Campaign of 1778 - 1779

**A Monograph
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13. ABSTRACT (<i>Maximum 200 Words</i>) Operational art is the tactical employment of force to achieve strategic objectives. It emphasizes interaction between imagination and judgment to determine the intermediate ways that link tactics and strategy. Historians generally submit operational art emerged in industrial era wars and traditionally remained the purview of generals. However, modern American field grade commanders increasingly employ operational art. This is not new in American military history. During the American Revolution, Lieutenant Colonel George Rogers Clark led one hundred and seventy-five volunteers on a campaign to protect Virginia's frontier by capturing the Illinois region. This monograph analyzes how Clark linked the tactical employment of forces to achieve strategic objectives. It assesses Clark's operational vision, how he demonstrated the hallmark of operational art, and evaluates his operational flexibility to maintain his aim. Clark's Illinois Campaign provides a narrative at the very roots of America's military heritage relevant to future conflicts. One that demonstrates operational art is less about an era, formation, or technology and more about the scale, scope, and synchronization of action relative to the strategic aim. It is about achieving effectiveness in war.				
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Abstract

GREAT THINGS HAVE BEEN DONE BY A FEW MEN: OPERATIONAL ART IN CLARK'S ILLINOIS CAMPAIGN OF 1778 - 1779 by MAJ Eric J. Duckworth, US Army, 79 pages.

Historians generally submit operational art, and modern war for that matter, emerged during the industrial era wars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when national conscription fielded massive armies of corps and divisions. This sustained campaigns of distributed maneuver across broad geographic theaters to achieve intermediate aims. Modern interpretations define operational art as the tactical employment of forces to achieve strategic objectives. Current operational theory concentrates less on large force groupings. Instead, it articulates the interaction between imagination and judgment that determine the intermediate ways to link tactics and strategy.

No longer the purview of generals, American brigade and battalion commanders increasingly employ operational art. They execute campaigns with implications spanning all levels of war. Historical vignettes depicting field grade commanders using operational art are sparse. But the practice is not new to American military history. George Rogers Clark's Illinois campaign may provide an example where an eighteenth century field grade theater commander employed operational art using a small, independent force.

Lieutenant Colonel George Rogers Clark led a bold campaign to reverse Britain's attempts to destroy Virginia's frontier settlements during the American Revolution. Between 1778 and 1779, he captured the Illinois region with just one hundred and seventy-five men, forced his adversary, Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton, into battle and defeated him in a surprise maneuver at Vincennes. This victory saved Kentucky and denied potential British-Indian penetrations east of the Appalachians might have altered critical events leading to Yorktown.

This monograph analyzes how Clark linked the tactical employment of forces to achieve strategic objectives. It assesses whether Clark exhibited operational vision. It considers whether his campaign demonstrated the hallmark of operational art. And it evaluates Clark's operational flexibility through the techniques used to maintain the operational aim.

The American Revolution in the West is inappropriately characterized as endless local skirmishes. Such depiction distorts the reality of Clark's operations. He continually balanced between offensive, defensive, and stability operations to achieve a strategic objective tied directly to the *casus belli* in the Declaration of Independence. As a result, the Illinois Campaign provides a narrative at the very roots of America's military heritage relevant to the future conflicts. One that demonstrates operational art is less about an era, formation, or technology and more about the scale, scope, and synchronization of action relative to the strategic aim. It is about achieving effectiveness in war.

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Introduction



Figure 1: Vincennes, 24 February 1779. British Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton surrenders to Virginia Lieutenant Colonel George Rogers Clark.¹

At the outset of the American Revolution, the defense of Virginia's western frontier resided in the hands of a twenty-four year old land surveyor named George Rogers Clark. Though young, Clark was a frontier veteran and personally invested in Kentucky's future. But in the summer of 1777, Kentucky stood on the brink of collapse.²

¹ H. Charles McBarron, *Vincennes, 24 February, 1779* in the *Soldiers of the American Revolution Series*, 1976, U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC.

² Clark and John Gabrielle Jones were Kentucky's 1776 representatives to the Virginia Assembly. He and Jones garnered the support of Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and others in their petition to establish Kentucky County. Lowell Harrison, George Rogers Clark: The Early Years in *The Life of George Rogers Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, Kenneth C. Carstens and Nancy Son Carstens, eds., Contributions in American History, Number 203 (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 8-13, here after *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*.

British Indian agents, directed from Detroit by Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton, incited tribes to destroy America's frontier settlements. Hamilton aimed to compel Rebel forces away from Britain's main effort in the East or expose the interior of Pennsylvania and Virginia to desolation. Clark was a major of Virginia militia and the senior Continental officer west of the Appalachians. He devised a plan to counter Hamilton and persuaded Virginia Governor Patrick Henry to approve it. Newly promoted to lieutenant colonel, Clark then led a bold campaign to capture the Illinois region. Between 1778 and 1779, he penetrated the Northwest Territory with just one hundred and seventy-five men, forced Hamilton from Detroit, and defeated him in a surprise winter maneuver at Vincennes. This victory prevented "what might have been a conquering British-Indian drive against Kentucky settlements."³

Clark's mission required him to continually weigh efforts between offensive, defensive, and stability operations to deliver a decisive strategic result. The Northwest Theater encompassed nearly 180,000 square miles of wilderness with extended lines of communications. Clark's forces defended American supply lines along the Ohio River and retained the Illinois and Kentucky territories until the war's end. By then Clark was thirty years old and a brigadier general. When Britain signed the Treaty of Paris, they ceded the Northwest Territory to the United States. This earned Clark credit as "the man principally responsible for achieving American sovereignty over the territory."⁴

³ Letter of Lord George Germain to Sir Guy Carleton, Whitehall, March 26, 1777 in *The George Rogers Clark Adventure*, ed. Katherine Wagner Seineke (New Orleans, LA: Polyanthos, Inc., 1981) 196-197; Thomas D. Clark, Foreword in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, xiv; Unknown, Foreword in *Clark's Memoir from English's Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio*, March of America Facsimile Series Number 48, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966) ii, here after *Clark's Memoir*.

⁴ Foreword in *Clark's Memoir*, ii.

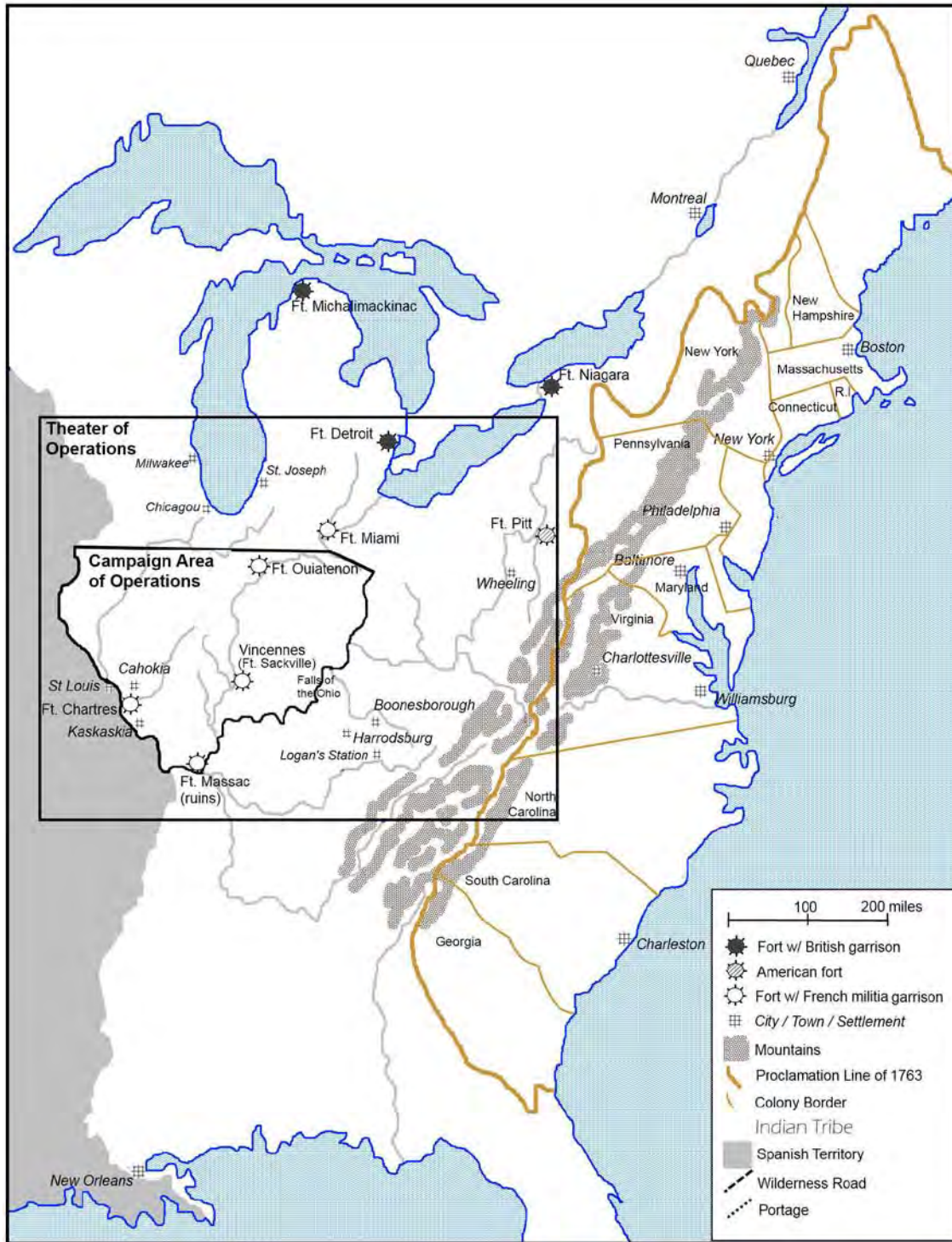


Figure 2: Map of the Theater Of Operations and Illinois Campaign Area of Operations⁵

⁵ Adapted from Pamela Bennet, ed., "The Fall of Fort Sackville" in *The Indiana Historian*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1997), 4; Technical assistance by Andrew Bates.

George Rogers Clark may have positioned America for expansion to the Mississippi, but Clark's younger brother, William, and his expedition with Meriwether Lewis often eclipses George's name. The elder Clark's exploits are well documented. His heroism became legendary within America's frontier mythos. But contributions to the American way of war faded into obscurity. He remains relatively unknown in American Military History, perhaps because he fell into some disrepute in his later years. Or, it might be that, even for all its savagery, the American Revolution in the West remains a sideshow to the more grand campaigns in the East. General Clark's legacy can provide more than patriotic inspiration. It can inform modern study of American operational art.⁶

Modern interpretations define operational art as sequencing the tactical employment of forces to achieve strategic objectives. An operation is when forces "without interruption are directed into a distinct region of the theatre of military operations to achieve intermediate aims."⁷ The anthology *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, synthesizes fifteen military history scholars to conclude:

⁶ General Clark garners three sentences among 80 pages in Revolutionary and Early Frontier history in the official Army Historical Series. His career spans over thirty years and he is credited as a founding father of four U.S. states and the city of Louisville. He commanded throughout the entire American Revolution with many victories. Although not physically present and the militia acted contrary to his guidance, Clark received blame for the disastrous defeat of Kentucky Militia at Blue Licks in 1782. It was the last major battle before the Treaty of Paris. Post Revolution, he led campaigns and treaty negotiations against Indian tribes and remained a committed advocate for republican ideals and frontier settlement. He remained plagued by debt and embittered that Congress never compensated the significant expenses he incurred for the nation. In 1792 he was implicated in a seditious conspiracy to help France take Spanish Louisiana. This scandal and alleged alcohol abuse tarnished his reputation until his death in 1818. Maurice Matloff (ed.), *American Military History*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center of Military History, 1988) 85; Frederick Palmer, *Clark of the Ohio: A Life of George Rogers Clark* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1929), v.; Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 4 December 1783, *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, ed. Donald Jackson (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 2, 654-655; Milo M. Quaife, *The Capture of Old Vincennes: The Original Narratives of George Rogers Clark and His Opponent Gov. Henry Hamilton* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1927), xvi. Thomas D. Clark, xiii-xiv; James Fisher, *A Forgotten Hero Remembered, Revered, and Revised in The Life of George Rogers Clark...Triumphs and Tragedies*, 285-288.

⁷ Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategiia*, p. 220 cited in Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, (Portland: Frank Cass, 1997), 182.

Simply stated, the strategist identifies broad goals and generates the capabilities to achieve those goals, while the operational commander seeks a unity of effort over a specific period of time, and the tactician initiates immediate action on the field of battle. The operational art of war is thus different in sum and part. It is more than large-scale tactics, but it is not small-scale strategy either. It has both a tactical and a strategic dimension, because it must create a vision of unity of action on the battlefield that ultimately achieves a strategic objective.⁸

Historians generally submit operational art, and modern war for that matter, emerged during the industrial era wars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. National conscription fielded massive armies of corps and divisions. Their subsequent deployment, supported by increased production and transportation capacities, enabled continuous force generation. This sustained campaigns of distributed maneuver across a broad geographic theater. The military art prior to this era was typified as “a long march along an extended operational line and a short battle in one locale upon completion of the march.”⁹ Known as “the strategy of the single point,” it is defined as defeating the opposing army in a single, concentrated battle.¹⁰ The strategy has no other intermediate aims, “amount[ing] to a one-act tactical phenomenon.”¹¹

As the modern battlefield arrayed forces in both width and depth, it became impossible to destroy the enemy in a single moment in time. This prompted an evolutionary shift.

⁸ The essays survey the military powers of France, Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States across 182 years of war. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips, ed., et. al, *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 2007), vi.; Operational art is “the ability to link the tactical employment of forces to policy goals and strategic objectives,” U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-0, *The Army Capstone Concept, Operational Adaptability: Operating Under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict 2016-2028*, (Fort Monroe: U.S. Army TRADOC, 21 December 2009), 16.

⁹ G.S. Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, trans. Bruce W. Menning, (Moscow: The State Military Publishing House of the USSR People’s Defense Commissariat, 1937), 10.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Isserson, 10; Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon’s Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994), 5; James J. Schneider, The Loose Marble – and the Origins of Operational Art in *Parameters*, Vol. XIX No. 1, March (Carlisle: US Army War College, 1989), 86-90.

Commanders abandoned decisive battles of annihilation along a linear front. Depth became “the very essence of the evolving modern operation.”¹²

A modern operation does not constitute a one-act operational effort in a single locale. Modern deep operational deployments require a series of uninterrupted operational efforts that merge into a single whole. In operational terminology, this whole is known as a series of successive operations... *A series of successive operations is a modern operation.*¹³

Sequencing various forms of simultaneous and successive maneuvers and engagements distributed in time, space, and purpose to achieve a synergetic effect became “the hallmark of operational art.”¹⁴

Successful commanders became operationally flexible. They adapted campaigns to changing circumstances “in a manner that permit[ed] the accomplishment of the operational aim despite the opposition.”¹⁵ Effective techniques included broad mission orders, decentralized command, exploitation of tactical actions. Commanders retained freedom of action and prevented culmination by creating durable force organizations with logistical structures suited for distributed operations. This required commanders to foster reliable subordinates with initiative, judgment, and sound tactical abilities.¹⁶

Current operational theory concentrates less on large force groupings. Instead, it articulates the interaction between imagination and judgment that determine the intermediate ways to link tactics and strategy. Krause and Philips call it “a vision of unity of action,” James

¹² Ibid, 48.

¹³ Ibid, 48-49.

¹⁴ Ibid, 48-49. Schneider, 87-88.

¹⁵ Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, (Portland: Frank Cass, 1997), 137.

¹⁶ Epstein, 4-5; Schneider, 91-92; L.D. Holder, A New Day for Operational Art in *Army: The Magazine of Landpower*, Vol. 35, No. 3, March (Arlington: Association of the U.S. Army, 1985), 27.

Schneider labels it “operational vision,” Carl von Clausewitz terms it “military genius.”¹⁷ These descriptions, along with American doctrinal definitions, convey operational art as a decision-making skill useful to any echelon charged with attaining a strategic goal.¹⁸

No longer the purview of generals, American brigade and battalion commanders increasingly employ operational art. They execute campaigns with implications spanning all levels of war. Doctrine expects them to understand the political situation and strategic context. They endure austere environments over vast distance, rapidly adapt to changing conditions, find comfort in decentralization, and accept prudent risk to obtain objectives. The ideal American operational artist achieves strategic objectives at the lowest possible cost in lives and materiel.¹⁹

Historical vignettes depicting field grade commanders using operational art are sparse. But the practice is not new to American military history. During the American Army’s infancy, “the sheer size of the nation and its major wars forced its leaders to broaden the scope of their war planning and execution,” before any formal awareness of the operational art.²⁰

¹⁷ Krause and Philips, vi; Schneider, 97-98; Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 100, 112.

¹⁸ “The operational level, not only bridges between the strategic and the tactical levels, but also combines the unique qualities and characteristics of each of these level, i.e. abstract contemplations and mechanical action” (Naveh, 8). U.S. Joint Doctrine defines operational art as “the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs – supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience – to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces” (JP 3-0, IV-2). The U.S. Army expands the description as an “intuitive understanding of the operational environment and the approach necessary to establish conditions for lasting success” (FM 3-0, 6-1). Intuition is the natural product of making right decisions by recognizing patterns from experience gained over time. Intuition is fallible and must be balanced with analysis, but analysis cannot substitute for intuition (Klein, 8); Naveh, 8; U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0 Joint Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office (GPO), 17 September 2006, Incorporating Change 1, 13 February 2008), IV-2; U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 3-0 Operations*, (Washington, DC: GPO, February 2008), 6-1; Dr. Gary Klein, *The Power of Intuition How to Use Your Gut Feelings To Make Better Decisions At Work*, (New York: Doubleday, 2003) 8.

¹⁹ Huba Wass de Cega, Systemic Operational Design: Learning and Adapting in Complex Missions, *Military Review*, Volume LXXXIX, January-February (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2009), 2; Holder, 25; TRADOC Pam 525-3-0, 28-29; U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 100-5 Operations*, (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1986), 1-3.

²⁰ Of twelve vignettes in the U.S. Army’s Field Manual on Command, none demonstrate the linkage of operational art to the conduct of tactical decisions by brigades or below. US Army, *Field Manual*

Lieutenant Colonel Clark's Illinois campaign may provide an example where an eighteenth century field grade theater commander employed operational art using a small, independent force. Using characteristics outlined above, this monograph analyzes how Clark linked the tactical employment of forces to achieve strategic objectives. It assesses if Clark exhibited operational vision. It considers if his campaign demonstrated the hallmark of operational art. And it evaluates Clark's operational flexibility through the techniques used to maintain the operational aim.

George Rogers Clark's Place in History

The literature on George Rogers Clark's Illinois Campaign draws from a strong collection of primary material from all sides. Clark's campaign journal, letter to George Mason, and his *Memoir* remained the foremost primary sources in early biographies. Starting with Lyman Draper's collection in the nineteenth century, many efforts into the twentieth century have acquired and organized primary material for improved access and contextual understanding.²¹

The *George Rogers Clark Papers* with volumes published in 1912 and 1926 provides a wealth of documentary evidence on Clark and the Illinois Regiment. Margery Herberling Harding's *George Roger's Clark and His Men: Military Records 1778-1784* provides

(FM) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: GPO, August 2003) vii: Krause and Phillips, 329.

²¹ Public and private archives from the Library of Congress, Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin and Missouri, as well as Canada, Britain, France, and Spain provide official records and personal accounts to further describe the Revolution in the West. Written amidst the war, Clark's letter to George Mason, November 19, 1779 was Clark's first complete report regarding the campaign. It was published in 1869. Clark wrote his *Memoir* in 1789, ten years after the campaign, but it was not published until 1896. Among the foremost collection of documents relating to "Trans-Allegeny West" from 1755-1815 is the Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection. "Draper Manuscripts Overview" in "Wisconsin Historical Society", <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/military/draper/> (accessed 18 March, 2011); Clark to George Mason, Falls of the Ohio, November 19 1779 in *Ohio Valley Historical Series* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1869), Indiana Historical Bureau, <http://www.in.gov/history/2963.htm> (accessed December 4, 2010); George Rogers Clark, *Clark's Memoir* in William H. English, *Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio 1778-1783 and the Life of Gen. George Rogers Clark*, Vol. 1, (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill Company, 1896), 455-555, <http://books.google.com/books> on (accessed, 17 November, 2010).

authoritative details on enlistment and organization. Katherine Wagner Seineke's *The George Roger's Clark Adventure in the Illinois and Selected Documents of the American Revolution at the Frontier Posts* offers an extensive contemporary compilation of primary sources from the opposing combatants arranged in historical order. While the Indiana Historical Bureau's online George Rogers Clark 225th Anniversary Exhibit is an excellent start point for research.²²

James Fisher's historiography shows "awareness of Clark [runs] in cycles," and scholarly opinions differ wildly.²³ J. P. Dunn's 1888 history of Indiana provides perhaps the first succinct analysis of Clark's contributions to American History. Even without Clark's *Memoir*, Dunn is first to provide authoritative citations from American and Canadian sources to romanticize Clark as "The Hannibal of the West." Dunn sees the Illinois campaign as a key milestone in founding the Northwest, and acknowledges Clark's genius and later decline. Dunn's research postulated that political desire existed to consolidate the Northwest and capture Detroit but failure rested with Congressional unwillingness to resource Clark and not in his generalship.²⁴

In 1896, William Hayden English's *Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio* became a critical work due to its elaborate detail. It printed Clark's *Memoir* in full, Joseph Bowman's journal, one of Clark's chief subordinates, and provided sketches on personalities critical to the campaign's outcome. English's interest originated from an ancestral connection and his reconstruction reinforces Clark's importance to American history. English "rescued Clark from obscurity," and a flurry of biographers followed suit.²⁵

²² James A. James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928), vii-ix; Margery Herberling Harding, *George Rogers Clark and His Men: Military Records, 1778-1784* (Frankfort: The Kentucky Historical Society, 1981); Seineke; "Indiana Historical Bureau," "George Rogers Clark Day, February 25 (1779)," <http://www.in.gov/history/2965.htm> (accessed 2 February, 2011).

²³ Fisher, *A Forgotten Hero Remembered, Revered, and Revised*, 288.

²⁴ J.P. Dunn, "The Hannibal of the West" in *Indiana: A Redemption From Slavery*, American Commonwealths series (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company 1891) 131-177.

²⁵ English's family descended from officers who served with Clark. Clark "added an empire to the boundaries of the United States" (English, 10). English, 9-13; "[Clark] was rescued from obscurity at the

Teddy Roosevelt saw Clark as an iconic frontiersman but adjusted this in *The Winning of the West*. He concluded it impossible Clark's conquest alone achieved the 1783 Northwest boundary, but believed the American delegation would not have argued for it if Clark were not in possession. Roosevelt reconciled Clark's *Memoir* against other sources, including Clark's main adversary Henry Hamilton. The investigation led him to believe Clark embellished the memoir and earlier writers masked Clark's true accomplishments by perpetuating the "half-imaginary feats of childish cunning [Clark] related in his old age."²⁶

James Alton James became the preeminent authority as editor to the *George Rogers Clark Papers* and author of *The Life of George Rogers Clark*. Like Roosevelt, he compared Clark's *Memoir* against the best available records, but concluded it a "trustworthy supplement."²⁷ James sympathetically interpreted Clark's influence with substantial evidence. He detailed strategic factors that influenced the young commander's attempt to control the Northwest, but gave limited consideration to British and Canadian records.²⁸

turn of the century, and no less than nine biographies appeared between 1896 and 1957." Fisher, *A Forgotten Hero Remembered, Revered and Revised*, 288.

²⁶ Clark possessed "those stern and manly qualities which are essential to the well-being of a masterful race." Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, *Hero Tales from American History or the Story of Some Americans Who Showed That They Knew How to Live and How to Die*. (New York: The Century Company, 1895) ix, 41. <http://books.google.com/books> (accessed 17 November, 2010); Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West, Part II: In the Current Revolution* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), 226, 229, 239-240.

²⁷ James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, ix, 113.

²⁸ *Ibid*, viii, 284-285; James, "To What Extent Was George Rogers Clark in Military Control of the Northwest," *Report American Historical Association* (1917), 313-329. Reuben Gold Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won the Northwest in How George Rogers Clark Won the Northwest and Other Essays in Western History* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903) would help as a predecessor to James' work. Thwaites drew extensively from the Draper Manuscripts of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Other notable early and mid-20th Century biographies include: Frederick Palmer, *Clark of the Ohio* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1929); Walter Havinghurst, *George Roger's Clark: Soldier in the West* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1952); John Bakeless' *Background to Glory: The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott Company, 1957); Dan Van Every, *A Company of Heroes: The American Frontier 1775-1783* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962); Dan Van Every, ed. *Clark's Campaign in the Illinois in 1778-9, The First American Frontier*, Vol. 3 (New York: Arno Press Inc., 1971). These works draw heavily from James A. James, the Draper Manuscripts, and also some of Hamilton's accounts. Their interpretations and facts deviate little from each other.

To balance earlier accounts, Milo M. Quaife's *The Capture of Old Vincennes: The Original Narratives of George Roger's Clark and His Opponent Gov. Henry Hamilton* introduces Hamilton's full report regarding his defeat and captivity. Quaife advanced three compelling points. First, the 1794 victory at Fallen Timbers and the Jay Treaty secured the Northwest, not Clark. Second, the Illinois campaign's unquestionable military significance was its disruption to British designs against Ft. Pitt and the western Colonial approaches. Finally, Quaife diminishes Hamilton's vilification and provides the first military analysis of Clark's adversary. He judges Hamilton "a man of but ordinary capacity...pitted against a veritable military genius" using an [Indian recruitment] system of warfare "against which at length the better sense of humanity was beginning to revolt."²⁹ John D. Barnhart's revised analysis of Hamilton's personal journal and correspondence in *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark in the American Revolution* demonstrates Hamilton suffered and often overcame challenges equal to Clark. While perhaps not the frontiersman of Clark's caliber, Hamilton's military capacity nearly defeated Clark twice. Furthermore, Indian recruitment and its consequent atrocities did not wane after the Revolution. It became more prevalent as America expanded.³⁰

America's bicentennial reinvigorated both research and revision. Lowell H. Harrison's *George Rogers Clark and the War in the West* expunged romanticism while still depicting Clark as a bona fide hero. Jack M. Sosin, an expert on British colonial policy, postulated the

²⁹ Quaife, xv-xvi, xix.

³⁰ Hamilton was not of "ordinary capacity" but instead enjoyed a rather successful post war career despite his defeat. He would go on to be Governor of Canada, the Bermudas, and Dominica. Clark's genius renown, on the other hand, would peak during the Revolution and slowly decline in failed business ventures, debt, alcoholism, and scandal until his death. John D. Barnhart, ed., *Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark in the American Revolution with the Unpublished Journal of Lieut. Gov. Henry Hamilton* (Indianapolis: R.E. Banta, 1951); John D. Barnhart A New Evaluation of Henry Hamilton and George Rogers Clark in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 37 (March 1951), 643-652. "On January 22, 1813, an American army under General James Winchester was wiped out by a combined British and Indian force on the river Raisin, south of Detroit... Of the 934 American soldiers who fought, more than 900 were killed or captured." American survivor John O'Fallon wrote, "a greater degree of inhumanities and savage barbarity never was before evinced by a civilized nation." Landon Y. Jones, *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (New York: Hill & Wang 2004), 210.

campaign's motivations were more financial than military. Mary A. Skardon's *The Battle of Piqua* and M. Juliette Magee's *Old Fort Jefferson*, revived details of resurgent British-Indian attempts to dislodge the Americans in the wake of Vincennes. They clarified how Fort Jefferson, the Shawnee campaigns, and Virginia's political struggles undermined Clark's ultimate aims by increasing Indian ire and Kentucky's vulnerability.³¹

Many essayists took these perspectives to task. Of particular note, the Indiana Historical Society's American Revolution Bicentennial Symposium Proceedings titled *The French, The Indians, and George Rogers Clark in the Illinois Country*. George Chalou's "George Roger's Clark and Indian America 1778-1780" argued Clark targeted French settlements "removed from the most anti-American tribes, which were to the east of Clark's operations."³² He forwards that Clark aimed more to secure trade with the Spanish into Kentucky since the campaign did little to neutralize the most hostile tribes, and overextended his capability to attack Detroit or properly defend settlements. George M. Waller's "Target Detroit" presented a strong counterpoint. Waller conceded personal economic interests, but argued, "despite geographical appearances," Clark identified Detroit as a strategic objective, "outflanked the British and opened a back door."³³ In the context of the European balance-of-power, Dwight L. Smith's "The Old Northwest and the Peace Negotiations" disputed the campaign's significance in the territory's

³¹ Lowell H. Harrison, *George Rogers Clark and the War in the West* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976), 1; Jack M. Sosin, *The Revolutionary Frontier 1763-1783* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, 1967) annotated in George M. Waller, Target Detroit: Overview of Revolution West of the Appalachians, in *The French, The Indians, and George Rogers Clark in the Illinois Country: Proceedings of an Indiana American Revolution Bicentennial Symposium* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), 52. Mary A. Skardon, *The Battle of Piqua, August 8, 1780: Focal Point of Ohio Revolutionary History* (Ohio: Clark County Historical Society, 1964), 8; M. Juliette Magee, *Old Fort Jefferson* (Wickliffe: The Advance-Yeoman, 1975), 2.

³² George C. Chalou, George Rogers Clark and Indian America 1778-1780 in *The French, The Indians, and George Rogers Clark in the Illinois Country*, 35, 43-44.

³³ Waller in *ibid*, 53.

final disposition. While the American delegation possessed some intelligence of Clark's victories, "claim was never made to the Old Northwest . . . on the basis of [Clark's] conquests."³⁴

Interest spiked again in 2004 as the campaign's 225th anniversary coincided with the Lewis and Clark Expedition's bicentennial. Adding twenty-first century perspectives, authors provided a more holistic appreciation of Clark relative to his times. Landon Jones credited George's mentorship in William's success. The mixed appraisals in Kenneth C. and Nancy Son Carstens' *The Life of George Rogers Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies* revisited the role of French sympathizers, Clark's credibility with Native Americans, logistics issues and involvement in slave trade in the Illinois. The anthology also covered later events regarding his frontier management, 1780 Shawnee expedition, Fort Jefferson, and battlefield success at Hood's Point. John Grenier's 2005 book *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* became among the few works to consider the Illinois Campaign within the broader context of American military history. Grenier depicted Clark as a waypoint in an evolving American military tradition "commit[ted] to irregular and total war" against civilian targets.³⁵

The Illinois Campaign remains debated; extolled for patriotic heroism and indicted for ethnocentric avarice. Little exists regarding its context within the evolution of American operational art. This monograph fills a portion of that void.³⁶

³⁴ Dwight L. Smith, *The Old Northwest and the Peace Negotiations* in *ibid*, 98-99, 102-103.

³⁵ Jones, 24-48, 86; Kenneth C. Carstens and Nancy Son Carstens, eds., *Clark 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*; John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 155-156. Guy Chet, Book Review of *The First Way of War* in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 1, February (The American Historical Association, 2007), 183.

³⁶ Outside of the American Revolution, a review of American Military History compilations possess scant or no mention of George Rogers Clark's efforts though he operated continually during the entire Revolution. He garners three sentences among 80 pages of Revolutionary and Early Frontier history in the official Army Historical Series. Matloff, ed., 85; Clark's "punitive force" receives a singular insignificant mention by David H. Overy, *The Colonial Wars and the American Revolution* in *The American Military Tradition: From Colonial Times to Present* in John M. Carroll and Colin F. Baxter, eds., (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1993), 11; Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts, eds., *Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the*

Campaign Background

Clark's six years in the West is inappropriately characterized as little more than "an endless series of local skirmishes."³⁷ Until recently, historians did not even consider the Illinois Campaign relevant to the "American Way of War."³⁸ Grenier believed the campaign served as a deterrent and depicts Clark as a "pragmatist" and his "Virginia rangers" as part of a military system characterized by "necessity, efficiency, the uncontrollable momentum for excessive violence, and the quest for the subjugation of the Indians."³⁹

Such depictions distort the reality. Clark was indeed a realist, but he often mitigated bloodshed and used diplomacy when possible. His efforts correspond directly to the strategic context. The Proclamation of 1763 followed by The Quebec Act of 1774 dashed the aspirations of colonists, including many founding fathers, from speculating in frontier development. The Declaration of Independence lists this among the *casus belli* for of the American Revolution itself. Clark's Illinois Campaign became the operational extension to this grievance.⁴⁰

Present, Contributions in Military Studies, Number 51 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) as well as Robert A. Doughty and Ira D. Gruber, eds., *American Military History and the Evolution of Warfare in the Western World* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996) make no reference to Clark at all.

³⁷James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789* (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc, 1982) 137.

³⁸In Russel Weigley's foundational text *The American Way of War*, George Washington's military tradition is portrayed as the struggle to build a professional army from a European template to conduct European-style warfare through a strategy of attrition. Nathanael Greene's tradition illustrates how guerilla networks exhausted a much larger British force. There is no mention of George Rogers Clark. Russel F. Weigley, *The American Way of War; A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977) 20;

³⁹It is important to note that while Grenier categorizes Clark's expedition among the American ranger tradition and that Clark's forces operated in a similar manner to rangers, neither Patrick Henry's orders or Clark ever referred to the militia volunteers as rangers. Grenier, 155-156,147.

⁴⁰The U.S. Declaration of Independence specifically links the Quebec Act as cause for revolt, "For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies." United States Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html (accessed November 23, 2010); Mark Tully, The Revolution in the Old Northwest posted to the Northwest Territory Alliance website, <http://www.nwta.com/couriers/5-97/nwest.html> (accessed November 23, 2010).

Britain assumed possession of the Northwest Territory from France as a concession of the Seven Years War. Bounded by the Mississippi River in the west, Ohio River to the south and east, and the Great Lakes to the north, the Northwest constitutes present-day Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. Inhabited mainly by Native Americans, the region also possessed nearly two thousand French across six scattered settlements.⁴²

Most French settlers lived in the southwest Illinois. Kaskaskia, Cahokia, Prairie du Rocher, St. Philippe, and Fort Chartres formed a string of posts near the Mississippi River. Kaskaskia was the principal town. Cahokia lay across from Spanish governed St. Louis. From there trade accessed New Orleans; also French settled but Spanish controlled. Vincennes was the second largest settlement. Positioned astride the southern Wabash River, it served as a trading post between the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and the Indian posts of Ouiatenon and Miami town. The Wabash also connected to Lake Erie by portage through the Maumee River. This created a near continuous water route between the Gulf of Mexico and Great Lakes. Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Joseph, Michilimackinac, Niagara, and Detroit encompassed the Britain's Great Lakes outposts. Chief among these was Detroit. Its water route to Niagara and Montreal and access into the Illinois, Wabash, and Ohio through multiple rivers made it ideal for coordinating efforts for British interests.⁴³

⁴² Less than 100,000 French settlers occupied the territory, with the majority in Canada and New Orleans. Significant tribes included: Illinois, Kickapoo, Wea, Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi, Ottawa, Shawnees, and Wyandot. Clarence Edwin Carter, *Great Britain and the Illinois Country 1763-1774*, (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1910) 2-3.

⁴³ France ceded the Louisiana Territory to Spain in 1763 after the Seven Years War. "A census taken in 1767 gave Kaskaskia ... 600 men, women, and children and 303 Negro slaves; Cahokia 60 families; Prairie du Rocher 25; St. Philippe 3, and the village at Fort Chartres 3." The 1767 census counted "232 white men, women, and children, 10 Negro and 17 Indian slaves" and 168 transient hunters and traders. John Francis McDermott, *French Settlers and Settlements in the Illinois Country in the Eighteenth Century* in *The French, The Indians, and George Rogers Clark in the Illinois Country*, 9; John Wallis, *Map in Essentials on the First Published Map of the United States* (London: 1783) reprinted in Palmer, *Clark of the Ohio*, inside cover; Carter, 3, 5.

The British spent the next ten years attempting to organize the preexisting French settlements and benefit from peaceful trade with the Indians. French inhabitants routinely embraced Indian culture and were enlisted as British Indian agents to influence tribal relations. The Americans however, started to settle and clear portions of important native hunting grounds along the Ohio and in Kentucky. British efforts were unsustainable without a long-term policy to contain American encroachment and prove British intentions.⁴⁴

The Proclamation of 1763 sought to pacify the Indians and reserve their lands by prohibiting American settlement beyond the Appalachians. It abstained from defining a civil authority over the Northwest and left government of French settlements in the hands of British post commanders. Major General Thomas Gage, commander and chief of British Forces in America administered the Illinois occupation from New York throughout this period. The proclamation did little more than antagonize the colonies. Land speculation and settlement continued, and Indians commonly attacked trespassers.⁴⁵

Tensions rose from 1772-1774 as Virginia and Pennsylvania fiercely competed for western lands. Both Whites and Indians perpetuated murders and raids in an escalating cycle of land theft and reciprocity. Virginia Governor, Lord Dunmore, exploited the situation to secure land claims by justifying war against the Shawnee Indians. Dunmore's War in 1774 preempted Pennsylvanian claims to Kentucky and pushed the Shawnee north of the Ohio River.⁴⁶

George Rogers Clark was a young land surveyor when he volunteered for Dunmore's cause. By age twenty-two, he already spent two profitable years embroiled in the conflict while exploring the Ohio interior. He was commissioned a captain in the Virginia militia and embarked

⁴⁴ Other initial British diplomatic missteps gave rise to Pontiac's Indian uprising. The costs of this revolt also contributed toward a policy sensitive to maintaining good Indian relations. Carter, 29, 108.

⁴⁵ The Proclamation ordered British settlers in the region to return to the Colonies. Regardless, from 1765-1768, 30,000 people settled west of the Appalachians; Ibid, 17-18, 23, 157; Bakeless, 22.

⁴⁶ Jones, 26-27.

on his first military campaign. He witnessed the Shawnee's fearsome capabilities and the immense effort required to subdue them. He also observed his first tribal treaty negotiations. After the war, Clark declined a British commission and returned to upper Kentucky as "Captain of the Militia of Pittsburgh and its Dependencies" and deputy surveyor for the Ohio Company.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, crisis mounted in Boston. Britain enacted the punitive "Coercive Acts" in response to the Boston Tea Party and needed enforcers. Resolving the Northwest Territory's civil status would make such forces available and further check the Colonies' westward expansion. Britain redistributed forces from Northwest garrisons, and sent Gage to Boston. Britain passed the Quebec Act June 22, 1774, placing the Northwest under the purview of the Royal Governor of Canada, Sir Guy Carleton. That decision threatened American aspirations. It also fueled perceptions that Britain courted French Canadian support against the Colonies. Americans added the Quebec Act among the Coercive Acts. Revolution was coming.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Clark spent August, 1774 clearing Shawnee villages and burning their crops. In October, he marched as part of a two-column advance against the Shawnee defended Scioto Valley. Colonel Andrew Lewis won a pitched battle at Point Pleasant. The Battle of Point Pleasant in present day West Virginia pitted between 300-1000 Shawnee and Delaware under the command of Cornstalk and Blue Jacket against 1,100 Virginians commanded by Colonel Andrew Lewis. The battle was technically a draw with 70 Virginian and 30 Indian dead, but the Virginians maintained their advance into the Scioto Valley when Dunmore's column pressed toward the Indian capital of Chillicothe. Clark marched with Dunmore and witnessed his first tribal negotiations at the Treaty of Camp Charlotte. He James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 9-15; Jones, 27-28; George Rogers Clark in *The First American Frontier, Volume 3: Clark's Campaign in the Illinois in 1778-9*, Dan Van Every, ed., 10: English, 64-65.

⁴⁸ As early as January 1774, the detachment of troops had been ordered to leave Fort Gage (Kaskaskia) and the allowance for a commanding officer discontinued." The Battle of Lexington and Concord occurred April 19, 1775. The Continental Congress would make an unsuccessful appeal for Quebec's inhabitants to join the Revolutionary cause after the Quebec Act passed. Captain Hugh Lord and a few soldiers did not fully depart Kaskaskia until the spring 1776, Carter, 161-162; Craig L. Symonds, *A Battlefield Atlas of the American Revolution*, (Baltimore: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company, 1986), 5-7,13; Quebec Act, June 22, 1774 and Continental Congress Address to the Inhabitants of the[Quebec] Province, Philadelphia, October 26, 1774 in *Documents of American History* (F.S. Crofts & Co., Inc, 1934) at <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/related/cqa.htm> (accessed December 6, 2010).

British Operations: April 1775 – March 1777

By late 1775, The American Revolution “absorbed the whole attention of both the [British] home government and Canada.”⁴⁹ Rebels besieged Boston, invaded Canada, seized Montreal and put Carleton at bay in Quebec. British Administration of the Northwest was in a feeble state. The Rebels isolated the British by severing communications along the St. Lawrence. Tribal alliances were at risk without the flow of presents. Small garrisons remained around the Great Lakes, but only French militia and a few French-Canadian Indian agents defended the Illinois for Britain. Carleton relied on his lieutenant governor to manage the situation.⁵⁰

Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton was Carleton’s man. Prior to accepting his civilian post, Hamilton completed twenty years as a British infantry officer where he previously served under Carleton. He was a combat veteran of the Seven Years War, served throughout North America and the Caribbean, and achieved the rank of brigade major before selling his commission. Appointed days before the Revolution, Hamilton grimly assumed his duties at Detroit as Montreal fell.⁵¹

Carleton left Hamilton’s military authority undefined amidst the turmoil. One hundred twenty British regulars from the King’s 8th Regiment of Foot garrisoned Detroit and an armed flotilla maintained communications along the Great Lakes. Detroit possessed an estimated three hundred fifty French militia with hundreds more throughout the Illinois. Hamilton controlled Indian affairs and the militias. But friction ensued with the British garrison because of

⁴⁹ Carter, 161.

⁵⁰ Symonds, 17,20-25; James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 31-34; Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (Norwalk: Easton Press, 1971, repr.1993) 106-115.Waller, 49.

⁵¹ Hamilton served in the 15th Regiment of Foot from 1755-1775. He was appointed lieutenant governor April 7, 1775. The Battle of Lexington was April 19, 1775. Hamilton arrived at Detroit November 9, 1775 after meeting with Carleton in Montreal. Montreal surrendered November 14, 1775 and Carleton fled to Quebec; Elizabeth Arthur, “Henry Hamilton,” *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, 1771-1800, Vol. IV*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000) [http:// www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=36053&query=hamilton](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=36053&query=hamilton) (accessed 13 March, 2011); Symonds, 14, 21.

Hamilton's civilian status. The disunity continued until Carleton reestablished communications and clarified Hamilton as the supported commander. Thereafter, cooperation was mainly through gentlemen's agreements.⁵²

Coordination with Kaskaskia posed a different challenge. Unable to fill a British billet, Carleton employed Philippe Francois De Rastel chevalier de Rocheblave to serve as "Judge and Commandant" to the Illinois settlements.⁵³ Rocheblave was a former French Canadian officer turned professional soldier and businessman. Carleton charged him to monitor the Spaniards and manage the Indians. He was a reliable custodian but not empowered to make any designs beyond local defense and requisitions for Indian war parties.⁵⁴

Hamilton remained leery of French loyalty. To Carleton he expressed "in all those Posts where the french had settled a Trade intercourse with the Savages, An Officer's presence with Troops is much wanted, for the minds of the Indians, in remote posts are poisoned by the falsehoods & misrepresentations of the French."⁵⁵ In addition to questionable French loyalties, Virginian settlers continued to flow into Kentucky. The Americans held Montreal and seemed poised to take Quebec. From the nearest Rebel stronghold at Fort Pitt, the Americans negotiated with the tribes to allow expeditions against Detroit.⁵⁶

⁵² Captain Richard Berringer Lernoult commanded the Detroit garrison, but was absent from 1776-1777. Hamilton quarreled incessantly with commandant, Captain John Mompesson, who often undermined Hamilton's civil authority. "Their squabbling extended even to a petty dispute over which man should be responsible for the keys to the town gates each night" (Dunnigan, 105). Carleton clarified Lernoult's responsibilities when he returned to Detroit. Thereafter, Hamilton and Lernoult cooperated on plans against Ft. Pitt and Lernoult provided garrison forces to support Hamilton's expedition. James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 30; Dunnigan, 105-106; Arthur, [http:// www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=36053&query=hamilton](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=36053&query=hamilton) (accessed 13 March, 2011)

⁵³ Carter, 161-162: Proclamation of de Rocheblave to the Inhabitants, Fort Gage[Kaskaskia], November 19, 1777, in Seineke, ed., 208-209.

⁵⁴ Carleton to Hamilton, Quebec, May 16, 1777 in Seineke, ed., 200-201.

⁵⁵ Hamilton to Carleton, Detroit, April 25, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 234.

⁵⁶ Deciding the season too late in 1775, Congress disapproved Arthur St. Clair's 500-man expedition for Detroit. Instead, St. Clair's regiment attempted to reinforce Montgomery in Montreal, but arrived too late to prevent the American withdrawal. *Ibid.*

Both sides continually courted Indian alliances or at least neutrality. With upward of eight thousand warriors, the Indian tribes of the Great Lakes, Ohio, and upper Mississippi swung the balance of power. Many tribes already opposed the Americans. Mobilizing them against the American frontier seemed to support British interests while strengthening the depth of Detroit's defenses. However, Carleton did not favor using Indians against American settlements. Throughout the summer and fall of 1776, Carleton became preoccupied with driving Benedict Arnold from Canada. Hamilton's concern grew. The situation required action.⁵⁷

Hamilton's Indian Offensive: March 1777 – April 1778

Hamilton circumvented Carleton and wrote directly to British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord George Germain. He proposed "making a Diversion on the Frontiers of Virginia and Pensilvania by Parties of Indians."⁵⁸ In March 1777, Germain approved and directed Carleton to execute his subordinate's plan:

It is the King's Command that you should direct Lieutenant Governor Hamilton to assemble as many of the Indians of his District as he conveniently can ...[to] employ them in making a Diversion and exciting alarm upon the Frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania...

It is His Majesty's pleasure that you do authorize and direct Lieut. Governor Hamilton to invite all such Loyal Subjects to Join him...

These offers it is hoped...may enable Lieut. Governor Hamilton to extend his operations, so as to divide the attention of the Rebels, and oblige them to Collect a considerable force to oppose him, which cannot fail of Weakening their main army, & facilitating the Operations directed to be carried on against them in other Quarters, and thus bring the War to a more Speedy Issue and restore those deluded people to their former State of happiness...⁵⁹

⁵⁷ James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 31-43; Higginbotham, 320; Waller, 49; Symond, 25.

⁵⁸ Hamilton wrote the letter intended for the Earl of Dartmouth on September 2, 1776, but Germain succeeded him. Germain to Carleton, Whitehall, March 26, 1777 in Seineke, ed., 196-197.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Carleton relayed the order to Hamilton in May; synchronizing it with Burgoyne's Campaign in New York. He also delegated full civil authority to Hamilton for the entire territory and sent Edward Abbot, newly appointed Lieutenant Governor of Vincennes, as support.⁶⁰

With presents flowing again, the tribes took up the war belt in earnest. Hamilton's agents accompanied war parties to Kentucky. From the spring of 1777 to the spring of 1778, the frontier was ablaze. The attacks "were continual and severe."⁶¹ The population suffered over two thousand casualties and dropped to under two hundred. Hamilton praised, "the Indians have done their duty perfectly."⁶² Kentucky was on the verge of collapse.⁶³

The effect was not positive everywhere. At Vincennes, Lieutenant Governor Abbot objected to pitting Indians against whites. Regardless of appeals for humanity, war parties attacked the most vulnerable settlers and rarely distinguished between loyalties. Throughout the region, Loyalists considered joining the Rebel cause. Many vilified Hamilton and disdained Rocheblave. Abbot disappointed his superiors. He exceeded expenses then cited insufficient

⁶⁰ Carleton expanded Indian recruitment to include Colonel Barry St. Leger. Simultaneous with Hamilton's campaign, St. Leger's operations were meant to support Burgoyne's ill-fated invasion. Americans blocked St. Leger and his Iroquois at Ft. Stanwix. Carleton to Hamilton, Quebec, May 21, 1777 in Seineke, ed., 201; Edward Abbot was a British artillery officer sent to help administer the province. He arrived in Vincennes in spring, 1777 but deserted shortly thereafter. British appointee Matthew Johnson declined assignment to Kaskaskia, leaving Rocheblave as Britain's custodian. As a result Carleton extended Hamilton's civil authority throughout all the Illinois, but Hamilton's military authority remained vague. Quaipe, 54; Carleton to Hamilton, Quebec, May 16, 1777, in Seineke, ed, 200-201; Arthur, <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=36053&query=hamilton> (accessed 13 March, 2011).

⁶¹ George Rogers Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 465.

⁶² Henry Hamilton to Monsieur ? at the Illinois, Detroit, December, 1777 in Seineke, ed., 212.

⁶³ "Twenty-three hundred Indians assembled at Fort Niagara during December 1777 to receive presents," James, *Life of George Rogers Clark*, 42; The Shawnee captured Captain Daniel Boone and brought him before Hamilton. "By Boone's Account the People on the Frontiers have been so incessantly harassed by parties of Indians, they have not been able to sow grain, & at Kentucke will not have a morsel of bread by the middle of June... nor do they expect relief from Congress. Their distresses will probably reduce them to trust the Savages who have shown so much humanity to them. Prisoners [will] come to [Detroit] before Winter." Hamilton to Carleton, Detroit, April 25, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 235.

funds to recompense the tribes. Without a British garrison Abbot feared native reprisals and resigned his post.⁶⁴

In London, a dissatisfied Lord Germain sacked Carleton for General Sir Frederick Haldimand. But Haldimand would not arrive for another ten months. This event would prove crucial as Carleton abdicated his interim responsibilities. In the meantime Hamilton's situation seemed promising. He retained limited authority over British Regulars, but received full command over all other Northwest affairs. With Kentucky nearly destroyed, he targeted Ft. Pitt. In December 1777, Hamilton wrote with optimism:

As for the news – the rebels have furnished more blood than one could believe existed in a body so recently formed. For neophytes, they show themselves to be excellent martyrs. I pity them perhaps more than they deserve—but the Greeks had to suffer a plague because of Agamemnon's sacrilege; on this footing, I find them worthy of compassion.⁶⁵

That same month George Rogers Clark arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia with a plan.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Hamilton received the villainous moniker "The Hair Buyer" for allegedly offering rewards for scalps. Lieut. Governor Abbott implored Carleton, "Your Excellency will plainly perceive the employing Indians on the Rebel frontiers has been great hurt to the cause, for many hundreds would have put themselves under His Majesty's protection was there a possibility: that not being the case, these poor unhappy people are forced to take up arms against their Sovereign or be pillaged and left to starve...." (Abbot to Carleton, June 8, 1778). Besides building Fort Sackville in Vincennes, Abbot served no further importance. He turned command of Fort Sackville over to the French Militia commandant, Major Beaulon [likely Major Francis Bosseron] on 2 Feb, 1778. Abbott to Carleton with Enclosure: Abbott's Instructions to Major Beaulon, Detroit, April 25, 1778; Abbot to Carleton with Enclosure with Declaration of Mons. Montbrun, Detroit, June 8, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 237, 244; James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 52-43.

⁶⁵ Hamilton to Monsieur ? at the Illinois, Detroit, December, 1777, in Seineke, ed., 212.

⁶⁶ Almost losing Canada in 1775, Carleton fell out a favor when he did not press the offense into New York after the Battle of Valcour Island in October, 1776. Lord Germain notified Haldimand September 19, 1777 to succeed Carleton, coincidentally the same day as Saratoga's Battle of Freeman's Farm. Carleton wrote Hamilton, "The conduct of the war has been taken entirely out of my hands and the management of it upon your Frontier has been assigned to you." Symonds, 35; Note following Carleton to Hamilton, Quebec, September 15, 1777; Carleton to Hamilton, St. John's, September 26, 1777; Hamilton to Carleton, Detroit, February 1, 1778, in Seineke, ed., 208, 219-220.

Clark's Illinois Campaign

Before Hamilton's offensive, George Rogers Clark spent 1775 and 1776 organizing Kentucky's civil government and defense. He convinced Virginia's legislature to establish Kentucky County and was promoted to major. In 1777 he uncovered Indian preparations for war as he ferried ammunition from Ft. Pitt.⁶⁷

He arrived in Kentucky barely ahead of Indian war parties and set to organizing the militia. The county instituted compulsory service. Reputable captains led four companies totaling perhaps one hundred and fifty men. From Harrodsburg, Boonesborough, Logan's Station, McClelland's Station and Leestown, they desperately repelled Indian assaults from spring through fall. McClelland's Station and Leestown fell. Clark led retaliatory missions when possible. He feared surrender, but the settlements "remained firm."⁶⁸

Relief arrived with Colonel John Bowman. However, the troops' enlistments lasted only long enough for Kentucky to repair its defenses. Without further respite, the Indians would descend upon Kentucky before it recovered. Clark wanted to bring the fight to the enemy.⁶⁹

Designs, Plans, and Orders: April 1777 – January 1778

Clark did not think this of struggle in terms of independent skirmishes. Instead, he reflected on how to turn the situation into one favorable to the whole American war effort. He identified Kentucky as a buffer to the states' interior. He deduced British supplied Indian incursions would exhaust the United States by fixing large forces to frontier defense and

⁶⁷ Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 463.

⁶⁸ The Kentucky militia captains were "noted Indian fighters," Daniel Boone, James Harrod, John Todd Jr., and Benjamin Logan. Logan's Station was also known as St. Asaph. Ibid: James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 56-58; Neil Hamon, Kentucky County in *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, John E. Kleber, ed., (Lexington, Kentucky: The Kentucky University Press, 1992), 495.

⁶⁹ Virginia bolstered Kentucky with two hundred forty-eight riflemen and cavalry. Colonel Bowman was Kentucky's senior militia leader but was delayed in Virginia throughout most of 1777. Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 463.

disrupting the flow of materials east. Finally, he postulated Kentucky as a salient where, with “minimal assistance,” a force could prevent a western invasion by striking at British bases.⁷⁰ “Those ideas caused me to view Kentucky... as a place of greatest consequence,” wrote Clark, “and as the commandants of the different towns of the Illinois and Wabash, I knew, were busily engaged in exciting the Indians, their reduction became my first object.”⁷¹

Even as Indian raids grew daily, he dispatched two men to spy on his objectives. Both reported the settlements in good order with trained militia, not expecting an attack but ready if alarmed. They observed some sympathy for the Americans. However, British agents attempted to counter this by depicting Rebel frontiersmen as more barbarous than the Indians.⁷²

With this intelligence, Clark detailed his plan to Virginia Governor Patrick Henry. He assessed that without intervention, Kaskaskia and the Wabash settlements would continue to spur the Indians to war and could disrupt American communications and commerce along the Mississippi. Clark surmised:

[I]f [Kaskaskia] was in our possession, it would distress the garrison at Detroit for provisions, and it would fling the command of [the Mississippi and Ohio] rivers into our hands, which would enable us to get supplies of goods from the Spaniards, and to carry on a trade with the Indians [and] might perhaps with small presents keep them our friends.⁷³

He imagined with five hundred men, boats, and forty days provisions he could proceed down the Ohio River and then overland to seize the settlements. He believed he might take the garrison by surprise at night, and if they resisted he could compel them by threatening the town’s provisions. If authorized, Clark estimated completion by April, 1778. He warned Henry, “either take

⁷⁰ Ibid, 466-467

⁷¹ See Appendix B of this monograph. This excerpt from *Clark’s Memoir* provides a compelling example of Clark using what U.S. Army doctrine cause “design methodology.” Ibid.

⁷² See Appendix B of this monograph. Clark dispatched Sam Moore and William Linn April 20, 1777. They returned June 22, 1777 and Clark reported the intelligence to Henry. George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Diary and Clark to [Patrick Henry?] 1777* in *The George Rogers Clark Papers 1771-1781*, James A. James, ed., (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1912), 21-22, 30-32.

⁷³ Ibid. See Appendix B of this monograph.

[Kaskaskia], or in less than twelve month[s] send an army against the Indians on Wabash, which will costs ten times as much and not be half the service.”⁷⁴

Once relieved by Colonel Bowman, Clark departed for Williamsburg to obtain political support to his plan. His timing was impeccable. While enroot, the Virginia Assembly authorized Governor Patrick Henry to raise up to six hundred militia volunteers to attack Virginia’s “western enemies.”⁷⁵ Though there is no direct documentation, Clark’s prior correspondence may have influenced the decision. Separately, The Continental Congress acknowledged Henry Hamilton’s threat and commissioned offensive actions with upward of two thousand men from Fort Pitt into the West to push back the Indians and reduce the British garrison at Detroit. Congress recommended Virginia and Pennsylvania support the endeavor with their militias.⁷⁶

George Rogers Clark was not among those commissioned for the effort, but his proposition coincided with the greater strategy. On December 10th, 1777, Clark presented his plan to Governor Henry. Clark furthermore believed he might capture Detroit by persuading the French. But to avoid appearing overconfident, he did not mention it to the Governor. Henry already thought the concept hazardous but outstanding.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Clark to Mason, Part I from English’s *Conquest of Country Northwest of the River Ohio*, reprinted by the Indiana Historical Bureau, <http://www.in.gov/history/3006.htm> (accessed 13 March, 2011): Clark to [Patrick Henry?] 1777 in the *Clark Papers*, 30-32.

⁷⁵ See Appendix C of this monograph. “The basis for Governor Patrick Henry’s authority for implementing the Clark expedition is ‘An act for better securing the commonwealth, and for the farther protection and defence thereof,’ which was passed by the General Assembly of Virginia at the October session, 1777.” Note regarding Two Letters of Patrick Henry Authorizing Clark Expedition, Williamsburg, January 2, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 215.

⁷⁶ Brigadier Edward Hand would attempt a campaign into Ohio in 1777, and General Lachlan McIntosh attempted to build a fortified invasion route to Detroit in 1778. Both attempts failed, as Hand’s militia would prove ineffectual and McIntosh’s Continental manpower would eventually be diverted back East. Congressional Report on Hamilton’s Proclamations to Indian Tribes, Philadelphia, November 20, 1777 in Seineke, ed., 210-211: Higginbotham, 327-328.

⁷⁷ Congress believed two thousand men necessary to take Detroit. Clark’s Letter to George Mason, November, 1779, Part I: George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Memoir*, 468.

Henry consulted his privy council. Clark wrote, “after making every inquiry into my proposed plans of operation... the expedition was resolved upon.”⁷⁸ Governor Henry composed two sets of orders: a public set as deception, and secret instructions detailing the true objectives. The Virginia Assembly promoted Clark to Lieutenant Colonel and on January 2, 1778, Patrick Henry issued Clark’s instructions.⁷⁹

Clark’s public instructions ordered him to enlist a regiment of 350 men for the strict purpose of protecting Kentucky. His secret instructions ordered him to attack Kaskaskia. Clark was to persuade or compel the inhabitants to become citizens of Virginia and garrison the town. If he failed, the expedition was to retreat into Spanish Territory. Henry also informed Clark to be prepared to “establish a post near the Mouth of the Ohio [River].”⁸⁰ Coordinating instructions established rules of conduct. They also permitted Clark to acquire boats and provisions from Ft. Pitt. Governor Henry alerted Ft. Pitt’s commandant, General Hand, of Clark’s true mission. The Virginia Assembly added incentives, promising each volunteer with three hundred acres from the conquered land.⁸¹

The mission held great strategic potential. Occupation of the Illinois and the mouth of the Ohio could improve communications with Spain by circumventing the British Navy, and also check Spain’s Mississippi ambitions. Critical supplies already trickled in from Spanish New Orleans. Governor Henry wished to expand it and clarified his intent two weeks later:

Proceed as you find the Interest of your Country directs when you get to the place you are going to. What I have in View is that your Operations should not be confin’d to the Fort & the Settlement at the place mention’d in your secret Instructions, but that you proceed to the Enemy’s Settlements above or across, a you may find it proper.⁸²

⁷⁸ George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Memoir*, 468.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ See Appendix C of this monograph. *Ibid.*: Two Letters of Patrick Henry Authorizing Clark Expedition, Williamsburg, January 2, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 215.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: Wythe, Mason, and Jefferson to Clark, Williamsburg, January 3, 1778 in *ibid.*, 216.

⁸² Henry to Clark, Williamsburg, January 15, 1778 in *ibid.*, 218.

Clark confirmed, “I was ordered to attack the Illinois---in case of success to carry my arms to any quarter I pleased.”⁸³ Orders in hand, Clark set upon his task.⁸⁴

Preparation: January – June 1778

During Clark’s preparation, James Willing embarked from Fort Pitt on a privateer raid of the lower Mississippi. Separately planned by the Congressional Commerce Committee, the raid had supporting effects. Willing captured the sixteen gun British vessel, *Rebecca*, and effectively neutralized British river forces from interfering in Clark’s expedition. But, Willing nearly compromised Clark’s mission by alarming the Illinois to potential invasion. However, the raid gave temporary control of the lower Mississippi to the Rebels, demonstrated the vulnerability of British posts in the West, and created confusion about a pending Continental invasion.⁸⁵

Recruiting proved difficult. Clark dispatched officers throughout the interior settlements; planning for the new companies to rendezvous at Redstone (Brownsville, Pennsylvania) on February 1, 1778. Competition among Continental and Virginia armies for the eastern campaigns, local militia requirements, and Pennsylvanian mistrust of Virginian endeavors, hindered the effort. Governor Henry even instructed Clark to recruit closer to the frontier⁸⁶

⁸³ Clark to Mason, November 19, 1779, Part I.

⁸⁴ Henry dispatched Colonel David Rogers with correspondence for Spanish General Bernardo de Galvez. “I have thought it necessary for securing the intercourse with New Orleans to build a Fort somewhere near the mouth of the Ohio. The inland Navigation of the Mississippi & Ohio although at present subject to many Inconveniences has this great advantage that British Cruisers cannot infest it.” Henry to de Galvez, Williamsburg, January 14, 1778 in *ibid*, 216-217.

⁸⁵ Robert V. Haynes, *The Natchez District and the American Revolution* (University Press of Mississippi, 1976) 58, 66-67, 75: Rocheblave to Carleton with Interrogation of Henry Butler, Kaskaskia, February 18, 1778 and Rocheblave to Hamilton, Fort Gage, March 17, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 224-225, 232.

⁸⁶ William B. Smith went to the Holston region, Leonard Helm went to Fauquier County, Joseph Bowman went to Frederick County, and John Montgomery and James Harrod went to other parts of the state. George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Memoir*, 469: Harrison, George Rogers Clark the Early Years in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 15: Henry to Clark, Williamsburg, January 24, 1778 in *Clark Papers*, James, ed., 39.

Clark repeatedly delayed departure as available recruits staged flatboats, ammunition, and provisions. He received communication that his recruiter in Holston, Major Smith, successfully mustered four companies to meet Clark in Kentucky. Furthermore, Leonard Helm and Joseph Bowman each assembled a company. Clark believed he possessed six of his authorized seven companies. The expedition departed with a number of families in tow on May 12, 1778.⁸⁷

Clark thought the falls of the Ohio key as it canalized river navigation and offered much protection. He fortified a small island as his base where he could organize and discipline his troops and divulge his secret orders. But not all anticipated forces arrived. Colonel Bowman joined Clark, bringing some militia and only one of the four companies promised by Smith.⁸⁸

The mission was in jeopardy. Being late in the Spring, the Indian threat still loomed over Kentucky. Colonel Bowman and Clark deliberated over continuing. “[W]eaker than expected,” they chose the bolder course.⁸⁹ They allocated all four companies to the expedition, believing it “better to run great risk with one party than to divide our forces [and] hazard the loss of both.”⁹⁰ Of Clark’s required five hundred men he tallied one hundred fifty. Colonel Bowman provided more volunteers before returning to the settlements. After some desertions and designating a rear detachment to secure Corn Island, the expedition numbered around one hundred seventy-five. They set off down the Ohio on June 24, 1778.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Clark to Hand, Redstone, April 17, 1778, in Seineke ed., 233: Ibid.

⁸⁸ “On this island I first began to discipline my little army, knowing that to be the most essential point towards success. Most of them determined to follow me; the rest, seeing no probability of making their escape. I soon got that subordination as I could wish for.” Clark to Mason, Part I; Clark, *Clark’s Memoir*, 471; Two of those companies were diverted when Indians captured Daniel Boone and others earlier in the year. Smith remained in Holston looking for replacements. He wrote Clark on his turn of events. It is unclear if Clark proceeded in spite of the news or did not receive it. Smith to Clark, Holston River, March 29, 1778 in the *Clark Papers*, James ed., 42.

⁸⁹ George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Memoir*, 471.

⁹⁰ Bowman and Clark assumed Smith could reinforce Kentucky from Holston. Ibid, 472-473.

⁹¹ Prior to departure many of those recruited from Holston deserted. Clark threatened death to any who resisted arrest and recovered some in pursuit. While not worried about this desertion in particular, he

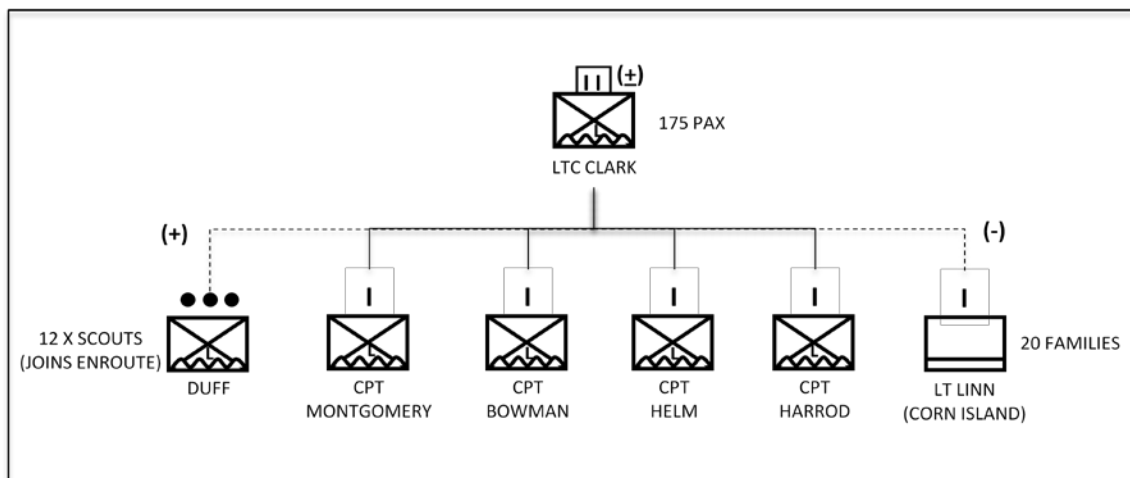


Figure 4: Clark's Task Organization, June 24, 1778⁹²

Hamilton assessed the Virginians incapable of offensive action. He proposed to attack Fort Pitt and implored Carleton to retain the initiative. Carleton retorted, "The Instructions sent out last Summer by Lord Germain were so pointed, taking the management of the War on all sides out my hands, that I cannot give you any directions."⁹³ Carleton promised to pass along Hamilton's plan to Haldimand. As a result, Hamilton retained most of his Indians at Detroit to await orders. Spring passed. Haldimand would not arrive until July 30. By then, Clark would occupy the Illinois.⁹⁴

wanted to prevent further desertion. Clark used invalids and families to secure the blockhouse on Corn Island. Clark to Mason, Part I: George Rogers Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 472-473.

⁹² The company commanders were John Montgomery, Joseph Bowman, Leonard Helm, and William Harrod. William Linn commanded the rear detachment at Corn Island, but joined Clark later. A hunting party encountered enroot, led by John Duff, volunteered as scouts. Heberling Harding, 1-3.

⁹³ Carleton to Hamilton, Montreal, March 14, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 231.

⁹⁴ Hamilton laid out requirements for an expedition and wrote, "We [Hamilton and British garrison commander Captain Lernoult] are entirely agreed as to the practicability of distressing the Enemy Somewhere on the frontier next Spring." Hamilton wrote, "The Savages will in a few days meet in Council and before they are dismissed, I shall hope for orders how to direct their inroads upon the Frontiers. It would make me very happy to have received them from your Excellency but as you have determined to go to Europe, those hopes are at an end. Should there not arrive in time particular orders, I shall dispose of a part of the Savages in small scouts and if possible retain the most reputable of the Chiefs and warriors in

Attack, Exploitation, and Consolidation: June – September 1778

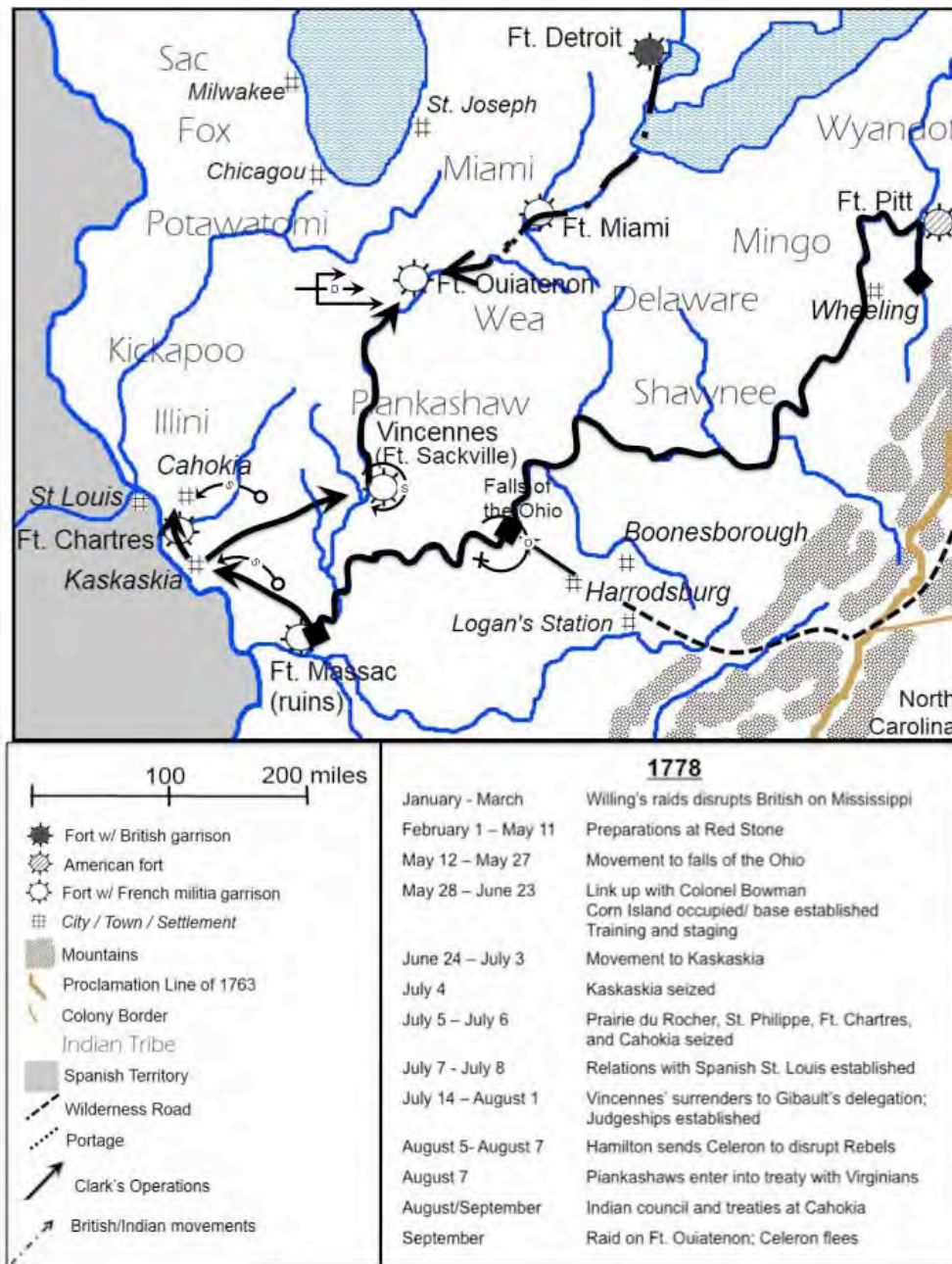


Figure 5: Map of Clark's Operations, May 1778 – September 1778⁹⁵

the neighborhood that if the Commander in chief should think proper to point out some particular Service for them in the course of the current Year they may be in readiness." Hamilton to Carleton, Detroit, February 1, and June 9, 1778, in Seineke, ed., 219-220, 245.

⁹⁵ Technical assistance by Andrew Bates.

While Clark was enroute news arrived of the France's Alliance with the United States. He believed the information might influence the Illinois French to favor him. The expedition also detained a group American hunters returning from Kaskaskia. They provided current intelligence and volunteered to guide Clark's force. With this knowledge, Clark refined his plan to evade detection. They landed their boats and infiltrated one hundred twenty miles to their objective.⁹⁶

The evening of July 4, the battalion assembled at a farm a mile from the town and questioned the inhabitants. They conducted a hasty crossing of the Kaskaskia River with confiscated boats and discovered the town off its guard.

I immediately divided my little army into two divisions. Ordered one to surround the town. With the other, I broke into the fort---secured the governor, Mr. Rochblave; in fifteen minutes had every street secured; sent runners through the town ordering the people, on pain of death, to keep close to their houses, which they observed, and before daylight had the whole town disarmed.⁹⁷

The assault was bloodless. Clark briefly played on Britain's brutal frontier stereotype to sustain shock effect until he ascertained the town's disposition. He met with their priest, Father Gibault, and other community leaders. He reassured their freedoms, explained his mission, brought news of the United States and French Alliance, and announced plans to institute locally run civil government and courts. Clark leniently prosecuted those accused of supplying Indian war parties and issued general amnesty to others, anticipating later advantages with intelligence and tribal negotiations. The town swore allegiance to the United States.⁹⁸

Clark maintained the momentum. Intent to "make a lodgment" in Cahokia,⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Col. John Campbell to Clark, Pittsburgh, June 8, 1778 in *ibid*, 242-243.

⁹⁷ Clark to Mason, Part II.

⁹⁸ There are speculations local sympathizers and opportunists collaborated with Clark to keep Kaskaskia off guard and identify the Loyalists. French militia outnumbered Clark four to one and would have likely fought if supporting the Americans was not in their interest. Margaret Kimball Brown, *Kaskaskia and the French Kaskaskians as seen by Clark in Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 32-41; George Rogers Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 479-481, 484-486.

⁹⁹ George Rogers Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 481.

I ordered Major Bowman to mount his company and part of another and a few inhabitants, to inform their friends what had happened, on horses procured from the town, and proceed without delay, and if possible get possession of Kohokia before the ensuing morning; that I should give him no further instructions on the subject, but for him to make use of his own prudence.¹⁰⁰

Bowman's company with Kaskaskian militia volunteers advanced the fifty miles to Cahokia within twelve hours. He conveyed Clark's message to the inhabitants and took initiative to open communications with the Spanish government at St. Louis. By July 8, Cahokia, Fort Chartres, and Prairie du Rocher took the oath of allegiance.¹⁰¹

His immediate objectives secured, Clark focused on Vincennes. He collected intelligence from the Spanish and locals. Hamilton's tribal mobilization effort was greater than first imagined. But there were vulnerabilities. For protection, Clark and his men perpetuated a deception that their regiment was the precursor of a larger invasion. British tribal alliances were ephemeral and expensive, and separate tribal interests made the alliances malleable. Most conveniently, Governor Abbott had departed Fort Sackville. In conference with Father Gibault, Clark believed the town amenable to the American cause. To conserve force, Clark resolved to gain the town "on other measures than that of arms."¹⁰² He approved the priest and two local doctors to make a diplomatic appeal to its inhabitants. They departed July 14 and reported August 1 that the town joined in allegiance. Clark included terms for Vincennes to garrison itself without American occupation; a symbolic gesture of confidence and a means to prevent over extending his meager force. The force completed its primary mission and enlistments would soon expire.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Over 300 residents pledged allegiance. Larry Nelson, Clark's Kaskaskia Expedition, June 24-July 4, 1778 in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 29: Bowman's other task was to apprehend Kaskaskian merchant John Gabriel Cerre, accused of supplying Indian war parties. Cerre fled to St. Louis and Bowman opened communications with St. Louis Lieutenant Governor Don Fernando de Leyba not only to coordinate support, but also to extradite Cerre. Cerre would become a key logistical supporter to Clark. Ibid, 482-484; de Leyba to de Galvez at New Orleans, July 11, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 262.

¹⁰² George Rogers Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 483-484.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 487-488.

Clark's written orders provided little instruction on what to do next. He contemplated withdrawal, but felt it contrary to his political guidance and the situation's emerging potential. Instead he took the initiative to consolidate their gains and pacify the Indian tribes. Clark set his subordinates to organizing the defense, reestablishing the rule of law, and attending to the public safety. Clark wrote, "[I] took every step in my power to cause the people to feel the blessings enjoyed by an American citizen, which...enabled me to support, from their own choice, almost supreme authority over them."¹⁰⁴ He established civil courts with elected magistrates. Cahokia selected Captain Bowman as their judge, while Clark's conduct as an appellate judge increased his reputation among the French.¹⁰⁵

Clark capitalized on French support. He reorganized to create the Battalion of the Illinois. Incentives and promotions persuaded one hundred initial expedition members to reenlist for eight more months. Clark appointed French officers, opened enlistments to French volunteers, and integrated garrisons and training with the local militia. The French militia were skilled woodsmen, knowledgeable in the terrain and the area's Indian tribes. They patrolled the trails, watched the rivers, and reported on Indian activity. The battalion formed a cavalry troop and garrisoned the forts, providing them with cannon and swivel guns.¹⁰⁶

The officers divided the area of operations; each sector commanded by an active company of Virginians augmented by French militia. Headquarters remained in Kaskaskia. Bowman retained Cahokia, Fort Chartres, and Prairie du Rocher. Leonard Helm became commandant at Vincennes and acted as American agent to the Wabash tribes. Lieutenant Linn returned to Corn Island to displace the post to the Kentucky side at present day Louisville.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 484.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 484, 489; Petition of the Inhabitants to Captain Bowman, Cahokia, 29 December, 1778, in Seineke, ed. 306.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 489; Clark's Appointment of Francois Bosseron Captain of Militia at Vincennes, Fort Clark, 10 August, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 270; James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 127; Herberling Harding, 6.

Captain Montgomery escorted discharges back to Virginia and delivered Rocheblave to Williamsburg. There he rendered Clark's report along with requests for reinforcements and an appointed civil authority to administer the new territory.¹⁰⁷

Clark also switched his primary supply line from the Ohio to the Mississippi River. It afforded him better logistical access with less risk Indian interdiction. With tacit Spanish support, Clark and patriot financier, Oliver Pollock established a network of merchants between New Orleans and the Illinois and made preparations for the winter. Men, food, and communications moved primarily along the Ohio and Kentucky settlements. The Mississippi became the main supply route for finished goods, ammunition, and clothing. The system's viability depended on the tenuous value of Virginia currency and personal credit.¹⁰⁸

The British learned of their reversal of fortune as well. Henry Hamilton was previously optimistic that Spanish attempts to turn the Illinois tribes would be ineffective. But when he received reports of Kaskaskia's fate in August and rumors of war with France and Spain, his optimism diminished. There was nothing to prevent the Virginians from possessing the Illinois. Hamilton still awaited orders. Should he proceed against Ft. Pitt or divert to the Illinois? "My Situation is thoroughly disagreeable at present – however I still look with patience for some Instruction by which to guide myself and others."¹⁰⁹ "You may well imagine how earnestly I look toward Canada for intelligence."¹¹⁰ As a precaution he ordered his regional agent at Ouiatenon, Pierre Celeron, to organize war parties along the Miami and Wabash rivers and spike

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 490: Captain Helm's Account of Supplies Issued by Him From the Military Stores at Fort Vincennes in Seineke, ed., 279-280.

¹⁰⁸ Clark to Pollock, Kaskaskia, 6 August, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 268; Gregory F. Holm, Supply Issues of the Illinois Regiment Under George Rogers Clark in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 172; James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 122-126.

¹⁰⁹ Hamilton to Carleton: Received by Haldimand, Detroit, August 11, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 270-271.

¹¹⁰ Hamilton to Unidentified Officer at Quebec, Detroit, August 12, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 271.

the cannons at Vincennes before they fell into Rebel hands. But Vincennes already turned and Clark too sought to gain tribal allegiances.¹¹¹

Tribes in the lower Illinois entered into peaceful relations with the Virginians. At Vincennes Captain Helm developed a friendship with the Piankashaw chief named Tobacco and Tobacco's son. Piankashaw support temporarily dissuaded other tribes from striking the newly arrived Virginians. Helm learned of Celeron's activities and requested permission to capture him near Ft. Ouiatenon. Clark "empow[ered] the captain to act agreeably to the councils held among themselves but that if they, at any time, on finding the attempt dangerous or the chances against them, to relinquish the enterprise and return."¹¹²

Captain Helm led a combined French, American, and Indian contingent up river by boat. Celeron assembled forty of his own Indians to give battle, but deserted them and fled back to Detroit. Helm arrived more quickly than anticipated, took the unguarded fort and surprised its occupants as they deliberated what to do next. The demonstration allowed Helm to recruit local Indian agents and parley neutrality and free passage to Detroit with the upper Wabash tribes.¹¹³

News of the Virginians spread. Clark expected tribes to fight or demand tribute. Already outnumbered, he could not lavish presents upon the Indians like the British either. He believed the practice conveyed weakness anyway. But the Virginians, called Big Knives by the natives, did possess a reputation as ruthless Indian killers. Clark organized a summit in Cahokia of the

¹¹¹ Hamilton to Carleton, Detroit, August 6, 1778; Hamilton to Carleton: Received by Haldimand, Detroit, August 8, 1778; De Peyster to Haldimand, Michilimacinac, August 15, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 267, 269-270, 273.

¹¹² Certificate of Captain Leonard Helm to Chief Tobacco, Vincennes, 7 August, 1778 and 25 January, 1779 in Seineke, ed., 268-269, 345-346; Hamilton to Haldimand with Enclosure, Detroit, 16 September, 1778, in Seineke, ed. 287. George Rogers Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 510.

¹¹³ Records vary, but it seems Helm commanded approximately 100 soldiers, the bulk provided by Captain Bosseron's Vincennes militia reinforced by 32 Americans from Kaskaskia under Lieutenant John Bayley and Son of Tobacco's Piankashaw Indians. Clark to Mason, Part 4; Herbling Harding, 34; Lieut. Governor's Final Letter From Detroit to Governor Haldimand Before Starting for Vincennes, Detroit, October 7, 1778 in Seineke, 317.

great tribes to instill peace. The invitation read, “We are numerous and will make an end to your father who is at Detroit. As for the Indians who are with him we regard them as nothing, we will sweep the roads with their bodies.”¹¹⁴

The response was astonishing. Tribal leaders from five hundred miles converged on the town. In preparation Clark observed local methods for dealing with the Indians. He studied copies of the British treaties. He derived insights from those who knew the chiefs. Then he entreated with the chiefs in council and individually over five weeks. His imposing demeanor and cultural knowledge allowed him to engage them with “an attitude, as occasion demanded, either kind, conciliatory, or severe.”¹¹⁵ Believing Indians only respected strength, Clark continually masked his force size, perpetuated stories about a larger army, and spoke to the council “as a conqueror . . .they could not hope to [defeat].”¹¹⁶

Results seemed mixed, but for Clark it “did more service than a Regiment of Men cou’d have done.”¹¹⁷ He established truces with many nations and verified compliance through informants. Tribes closer to British posts stayed reserved. Clark assessed, “a boundary between the British emissaries and our own appeared now fixed at the heads of the waters of the Great Lakes and those of the Mississippi. . .some tribes became divided among themselves, part siding with us, and part with the English.”¹¹⁸

Clark entered autumn with great success. In three months his battalion bloodlessly neutralized British influence in the Illinois. Tribes in Ohio and along the Great Lakes still posed a formidable threat, but rumors spread that an army of vengeful Big Knives advanced toward

¹¹⁴ James, ed., *George Rogers Clark Papers*, 126; *Clark’s Memoir*, 492; James Alexander Thom, *George Rogers Clark and the American Indian in Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 45.

¹¹⁵ James quoted by Thom, 45.

¹¹⁶ August Derleth, *Vincennes: Portal to the West* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 46.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹⁸ George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Memoir* quoted in Quaipe, ed., 87.

Detroit. Clark also received intelligence that another American expedition, under General Lachlan McIntosh, proceeded from Ft. Pitt to capture Detroit. Aided by Hamilton's own inactivity, Kentucky was spared from the ravages of the previous year.¹¹⁹

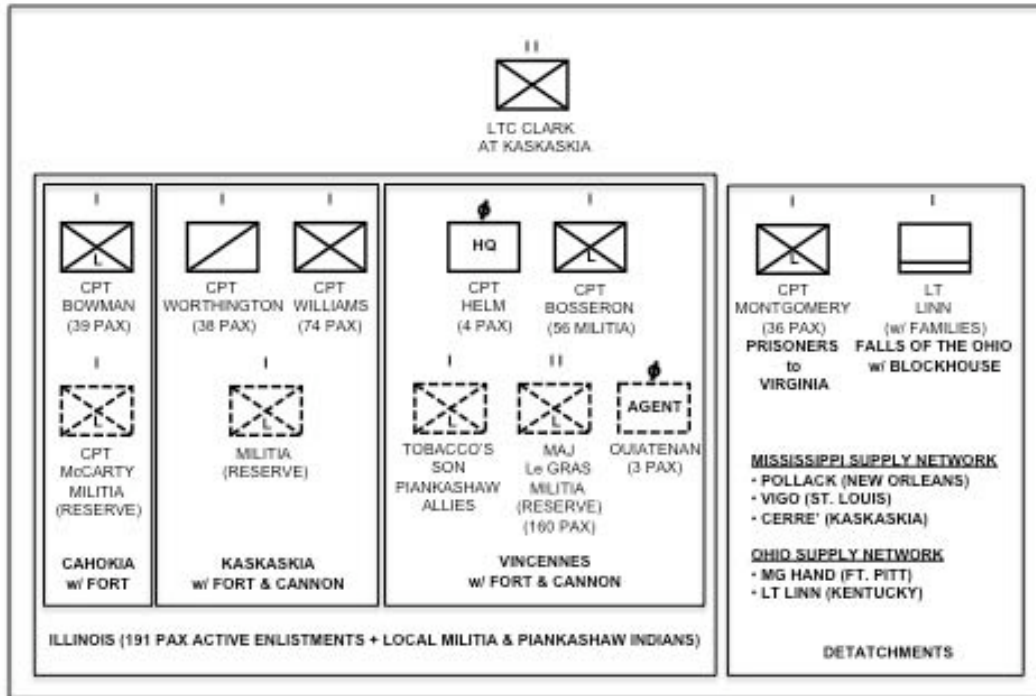


Figure 6: Battalion of the Illinois' Task Organization, August – December 1778¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Hamilton's Final Letter From Detroit to Governor Haldimand Before Starting for Vincennes, Detroit, October 7, 1778, in Seineke, ed. 318: Clark to Mason, Part Four.

¹²⁰ Besides active enlistments, Clark was able to enlist militia volunteers for short duration missions. Many merchants did business with Clark, but Pollack, Vigo, and Cerre' were his primary agents and went into personal debt for the Americans. Herberling Harding, 1-9, 18-19.

Hamilton's Counteroffensive: September 1778 – February 1779

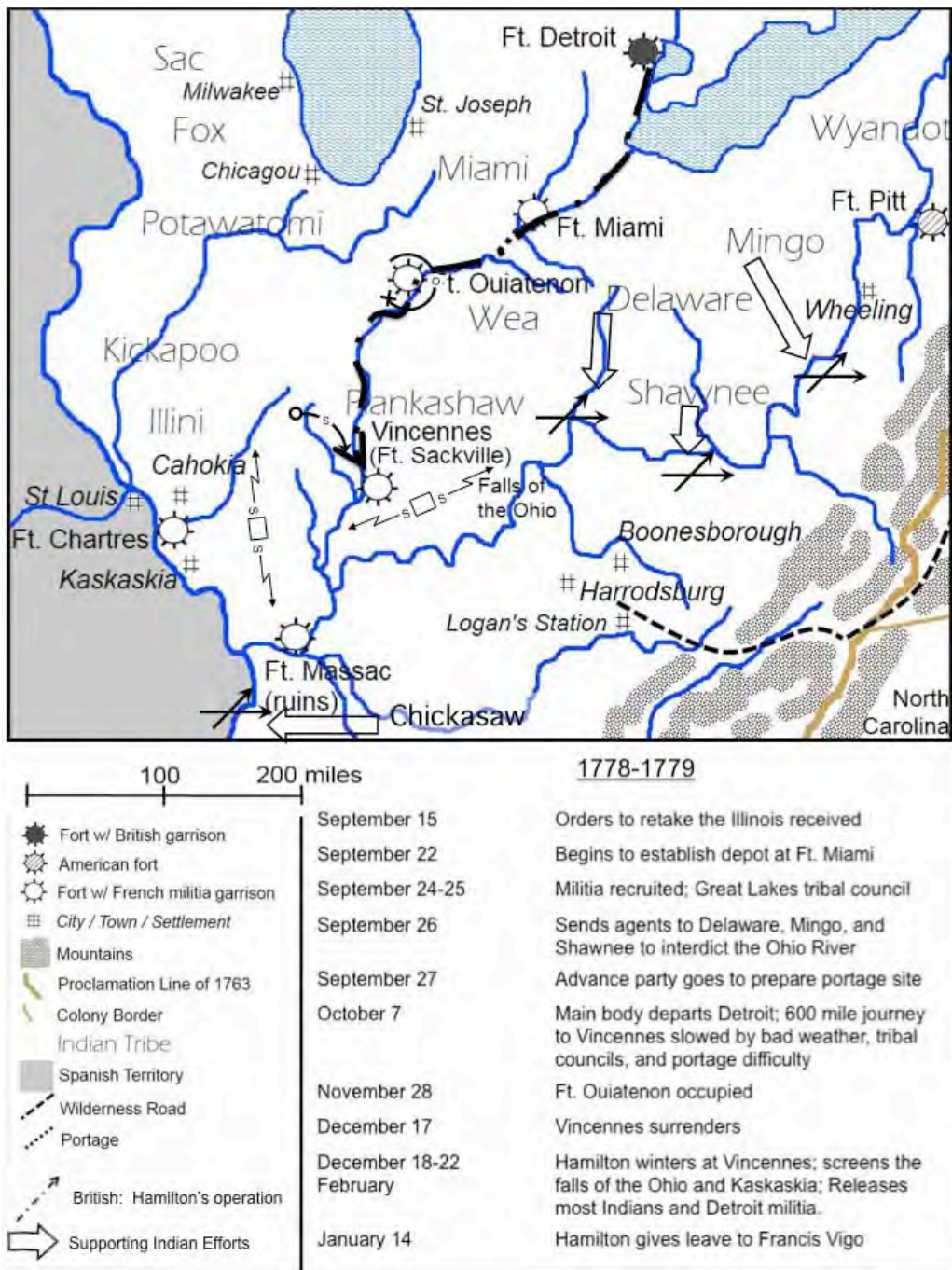


Figure 7: Map of Hamilton's Counteroffensive from October, 1778 – January, 1779¹²¹

¹²¹ Technical assistance by Andrew Bates.

On the evening of September 15, 1778 Hamilton received the instructions he ardently requested. Haldimand determined Ft. Pitt's seizure impractical while McIntosh's expedition made no significant advance beyond Ft. Pitt to warrant concern. Instead Haldimand ordered Hamilton to use the Indians to clear the Rebels from the Illinois and deny their communications with New Orleans. Haldimand recommended using the Wabash Indians to rout the Rebels and coordinate a constant succession of war parties to interdict the lower Ohio. Detroit was to receive priority for provisions and reinforcements. Haldimand emphasized, "there is no other important service which [the Indians] can render to the Government [in the Western Theater]." ¹²²

Hamilton detailed his plans the following week. In his initial phase he would reverse Indian neutrality in the Illinois and set conditions for a spring offensive against the Rebels. He sent a courier south to the Mississippi hoping the British Indian Superintendent there could garner Cherokee and Choctaw support. If the spring offensive succeeded, Hamilton contemplated fortifying the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi, seizing the falls of the Ohio, and disrupting Spanish operations by securing the forks of the Theakiki and Missouri Rivers. ¹²³

He envisioned three lines of operation. First, his Indian agents would disperse with supplies to the major Ohio tribes as well as the Wabash and Western Indians. These parties were to interdict Rebel movement along the Ohio throughout the winter. Second, he would establish a forward depot at the Miami portage to receive reinforcements from Niagara and facilitate supply distribution. Third, he planned to assemble a combined force of Indians, British regulars, and Detroit Militia to descend the Wabash and attack the Rebels. This would be his main effort. The combination of presents, influence from the Great Lakes chiefs, and military strength would

¹²² Haldimand to Hamilton, Quebec, August 6, 1778; Hamilton to Haldimand with Enclosure, Detroit, 16 September, 1778, in Seineke, ed., 267-268, 287.

¹²³ Contact with Mr. Stuart in Tennessee was Haldimand's guidance. Hamilton believed coordination improbable. Hamilton to Haldimand, Detroit, September 22, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 308-310.

encourage the Illinois tribes to return to the Crown. Once he recovered the tribes at Ouiatenon, he would establish a forward base before the onset of winter and await reinforcements to dislodge the Rebels in the spring.¹²⁴

The expedition departed October 7 upon pirogues. At just under two hundred soldiers it consisted of a detachment of British Regulars, a section of Royal Artillery, a large company of Volunteer Militia, and about seventy Indians. Progress for the six hundred mile journey was slow but deliberate. Hamilton stopped at Indian villages to reassure the King's commitment to the tribes, take part in ceremonies and persuade the chiefs to join his endeavor. Bad weather, a difficult portage, and boat maintenance prolonged the journey into December.¹²⁵

Tribal allies swelled the ranks. Nearly four hundred warriors followed "the Hair-Buyer" by the time he arrived at Ouiatenon. He reestablished authority there and proceeded onward to Vincennes. Hamilton's scouts blocked all routes, captured Helm's scouts, and prevented any alarm from reaching the settlements. On December 17, he sent a communiqué to the town to surrender. Captain Helm attempted to raise the defense, but the Vincennes garrison refused to muster. Hamilton entered Fort Sackville unopposed. The French inhabitants, to include nearly all the militia, switched allegiance again.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Hamilton delegated civil authority of Detroit to the British garrison commander in order directly command the expedition. *Ibid*, 308-311.

¹²⁵ Pirogues are flat bottom riverboats. Hamilton to Haldimand, Ouiatenon, December 4, 1778, *ibid*, 331.

¹²⁶ Of 216 available militia, only Helm, Bosseron, and 21 others mustered to defend Fort Sackville. Outnumbered over 20 to 1, Helm surrendered. Hamilton to Haldimand, Vincennes, December 18-30, 1778, *ibid*, 335-339.

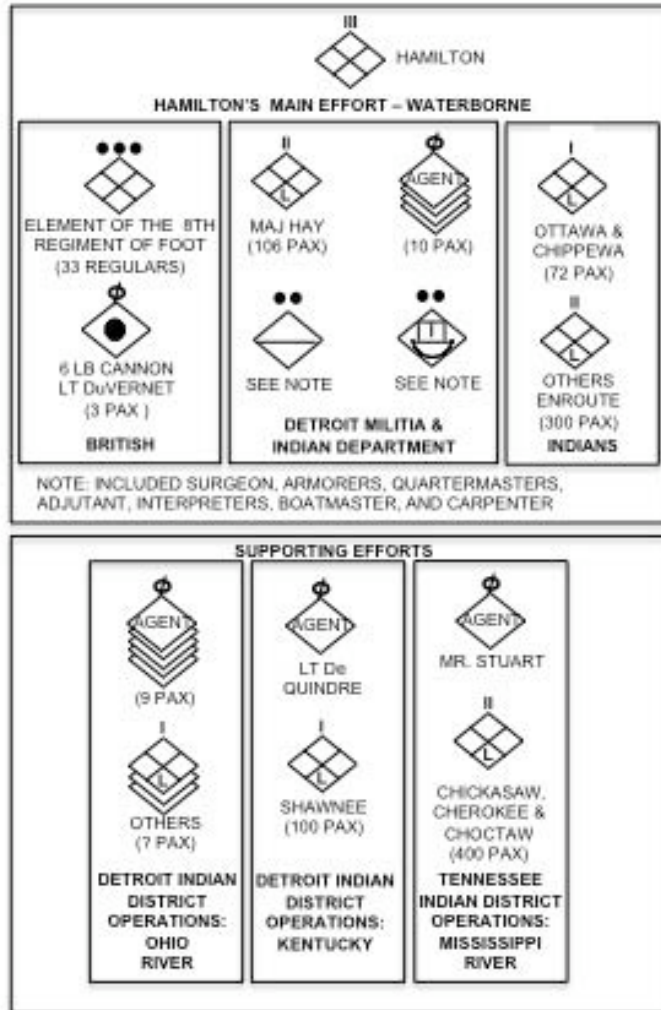


Figure 8: Hamilton's Task Organization, October 1778 – January 1779¹²⁷

Hamilton expanded his reconnaissance. Scouting parties accurately reported Rebel disposition, inferior strength, and observed no outward discipline. Hamilton learned Clark commanded the Rebels and sent a special mission to capture Clark, but it returned empty-handed. He mentions no additional intelligence on the leader. They confirmed the Rebels received no

¹²⁷ Hamilton to Haldimand with Two Enclosures, Detroit, 5 September, 1778, Hamilton to Haldimand, Detroit, 5 October, 1778, Hamilton's Final Letter from Detroit to Haldimand Before Starting for Vincennes, Detroit, 7 October, 1778 and Hamilton to Haldimand, Vincennes, 18 December, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 284-285, 313-317, 317-318, 335-336.

boats from New Orleans, and no Continental army existed at the falls of the Ohio. Most promising of all, four hundred additional Indians assembled in Tennessee along the Cherokee River “with design to intercept rebel boats [along] the Ohio,” and join Hamilton in the Spring.¹²⁸

Hamilton exploited no further as rains swelled the rivers and inundated the terrain. Routes appeared impassible and Hamilton feared exhausting supplies before reaching Kaskaskia. Keeping to his plan, he decided to winter at Fort Sackville and await reinforcement. He dismissed most of his Detroit Militia and Indians until spring “to conserve supplies.”¹²⁹

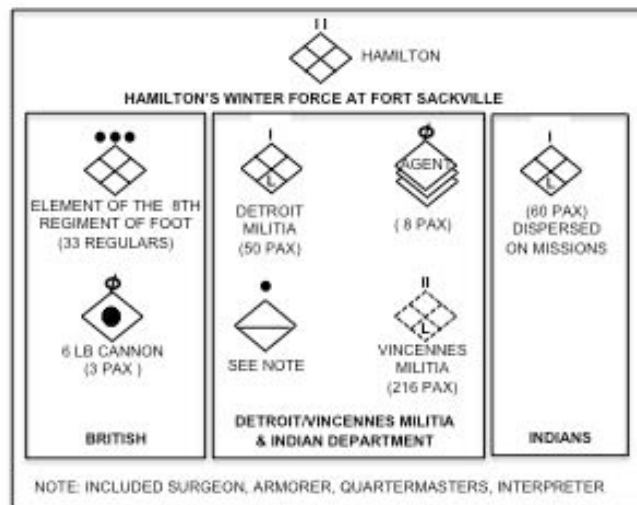


Figure 9: Hamilton’s Task Organization, January – February, 1779¹³⁰

The first phase was complete. Hamilton began fortifying the decrepit fort and relied on winter’s protection. If he met with overwhelming success in the spring, Hamilton contemplated “penetrat[ing] up the Ohio to Fort Pitt, sweeping Kentucky on his way.”¹³¹ The future held

¹²⁸ Ibid, 335-336.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Hamilton to Haldimand, Vincennes, 18 December, 1778 and Haldimand’s Notations Upon Receiving Hamilton’s Letter of 18 December, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 338-340.

¹³¹ Clark to Henry, Kaskaskia, 29 April, 1779, *ibid*, 373.

promise. So far the Lieutenant Governor's initial planning assumptions proved correct. "The Rebels are enterprising and brave but want of resources," he wrote Haldimand in September, "The French are fickle and have no man of Capacity to advise or lead them."¹³²

The British approach surprised Clark. He assumed Hamilton would defend Ohio from McIntosh. A captured spy revealed McIntosh's failure and Hamilton's arrival in the Illinois. Clark's forces were in poor position to respond. The Ohio River was now blocked and no word arrived from Virginia in nearly a year. The Americans were isolated. Fortunately, the Indians in treaty with Clark remained neutral. But he still expected to face upwards of eight hundred enemy. Clark began consolidating a defense for Kaskaskia. Then communications with Vincennes ceased and Clark suspected the worst.¹³³

¹³² Hamilton to Haldimand, Detroit, September 22, 1778, *ibid*, 308-310.

¹³³ Clark to Mason, Part Four.

Spoiling Attack, Security, Transfer to Civil Authority: February – June 1779

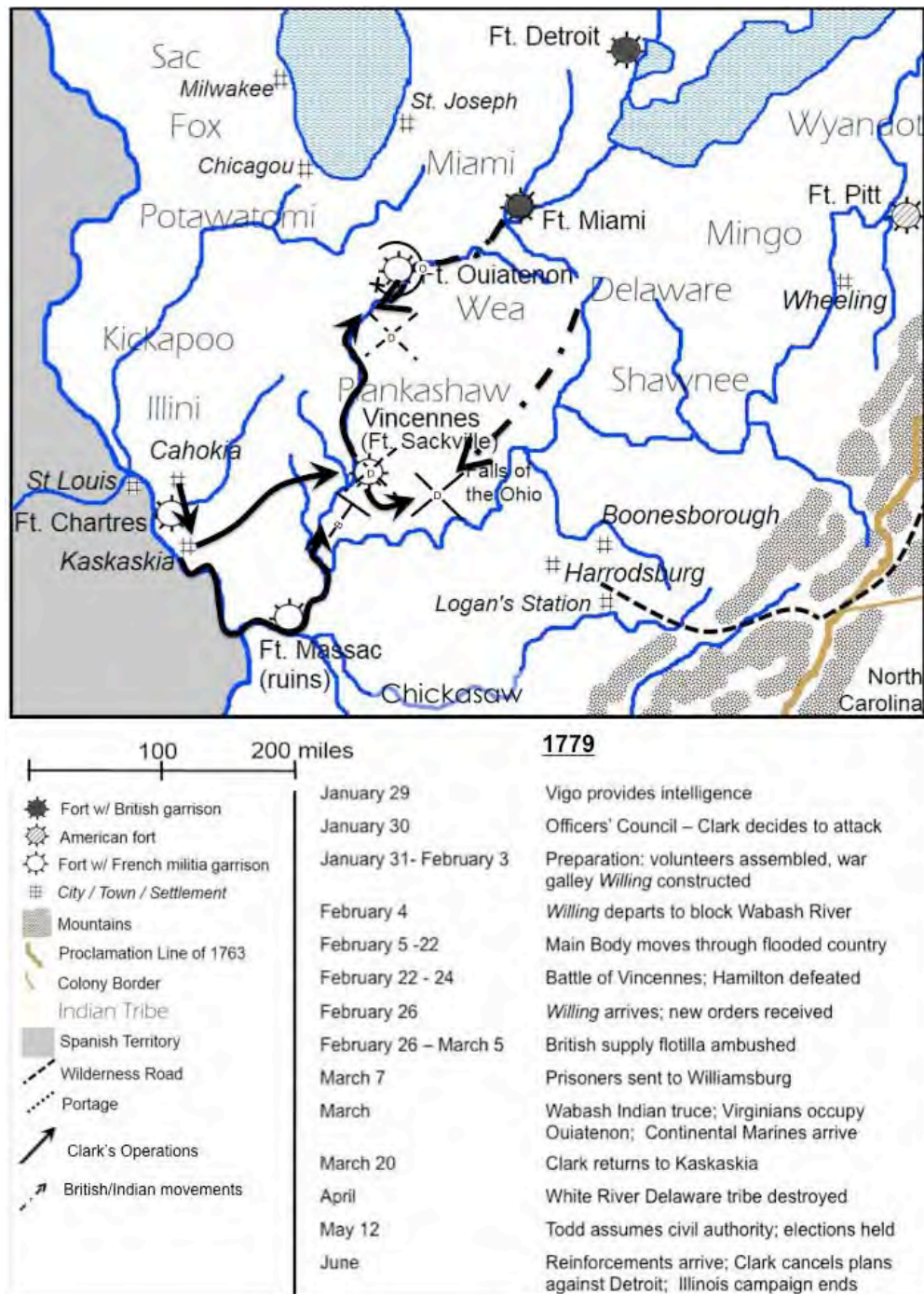


Figure 10: Map of Clark's Operations, January – June, 1779¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Technical assistance by Andrew Bates.

Francis Vigo, a Spanish merchant and one of Clark's supporters, escaped Vincennes. He returned to Kaskaskia on January 29, 1779 and produced detailed intelligence on Hamilton's operations and weakened garrison. This luck provided a risky window for bold action. On January 30, "Clark called a council with his officers and it was concluded to go and attack Governor Hamilton."¹³⁵ On February 3 Clark penned his potentially final letter to Governor Henry to justify his decision and explain his concept:¹³⁶

I am resolved to take the advantage of [Hamilton's] present situation and risk the whole on a single battle and shall set out in a few days with all the force I can raise amounting only to one hundred and seventy. The stores and forts I leave to the care of a few militia and take only those with me that know will die by me. I have fitted out a small galley mounted with two four pounders and four large swivels and forty men to transport my artillery and clear the Ohio River...If I am defeated she drops down the Mississippi and joins Colonel Rogers [in New Orleans]. If I fall through in this expedition the whole country is lost and I believe Kentucky also. But great things have been done by a few men, perhaps we may be fortunate. I have this consolation I know that my party will never quit me and sensible that I shall be excused by you when you know my reasons. I know the case is desperate. If I was sure of reinforcement I should not attempt it.¹³⁷

The river contingent departed February 4 to block the Wabash river, prevent British retreat to the Mississippi, and resupply the main body. The main body set out overland the next day. It consisted of four volunteer infantry companies consisting solely of the most dependable and hardened soldiers. Over half were French militia volunteers.¹³⁸

Clark surmised "the enemy could not suppose that we should be so mad as to attempt to march eighty leagues through a drowned country in the depths of winter...we might surprise

¹³⁵ Joseph Bowman's Journal quoted in Bennet, ed, 8.

¹³⁶ James, George Rogers Clark Papers, ixxv.

¹³⁷ See Appendix D in this monograph. Clark to Henry, Kaskaskia, February 3, 1779 in *The Secret Orders & "...great things have been Done by a Few Men..." Letters of Patrick Henry and George Rogers Clark Issued in Facsimile* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974), 8-9.

¹³⁸ James, The George Rogers Clark Papers, ixxvi.

them.”¹³⁹ In a daring feat, the main body marched one hundred eighty miles over the next sixteen days through the flooded, frozen terrain; wading shoulder deep across the icy rivers and fighting off starvation. The determination and leadership of Clark and his subordinates carried them through. On February 22, 1779 they reached Vincennes without raising the alarm.¹⁴⁰

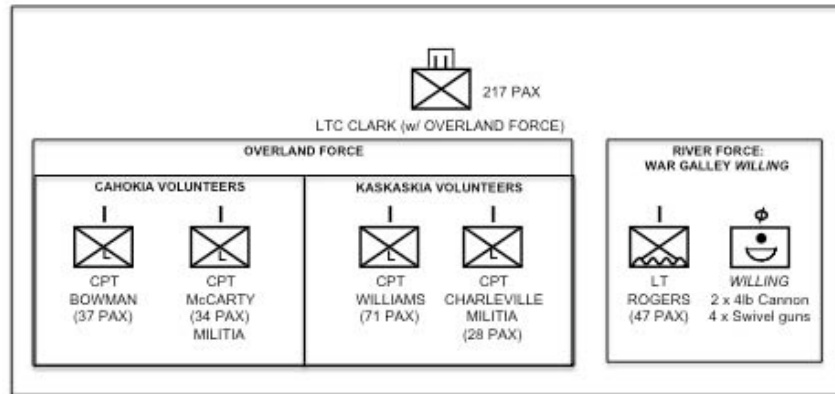


Figure 11: Clark’s Task Organization, 4 – 25 February, 1779¹⁴¹

The Battle of Vincennes commenced that night. Under cover of darkness, Clark sent one element to invest the garrison at Fort Sackville while the remainder seized the town. Knowing their lukewarm loyalties, Clark’s announcements deterred the inhabitants from taking up arms for Hamilton. The Rebels besieged the fort for two days. Their marksmanship effectively suppressed the British. The Americans sustained only light casualties.¹⁴²

Hamilton’s casualties mounted. The French abandoned him and Tobacco’s Piakanshaws declared to join the Big Knives. Circumstances seemed insufficient to withstand an assault.

¹³⁹ George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Memoir*, 519.

¹⁴⁰ James, *The George Rogers Clark Papers*, ixvii-ixxxi; Kenneth C. Carstens, George Rogers Clark in *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, Kleber, ed. 195.

¹⁴¹ Clark to Henry, Kaskaskia, February 3, 1779; Clark to Mason, Part 5 and 6; Herberling Harding, 17-20.

¹⁴² Clark’s Account of the Capture of Vincennes and the Articles of Capitulation of Fort Sackville from Clark’s Vincennes Journal, Vincennes, 23-27 February, 1779 in Seineke, ed., 350-354.

Clark relayed only unconditional surrender could save them. The afternoon of 24 February, the American's ambushed an Indian party returning from the Falls of the Ohio. Clark demonstrated his resolve by executing four prisoners caught with scalps in front of the fort. Hamilton perceived no advantage to holding out. He surrendered the next morning.¹⁴³

That the well equipped, fortified, and trained British gave up so readily surprised Clark. He pressed the advantage. On 26 February he sent the liberated Captain Helm with fifty men and gunboats to intercept a British supply column upriver. In another bloodless night attack, Helm overwhelmed the convoy and returned with forty prisoners and seven boats filled with provisions.

The *Willing* also arrived with an express messenger from Williamsburg. Clark received a change of mission. Virginia formed Illinois County, making Clark Commander and Chief of the Department of the Illinois. They authorized another battalion under and appointed John Todd as civil authority. Henry ordered, "with your whole force you are to protect the Inhabitants of the Country, and as occasions may serve, annoy the enemy."¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, he charged Clark to "conciliate the affections of the French and Indians" in the manner already underway. Clark was to "chastise" recalcitrant tribes and array his forces "to prevent the Indians from warring on [the north] side of Ohio." in the manner already underway.¹⁴⁵

Clark and his officers contemplated continuing to Detroit, but opted to wait until June when he expected seven hundred reinforcements. They spent the remainder of March recovering at Vincennes and setting conditions for the summer. James Willing attached a company of marines from New Orleans to garrison Kaskaskia.¹⁴⁶ An escort took Hamilton and his officers to Williamsburg. The French prisoners were paroled to Detroit, where many served as informants

¹⁴³ G. R. Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 523; Hamilton's Report in Quaipe, ed., 192, 194, 196-198.

¹⁴⁴ Patrick Henry's Instructions to George Rogers Clark, Williamsburg, December 12, 1778, in Salem, New Hampshire Exchange Club's virtual Freedom Shrine American Document Collection, <http://www.freedomshrine.com/historic-documents/patrick-henry.php> (accessed 13 March, 2011).

¹⁴⁵ Todd's official title was County Lieutenant. Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ G. R. Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 544-546.

and fomented support for the Americans. The Wabash chiefs proclaimed friendship and would allow forward passage to Detroit. As insurance, Clark positioned a Virginian company near Ft. Ouiatenon. Clark and the majority of his forces returned to Kaskaskia on March 20th.¹⁴⁷

Captain Helm continued operations to secure rear areas. A marauding Delaware tribe threatened settlers between the falls of the Ohio and Vincennes. Clark decided to send a brutal message. He charged Captain Helm to destroy all Delaware camps and “show no mercy to the men.”¹⁴⁸ Helm’s violent pursuit relented only after the Piankashaws promised to police the remaining Delaware.¹⁴⁹

Clark transferred civil control May 12, 1779. John Todd, the appointed County Lieutenant, held elections for the county judges. “For the first time within the territory of Illinois, the voters exercised their rights as citizens of a republic.”¹⁵⁰ The Illinois once again under his control, Clark felt assured he could take Detroit. Hamilton’s defeat significantly disrupted British western operations. They halted offensive operations and theater forces were redirected to defend Detroit’s small garrison. This delivered Kentucky from another year of coordinated attacks. Unfortunately, when June arrived the anticipated reinforcement from Virginia and Kentucky amounted to less than two hundred men. Clark assessed Detroit’s fortifications as too strong for his numbers and he abandoned the attempt.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 548.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 551; Thom asserts, “those orders inspired the troops to destroy en tire friendly Delaware community and take its whole population to Vincennes, where all men were publically tomahawked. The women and children were not massacred but sold into slavery.” Thom, George Rogers Clark and the American Indian in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 55.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 548-550.

¹⁵⁰ Todd established six judgeships between Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, and St. Phillippe and opened the election to the assembled French inhabitants. James, *Cahokia Records*, p. lix in *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 160-161.

¹⁵¹ Instead of supporting Clark, Colonel John Bowman diverted 296 Kentucky militiamen to a retaliatory raid against the Shawnee at Chillicothe on 1 June, 1779 suffering “substantial casualties” (West, 177). De Peyster to Haldimand, Michilimakinac, March 29, May 2, and June 1, 1779 and Haldimand to De Peyster, Quebec, May 20th, 1779 in Seineke, ed., 366-367, 376-377, 382- 384, 380; Brian Leigh Dunnigan,

Stability, Defense and Strategic Culmination: 1779 – 1783

June 1779 generally marks the end of Clark's Illinois Campaign. Prospects against Detroit declined, but much remained to be done for his new Department. Clark transferred command of the Illinois battalion to Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery in August. He created a recruiting command and an Indian superintendence. The Ohio remained contested so Clark established Fort Jefferson at its mouth and built a river navy to patrol vital water routes. To better command both Kentucky and Illinois, Clark relocated himself to the falls of the Ohio. Eventually he concentrated much of the regiment there to provide a mobile defense for the territory.¹⁵²

In 1780, Indian forays from Ohio began to pressure Kentucky's settlements again and the reorganized British launched a second offensive. Attacking along multiple avenues they sought to control the Mississippi and reduce the stronghold at the falls of the Ohio. The offensive enjoyed some tactical success, but failed in all its objectives. Clark moved along his interior lines to repel the invasion. First, he helped Spanish, French, and American defenders rebuff the northern thrust at St. Louis and Cahokia. Second, he led a relief force to lift the siege of Fort Jefferson in the west. Then he returned to Kentucky, enacted mandatory conscription, and raised over 1,000 men to pursue a combined British-Shawnee raiding force across the Ohio. The campaign against the Shawnee resulted in Clark's largest battlefield victory at Piqua.¹⁵³

Detroit: Clark's Obsession in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies* 102; Martin West, Clark's 1780 Shawnee Expedition in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 177; Clark, *Clark's Memoirs*, 552; James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 176.

¹⁵² G.R. Clark's Orders to His Officers, Headquarters, Fort Patrick Henry, Vincennes, August 5, 1779 in Seineke, ed., 392-393; On October 4, 1779, Indians under Simon Girty ambushed Colonel David Roger's supply boats and his escort provided by Clark near present day Cincinnati. The boats contained ammunition and blankets for Ft. Pitt. Rogers was killed and only 13 of the 70 soldiers escaped. "In addition to the booty which the victors procured, important messages from Clark and John Todd were captured which revealed conditions in the West" (James, 183). Clark, *Clark's Memoirs*, 552-554; James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 162, 183, 285.

¹⁵³ James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 198-200, 202-213; Martin West, Clark's 1780 Shawnee Expedition in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 178-193.

Regardless of his ability to retain the region, the theater became unsustainable. Diplomatic relations with Spain became strained over Mississippi navigation rights. Trade halted as Virginia specie became worthless and credit exhausted. Liberty's promise eluded the Illinois as governance efforts failed to meet expectations. Virginia law often slighted French custom. The courts became less efficient. The economic collapse in conjunction with cultural differences exacerbated enmity between the settlements and their occupiers.

Antagonisms between these two types of people could scarcely have been averted, for both the troops and the French inhabitants were suffering from a lack of necessary food and clothing . . . Moreover, the French and the backwoodsmen differed in language, in manners, and in religion, and these fundamental differences would have produced clashes even in a better-organized society.¹⁵⁴

Todd reverted to martial law in despair and retired to Kentucky to nominally perform his duties. Soldiers confiscated supplies from inhabitants as corruption prevailed in the French courts. The deteriorating situation plus the British invasion of the southern states prompted then Governor Thomas Jefferson to reprioritize his strategy.¹⁵⁵

In 1781 the Virginia Assembly transferred its lands northwest of the Ohio River to the central government. This was a political concession to ratify the Articles of Confederation. Jefferson promoted Clark to brigadier general and approved another attempt for Detroit. But Clark aborted it as support for the Department of the Illinois ceased. General Clark withdrew "to areas where they could continue to procure supplies using Virginia paper."¹⁵⁶ Fort Jefferson was abandoned. Operations focused solely on Kentucky's protection.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 164.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 227, 160-168, 175-176, 229.

¹⁵⁶ Holm, *Supply Issues of the Illinois Regiment under George Rogers Clark in Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 172-173.

¹⁵⁷ Clark was in Richmond in December 1780 through January 1781 to coordinate the war in the West with Jefferson. While there, he was attached to Major General Steuben and led a force of 300 militia and 30 cavalry to repulse Benedict Arnold at Hood's Point. The Virginia Assembly relinquished its claims to the Northwest on January 2, 1781. Jefferson authorized 2000 men to reduce Detroit and acquire Lake Erie. The intent was to place the British on the defensive, and prevent an offensive against Kentucky that

Bankrupt Virginia dissolved Clark's military command on July 2, 1783; two months before the Treaty of Paris ceded the Northwest Territory to the United States. Governor Benjamin Harrison thanked Clark for "wrestling so great and valuable a territory out of the hands of the British enemy, repelling the attacks of their savage allies, and carrying on successful war in the heart of their country."¹⁵⁸ However, a 1788 U.S. Government commissioner argued, "that by leaving the territory...Clark relinquished the defense of it."¹⁵⁹

Clark's Illinois Campaign as Operational Art

Did George Rogers Clark practice the operational art in the Illinois Campaign? Did he "create a vision of unity of action on the battlefield that ultimately achieved a strategic objective?"¹⁶⁰ Considering the whole of Clark's actions through three key characteristics may illuminate the answer.

could jeopardize Virginia's force commitments in the southern states. Clark was promoted to Brigadier General of Militia on January 22, 1781. Disagreements with Ft. Pitt Commander, Colonel Brodhead, over Continental support as well as recruitment issues failed to provide enough forces for the Detroit expedition. Clark raised only 400 men. Additionally a combined British-Indian force massacred 100 Pennsylvania militia under Archibald Lochry as they attempted to join Clark. These setbacks, plus the deteriorating conditions in the Illinois made Clark abandon the expedition. Virginia Legislature, "For a cession of the lands on the north west side of Ohio to the United States," September 13, 1783 in *Resolutions and State Papers, from 1782 to 1784, Henning's Statutes at Large*, Vol. 11, William Waller Henning, ed. (Richmond: 1823), 567-570, trans. Freddie L. Spradlin <http://vagenweb.org/hening/vol11-31.htm> (accessed March 15, 2011); James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark*, 229-253; Holm, Clark's Ambush of Benedict Arnold at Hood's Point in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 211-212.

¹⁵⁸ Harrison quoted in James A. James, To What Extent was George Rogers Clark in Military Control of the Northwest at the Close of the American Revolution? in *The Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1920), 315.

¹⁵⁹ Virginia's relinquishment of its claims to the Northwest Territory stipulated that the United States was to reimburse Virginia and Clark for expenses incurred for the Illinois expedition. The 1788 claims adjustment commission with Virginia was the government's obligation to the stipulation. John Pierce was the U.S. commissioner with a likely bias to limit expenses to the central government. John Pierce quoted in *ibid*; *Henning's Statutes at Large*, 567-568.

¹⁶⁰ Krause and Phillips, vi.

Operational Vision

James Fisher asserts Clark “lacked the vision to be a great leader, either militarily or politically,” but concedes, “while [Clark] may not have conquered much, he did *not* lose Kentucky.”¹⁶¹ But, Clark regarded conquest as peripheral to securing Virginia via retaining Kentucky and access to the Mississippi. He exhibited sophisticated understanding and determined intermediate actions to bridge strategy to tactics. His actions in 1777 guided political leaders. He articulated consequences of inaction and proposed a positive aim for reversal.¹⁶²

The strategic end was always “securing the commonwealth” and its frontiers.¹⁶³ The strategic way was attack. Using Clark’s concept, Governor Henry provided the means for Clark to occupy the Illinois posts and control the Ohio for as long as it served state interests. Accomplishing those strategic aims was up to the young lieutenant colonel.¹⁶⁴

Clark was no scholar, but possessed military genius. If, as Napoleon later observed, “adversity is the midwife of genius,” Kentucky’s near annihilation, constant personnel shortages, and Hamilton’s surprise offensive provided Clark impetus for bold solutions.¹⁶⁵ He repeatedly demonstrated Clausewitz’ “indispensible” qualities of genius: “*coup d’oeil*,” “*determination*,” and “*presence of mind*” to reflect upon and quickly overcome the unexpected.¹⁶⁶ He possessed

¹⁶¹ James Fisher, Clark as Manager of the Kentucky Frontier in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 226.

¹⁶² See Appendix B in this monograph. Clark to [Patrick Henry?] 1777 in the *Clark Papers*, 30-32.

¹⁶³ See Appendix C in this monograph. “An act for better securing the commonwealth, and for the farther protection and defence thereof” in Chapter VII of *Hening’s Virginia Statutes at Large*, Vol. IX, 374-375.

¹⁶⁴ See Appendix C and D in this monograph. Two Letters of Patrick Henry Authorizing Clark Expedition, Williamsburg, January 2, 1778 in Seineke, ed., 215.

¹⁶⁵ Napoleon Bonaparte quoted in “Leadership Quotes-Part One,” of “Winston-Churchill-Leadership”, Ian Chamberlain, 2007, <http://www.winston-churchill-leadership.com/leadership-quote-part1.html> (accessed 14 March, 2011).

¹⁶⁶ “If the mind is to emerge unscathed from this relentless struggle with the unforeseen, two qualities are indispensable: first an intellect that even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth; and second the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead. The

courage, self-control, and strength of will. This allowed him to confront danger, interact with diverse cultures and personalities, bluff, and recover from miscalculation. Finally, his expertise as a land surveyor, frontier guide, and warrior brought forward the imagination necessary to visualize “the relationship between warfare and terrain” particular to his conditions.¹⁶⁷

The sparsely populated wilderness made the Western Theater an economy of force for both Britain and America. The frontier war is often characterized by its eighteenth century parlance, *petite guerre* (small war) because it favored small, dispersed formations, sustained by foraging and capable of roving undetected over long distance. Whether American or British, formations consisted of quasi-military combatants led by a core of skilled professionals or veterans. Often, the primary belligerents sought But the conduct of *petite guerre*, and its later equivalent, guerrilla warfare, assumes an asymmetrical conflict pitting irregular partisans against a conventional army. The opponents in the Illinois Campaign maintained generally symmetrical forces. For that reason, “open warfare” better describes the nature of conflict.¹⁶⁸

Britain eschewed committing its army, so its center of gravity relied on using tribes as proxies. Rebel destruction of opposing Indian tribes was unreal due to their superior numbers and geographic dispersion; especially the Shawnee in Ohio. As long as Hamilton could foment aggression, mobilize war parties, and orchestrate concerted attacks against Kentucky, Britain retained freedom of action. But this required posts from where Hamilton’s Indian agents could unite tribal interests and supply them with arms. The absence of British regulars in the lower

first of these qualities is described by the French term *coup d’oeil*; the second is *determination*. . . . *presence of mind* . . . is nothing but an increased capacity of dealing with the unexpected. Clausewitz, 102-103.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 108-109; Harrison, George Rogers Clark: The Early Years in *Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 8.

¹⁶⁸ “When a theater is large or force densities low, open warfare, the old form of free-moving corps and armies, may still be practiced. When both sides possess freedom of action, the attacker may seek battle in vain . . . or may decline battle repeatedly.” Holder, 26; John M. Hall, “Washington’s Irregulars: George Washington and Petite Guerre” (paper presented by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies at Duke University, Chapel Hill, NC, November 19, 2010), 2-5.

Illinois settlements, the inhabitants' indifference to British interests, and reported sympathies for the Americans created a critical vulnerability for exploitation. Based on initial reconnaissance, Clark believed the highest probability for defeating British-Indian alliances was through an indirect operational approach. His selected objectives aligned with indirect approaches later described by Clausewitz. First, producing advantage through the "seizure of a lightly held or undefended province."¹⁶⁹ Second, creating "direct political repercussions" by disrupting opposing alliances and gaining new allies.¹⁷⁰

Clark's vision relied on "operational shock" to fragment Hamilton's system.¹⁷¹

The basic method for exploiting the system's structural and substantive weaknesses is by means of division and fragmentation...its aim is to break the continuity of the operational front and separate the formations from each other...the dividing strike segregates the rear echelons and operational reserves from those in the front and detaches the operational command from the entire command and control structure.¹⁷²

The plan used multiple defeat and stability mechanisms to avoid enemy strengths. Seizing the Illinois posts disintegrated Hamilton's command and control over the French inhabitants. Clark's information engagement and personal conduct influenced French, Indian, and Spanish attitudes, increasing his support base while diminishing Hamilton's. The American presence imposed civil order on the French and isolated many tribes, convincing them to change allegiance. Tribes not peacefully convinced were compelled into treaties. The synergetic effect was an operational turning movement. Clark dislocated Hamilton from his center of gravity and prompted General

¹⁶⁹ Clausewitz, 92

¹⁷⁰ "The concept of the centre of gravity comprises three elements: 1) the identification of exact points of strength and weakness in the opposing system; 2) the deliberate creation of operational vulnerabilities in it; and 3) the exploitation of such vulnerabilities through contemplated manoeuvring strikes," Naveh 18-19; The Shawnee population in 1777 "was estimated to be several thousand, of whom 300 to 500 were counted as potential combatants . . . even when outnumbered, the Shawnees remained formidable and frustrating antagonists. In victory they inflicted superior losses on the enemy, and in rare defeat, their opposition usually suffered greater casualties while most tribesmen escaped to fight again," West, 177; Clausewitz describes his indirect approaches as "short cuts on the road to peace" that "can form a much shorter route to the goal than the destruction of the opposing armies," Clausewitz 92-93.

¹⁷¹ Naveh, 16.

¹⁷² Ibid, 17.

Haldimand to divert the British from the American frontier. This induced Hamilton to leave the safety of Detroit, piecemeal his scarce regular forces, and subject them to defeat upon repositioning to Vincennes.¹⁷³

The Hallmark of Operational Art

Considering Vincennes alone, the Illinois campaign appears deceptively as a “strategy of a single point.”¹⁷⁴ It was the only major combat action and casualties were few. Clark’s resolve to “risk the whole on a single battle” resonates as a decisive battle of annihilation.¹⁷⁵ But that disregards the successive actions, lethal and non lethal, spaced in time and purpose that brought about the critical juncture. Strategic theorist Aleksandr Svechin described the phenomena:

Combat actions are not self-sufficient but rather are the basic materials from which operations are composed... Normally, the path to final aims is broken up into a series of operations, subdivided in time, by more or less sizeable pauses, different territorial sectors of a theater of war and differing sharply as a consequence of different intermediate aims.¹⁷⁶

The yearlong campaign was executed as a series of actions to disintegrate the enemy system threatening Kentucky. February, 1779 was just the operation to annihilate Hamilton’s reserve.

The very premise of taking the war from the Kentucky-Ohio front to the enemy sources of command and supply indicate Clark understood operational depth. He designed his campaign to convey the strategic and operational reach of Virginia. The over 1000 miles movement from Ft. Pitt to his staging base at the falls of the Ohio to his lodgment in Kaskaskia demonstrates

¹⁷³ FM 3-0, 6-9 thru 6-11.

¹⁷⁴ Isseron, 10.

¹⁷⁵ See Appendix D in this monograph. Clark to Henry, Kaskaskia, February 3, 1779.

¹⁷⁶ Svechin quoted in Naveh, 182.

operational maneuver from a strategic distance. He then reinforced his operational durability by establishing additional basing through St. Louis and New Orleans.¹⁷⁷

Within the Illinois Clark sequenced maneuver and distributed combat power against various decisive points. His physical lines of operations used both river and overland routes to seize key terrain at the falls of the Ohio, Kaskaskia, Cahokia, Vincennes, and Ouiatenon. Clark implemented multiple lines of effort against other logical decisive points. Examples include: civil control over the settlements, building security capacity through Spanish, French, and Indian coalition partnerships, and local counter intelligence and reconciliation activities.¹⁷⁸

Throughout the campaign Clark weighted offense, defense, and stability efforts using a combination of lethal and nonlethal methods. His Battalion combined those methods with tactics and techniques that struck with maximum effect. Naveh says, “the striking element represents the maneuvering trend at its best, not just by means of its high degree of mobility, but mainly in the fact that its mission is to generate shock, which guarantees the attainment of the operational aim.”¹⁷⁹ Clark’s apparatus of scouts and informants collected sufficient intelligence for action. Then, Clark, Bowman, and Helm’s “flying columns” of rangers combined waterborne, mounted, and dismounted movement to infiltrate the wilderness. Highly resilient, these men remained undeterred by their environment and sometimes risked starvation for their objectives. Under limited visibility, they struck with surprise and precision to gain positional advantage.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ “Operational reach is the distance and duration across which a unit can successfully employ military capabilities.” It balances endurance, momentum, and protection while creating conditions to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. Actions that can extend operational reach: Forward positioning of forces, reserves, bases, and support capabilities along lines of operations. Employing weapons systems with extended ranges, phasing an operation to focus limited resources, leveraging supply discipline, contracting, and host nation support, maximizing distribution network efficiency, and leveraging joint capabilities. FM 3-0, 6-74, 8-1 thru 8-7

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 6-11 thru 6-14.

¹⁷⁹ Naveh, 23.

¹⁸⁰ “Flying columns” are highly mobile independent detachments with light logistical structure. It is a term coined by Thomas-Robert Bugeaud regarding an 1840 French military solution against mobile

They rapidly applied maneuver, marksmanship, deception, information, and, when necessary, brutality. The tempo of physical and psychological effects rendered opponents impotent, mitigated bloodshed, and achieved decisive tactical results. In the yearlong campaign, Clark's forces suffered approximately seven deaths and recovered all prisoners. Enemy casualties were eleven killed and over 120 captured. This excludes those Delaware eradicated under Clark's orders, and the French and Indians assimilated into Clark's military system.¹⁸¹

Operational Flexibility

Clark's victory "was not by any means a miracle."¹⁸² Romanticizing Clark diminishes how personalities on the opposing sides contributed to the outcome. Clark and his men did not overcome incredible odds as much as create favorable odds. Both Clark and Hamilton struggled to achieve their aims despite limited resources. Clark surmounted this by creating mutual understanding through constant interaction with his superiors, subordinates, supporters and even his adversaries. The campaign succeeded because Clark understood his environment better than his opponents; not merely the terrain and enemy, but himself and those he led. The result was an adaptive organization that achieved superior tempo, simultaneity and depth, while retaining operational reach sufficient to avoid culmination.¹⁸³

Arab insurgents in North Africa. Clark cannot claim to have formally instituted the doctrine like the French, his techniques were certainly similar in practice over 60 years earlier. Schneider, 92.

¹⁸¹ This is based on a review of Clark's pay rolls between January 1778 and June 1779. Includes American military noncombat deaths, such as Major Joseph Bowman who was seriously injured in a gunpowder accident after the Fall of Fort Sackville and died in August, 1779. Herberling Harding, Chapters 1 and 2, 1-41.

¹⁸² John D. Barnhart quoted in Fisher, *A Forgotten Hero Remembered, Revered and Revised*, 278.

¹⁸³ "The greatest leader in the world could never win a campaign unless he understood the men he had to lead." General Omar Bradley quoted in "Leadership Quotes-Part One," of "Winston-Churchill-Leadership," Ian Chamberlain, 2007, <http://www.winston-churchill-leadership.com/leadership-quote-part1.html> (accessed 14 March, 2011); "Tempo is the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy." "Simultaneous combinations of offensive, defensive, and stability tasks overwhelm enemy forces." FM 3-0, 6-15 thru 6-17: Fisher, *A Forgotten Hero Remembered, Revered and Revised*, 282-284.

The critical component was individual initiative. It was made possible by cohesion and mutual trust fostered by shared hardship and a culture of “democratic” military leadership.¹⁸⁴ Clark shared privation, danger, led by example and took council from others. Such leadership “enhanced and augmented the wills of those who follow[ed] him, greatly extending the range of possibilities open to such a force.”¹⁸⁵ His subordinate commanders were frontier veterans and like-minded friends. They labored for the fledgling Kentucky settlements and were survivors of 1777’s desperate defense. They were similarly motivated by an existential threat, republican ideals, and the prospect of fortune. Interpersonal recruiting let leaders appeal to individual aspirations while communal preparation with families at Corn Island strengthened teamwork.¹⁸⁶

Clark continued the formula to regenerate his combat power. He did not segregate himself from the French and formed a close friendship with his Spanish counterpart, Lieutenant Governor Fernando de Leyba. He dined with his hosts, attended celebrations, and respected their Catholicism. The inhabitants felt Clark a “proper commandant.”¹⁸⁷ Kaskaskia and Cahokia militias drilled alongside the Virginians. But this was less practical at distant Vincennes. This potentially contributed to the latter’s surrender to Hamilton, while the former provided nearly half the volunteers for the counterattack.¹⁸⁸

This cohesion allowed Clark to capitalize on mission orders and decentralized execution. Clark’s directives to his subordinates were descriptive concepts with concise intent, but always deferred to their judgment. He entrusted vast sectors to his company commanders’ discretion and important tasks to local religious and community leaders like Father Gibault, Pierre Cerre, and

¹⁸⁴ Page Smith, *Reflections on the Nature of Leadership: The Fourth George Rogers Clark Lecture*, 25 February 1979 (Washington, D.C.: The Society of the Cincinnati, 1982), 9-10.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

¹⁸⁶ George Rogers Clark, *Clark’s Memoir*, 466, 469-473.

¹⁸⁷ Kimball Brown, 40.

¹⁸⁸ Nancy Son Carstens, *The Making of a Myth: George Rogers Clark and Terese de Leyba in Clark, 1752-1818: Triumphs and Tragedies*, 61. Kimball Brown, 40.

Francis Vigo. He empowered them to pursue Virginia's interests and held them accountable. This confidence provided Clark freedom to synchronize military, diplomatic, information, and logistical activities according to Governor Henry's orders. It also created, what Page Smith called, a "reciprocal relationship."¹⁸⁹ Clark's confidence in his men was "repaid him with expenditures of energy that strengthened his [commitment] as a leader."¹⁹⁰

Lieutenant Governor Hamilton displayed inklings of the operational art. He possessed vision, but underestimated Clark's capability to unify the inhabitants and overcome the terrain. His plans attempted distributed operations but he could not control them for decisive results. This was exacerbated by a culture of centralized command and Hamilton's own inability to create unity of effort. Carleton failed to articulate clear command relationships. Hamilton's authoritarian personality and disdain of the French inhabitants, as well as Detroit's physical isolation compounded the problem. He began as an outsider among the people and his subordinates. His actions often alienated them further. The internal friction and situational uncertainty caused Hamilton to surrender the initiative while within reach of his operational aim.

Unlike Carleton, Governor Henry established clear supporting relationships with both Ft. Pitt and New Orleans and empowered Clark. Clark's collaboration with Henry in planning the campaign forged accountability between the political and military leadership. In likelihood, Clark's discussions with Henry and his privy council helped clarify the strategic aim and improve Clark's certainty in his judgment. He completed his orders to the letter upon seizing Kaskaskia. However, Clark used intuition and initiative to exploit success. Henry's 1778 instructions proved that intuition correct.

The updated mission and limited personnel made justifications for Detroit difficult. Clark subordinated his aspirations to the political purpose. By forgoing Detroit, the Big Knives

¹⁸⁹ Page Smith,10.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

prevented culmination and remained a specter. The British fixed disproportionate forces to regional defense and aborted many operations because of uncertainty over Clark's intentions. Hostilities continued, but never again threatened Kentucky's survival.¹⁹¹

Britain abandoned their Indian allies at the Treaty of Paris. Kentucky recovered. The Illinois settlements remained loyal to the United States. The new central government assumed responsibility for the Northwest, eradicating the Indian threat militarily and securing Detroit and the remaining British posts diplomatically in 1794.¹⁹²

Clark provided the desired end. The campaign secured the Illinois long enough for the political leadership to decide when its strategic value was exhausted. Continued claim to the Illinois inhibited progress toward national government and Virginia's reconstruction. With Virginia's frontier secure, the aim was achieved.

Conclusion

War is a special activity, different and separate from any other pursued by man. This would still be true no matter how wide its scope, and though every able-bodied man in the nation were under arms. An army's military qualities are based on the individual who is steeped in the spirit and essence of this activity; who trains the capacities it demands, rouses them, and makes them his own; who applies his intelligence to every detail; who gains ease and confidence through practice; and who completely immerses his personality in the appointed task.¹⁹³

– Carl von Clausewitz, regarding Military Virtues of the Army in *On War*

Clark's Illinois Campaign was a tipping point. It disrupted British efforts, providing Kentucky two years of respite and reinvigorated settlement. In 1777 there were under two

¹⁹¹ Dunnigan, 102.

¹⁹² Dwight L. Smith, 103.

¹⁹³ Clausewitz, 187.

hundred surviving settlers. In 1780 there were several thousand. Without this reversal, British-Indian penetration east of the Appalachians might have altered events leading to Yorktown.¹⁹⁴

Did this occur because a young battalion commander of frontier militia practiced operational art decades before its recognized appearance? The Illinois Campaign faded into America's backwoods as European wars dominated the development of operational theory in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Clausewitz's singular American reference discounts the Revolution's achievements as something less than the fruits of military virtue. Clark predates the "period of operational ignorance," but the lack of published operational theory in the eighteenth century does not preclude its practice during the Illinois Campaign.¹⁹⁵

Lieutenant Colonel Clark practiced operational art in an American way before its conventional origins. He showed a talent for understanding strategic context. He formulated an operational vision to favorably shape his situation. He used personal initiative to guide political leaders to action and then subordinated his plan to their objectives. He structured the theater appropriate to his capabilities and assumed risk to reverse misfortune and sustain success. Relative to his opponents, he used superior operational flexibility to continuously interact with his environment, gain understanding, and adapt accordingly. He used the hallmark of operational art to seize the initiative, gain relative advantage, and restrict enemy freedom of action.

Clark's operational challenges are recognizable in the twenty-first century. His soldiers fought in an undeveloped theater to prevent terror in the homeland. They operated among foreign

¹⁹⁴ The collapse of Kentucky between 1778 and 1779 would have opened the Wilderness Road and Holston River settlements to British-Indian attacks. This would have prevented the destruction of Cornwallis' flanking column at the battle Kings Mountain in October, 1780, split available forces for Nathanael Green, and allowed Cornwallis to continue his invasion of North Carolina with greater freedom of movement and combat power. Robert J. Holden, *Clark's Attack on Vincennes, February 5-25, 1779 in Clark 1752-1818: Triumph and Tragedies*, 98-99; Symonds, 89-90.

¹⁹⁵ "...the period of operational ignorance, starting with the Napoleonic wars and ending in the 1920s, [is] characterized by the complete failure of military thought to develop patterns of conduct capable of coping with the material challenges set by the systemic environment," Naveh, xvi. Clausewitz, 188; Baron de Jomini, *Summary of the Art of War or A New Analytical Compend of the Principal Combination of Strategy, of Grand Tactics and of Military Policy* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co, 1854), 1-21.

cultures, in rugged terrain, over extended distances. He attempted to build regional capacity in defense, security, civil authority and strategic partnership while engaging the enemy. Politicians expected Clark to control the populace, establish governance, and sustain a coalition of diverging interests amidst financial crisis, domestic discord, declining manpower, and a reconstituting enemy. Achieving overwhelming success, he sought to create lasting results before political will expired. The modern American Army foresees those conditions as the future of armed conflict. Its doctrine has yet to reconcile between winning in combat while winning “the fight to restore safety, order and governance.”¹⁹⁶

The Revolution along the frontier was an ethnic, economic and ideological struggle rooted in demographic change. It was an era of persistent conflict whose character reflects America’s anticipated threat:

Diverse actors, especially nonstate actors, frequently operating covertly or as proxies for states, not bound by internationally recognized norms of behavior and resistant to traditional means of deterrence, will be difficult to discern and will shift their alliances and approaches over time to avoid our strengths. Hybrid threats—diverse, dynamic combinations of conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal capabilities—will make pursuit of singular approaches difficult, necessitating innovative, hybrid solutions involving new combinations of all elements of national power.¹⁹⁷

In the Illinois, such threats were the norm. Clark leveraged conventional, irregular, joint and multinational capabilities with the elements of national power. He used them to create unity of action and pursue multiple approaches that ultimately achieved the strategic objective.

George Rogers Clark’s Illinois Campaign provides a narrative at the very roots of America’s military heritage. It demonstrates how a field grade commander employed operational

¹⁹⁶ Huba Wass de Cega, On Plotting the Course Ahead in *ARMY*, Volume 61, No. 2, February (Washington: Association of the United States Army, 2011), 20; The military problem for 2016-2028 includes, “How will Army forces engage in security force assistance and support state building efforts as well as persuade and influence relevant populations in pursuit of national policy goals? How can the Army ensure that future leaders and organizations have the ability to think in terms of friends, the enemy, and the people, and develop the ability to secure populations and resources while simultaneously attacking or defending to defeat enemy organizations?” *TRADOC Pam 525-3-0*, 16.

¹⁹⁷ George W. Casey, America’s Army in an Era of Persistent Conflict in *ARMY*, Vol. 58, No. 10, October (Washington: Association of the United States Army, 2008), 24.

art to frame his problem, apply conceptual principles, and derive detailed solutions unique to his circumstances and objectives. It illustrates that operational art is less about an era, formation, or technology and more about the scale, scope, and synchronization of action relative to the strategic aim. It is about achieving effectiveness in war.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Epstein, 8.

APPENDIX A: Timeline of Key Events

1776	George Rogers Clark is a captain of Virginia militia in Kentucky. He serves as a delegate to the Virginia Assembly. Kentucky County established December 31. Clark (age 24) promoted to major.
1777	
June	Hamilton begins sustained Indian attacks against Kentucky. Clark sends spies to the Illinois posts.
Summer	Kentucky's settlements are razed or besieged; population depleted to under 200. Clark conceives his campaign. Lord George Germain sacks General Carleton as Commander of Canada. Battle of Saratoga in New York.
Fall	Colonel Bowman provides temporary relief to Kentucky. Clark departs for Williamsburg to gain support for his expedition. Virginia Assembly authorizes offensive operations in defense of the western frontier.
December 10	Clark meets with Governor Henry to discuss his campaign plan.
1778	
January 2,	Patrick Henry issues Clark's secret orders. Clark promoted to lieutenant colonel (age 25) and authorized to recruit 350 soldiers.
January – March	Willing's raid disrupts British navy on the Mississippi.
January – May	Clark's recruiting activities and preparation at Redstone and Ft. Pitt.
Spring	Hamilton's attacks continue. Daniel Boone captured. Kentucky near collapse. British Lieutenant Governor Abbot, retires from Vincennes leaving no British authority.
May – June	Clark establishes base of operations at the falls of the Ohio (Louisville).
June 24	Illinois campaign begins. Clark's battalion descends the Ohio River.
July 4	Kaskaskia seized by Clark.
July 5-6	Prairie du Rocher, St. Philippe, Ft. Chartres, and Cahokia seized.
July 7-8	Relations with Spanish St. Louis established.
July 14 – August 1	Vincennes' surrenders to Gibault's delegation; Judgeships established.
August 5 - 7	Hamilton learns of Kaskaskia's surrender; sends Celeron to disrupt Rebels.
July 30	British General Haldimand assumes command in Quebec.
August 7	Piankashaws enter into treaty with Virginians.
August - September	Indian council at Cahokia; Helm raids Ft. Ouiatenon; Celeron flees.
September 15	Hamilton received orders to retake the Illinois.
September 22-27	Hamilton makes preparations for counter offensive; holds tribal councils, recruits militia, and sends advance party to establish depot and portage site.
October 7	Hamilton's main body departs Detroit.
October - November	Continental General McIntosh departs Ft. Pitt with 1300 men to attack Detroit. His forces culminate in Ohio without threatening Detroit.
November 28	Hamilton occupies Ft. Ouiatenon.
December 17	Vincennes surrenders to Hamilton.
1779	
January 14	Hamilton gives leave to Francis Vigo.
January 29-30	Vigo arrives at Kaskaskia; Clark's council resolves to attack Hamilton.
February 4	War galley <i>Willing</i> departs to block the southern Wabash River.
February 5 - 22	Clark's main body marches through the flooded country to Vincennes.

February 23-24	Battle of Vincennes; Hamilton surrenders.
February 26	<i>Willing</i> arrives with Williamsburg courier; change of mission. Clark is ordered to protect and help administer newly established Illinois Country.
February 26 - March 5	Captain Helm ambushes British resupply flotilla.
March 7	Hamilton and twenty-five prisoners sent back to Williamsburg.
March 15	Tribes of the upper Wabash offer truces with Clark and permit Virginian forces to occupy Ft. Ouiatenon and have free passage to Detroit.
March 20	Clark returns to Kaskaskia; receives an attachment of Continental Marines from Captain <i>Willing</i> .
April	Captain Helm leads operation to destroy the White River Delaware tribe whose warriors were marauding white traders between the falls of the Ohio and Vincennes.
May 12	Clark transfers civil authority to the appointed County Lieutenant, John Todd; first elections for judges held.
May 27 – June 1	Colonel Bowman diverts forces for use against Detroit and leads failed campaign against Shawnee in Ohio.
June	Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery arrives with reinforcements. Clark assesses his forces insufficient to take Detroit. The Illinois Campaign ends.
August 5	Reorganizes to create the Department of the Illinois. He transfers command of the Illinois battalion to Montgomery and moves his headquarters to the falls of the Ohio.
1779-1781	Clark builds defensive belt to protect Kentucky and the Ohio River; he conducts operations to defend Kentucky, Virginia and the Illinois.
January 2, 1781	Virginia transfers claims to the Northwest Territory to the central government in order to enable ratification of the Articles of Confederation; Virginia ceases to support Clark's operations north of the Ohio River.
January 22, 1781	Clark promoted to Brigadier General of Virginia militia.
Summer, 1781	Clark aborts second effort against Detroit due to command support problems, and the lack of men.
October 19, 1781	British defeated at Yorktown.
August 19, 1782	Kentucky militia defeated at Battle of Blue Licks.
July 2, 1783	Unable to support further operations, Virginia ends Clark's command.
September 3, 1783	Treaty of Paris signed, American Revolution ends.

Figure 12: Timeline of Key Events

APPENDIX B: Clark's Operational Concept

These two excerpts provide compelling examples of Clark using what is defined in U.S. Army Doctrine as The Army Design Methodology to frame the operational environment, the problem, and operational approaches. The first is a letter written from Clark to, most likely, Patrick Henry near the close of the desperate Kentucky defense of 1777. It is important as it details what Clark thought about his problem, and it demonstrates his ability to think critically in time, space, and situation to anticipate change and create opportunities. The letter demonstrates his creative foresight to design and integrate a major operation across the levels of war.¹⁹⁹

Clark to [Patrick Henry?] 1777
Sir-

According to promise I haste to give you a description of the town of Kuskuskies, and my plan for taking of it. It is situated 30 leagues above the mouth of the Ohio, on a river of its own name, five miles from is mouth and two miles east of the Mississippi. On the west side of the Mississippi 3 miles from Kuskuskies is the village of Mozier [*Misere = Ste. Genevieve*] belonging to the Spaniard. The town of Kuskuskies contains about one hundred families of French and English and carry on an extensive trade with the Indians; and they have considerable number of negroes that bear arms and are chiefly employed in managing their farms that lay around the town, and send a considerable quantity of flour and other commodities to New Orleans, [which they barter every year and get the return in goods up the Mississippi], The houses are framed and very good, with a small but elegant stone fort situated [but little distance from] the centre of the town. The Mississippi is undermining a part of Fort Chartress; the garrison was removed to this place, which greatly added to its wealth; but on the commencement of the present war, the troops [were] called off to re-inforce Detroit, which is about three hundred miles from it – leaving the fort and 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; and to supply Detroit with provisions, a considerable quantity of which goes by way of the Waubash R., and have but a short land carriage to the waters of ye [Miami]

In June last I sent two young men there; They [Rocheblave and the French] seemed to under no apprehension of danger from [Americans] The fort, which stands a small distance below the town is built of stockading about ten feet high, with block houses at each corner, with several pieces of cannon mounted – [10,000 lbs] powder, ball and all other necessary stores without [any] guard or a single soldier. Roseblock who acted as Governor, by large presents engaged the Wabash Indians to invade the frontiers of Kentucky; was daily treating with other [Indian] Nations, giving large present and offering them great rewards for scalps. The principal inhabitants are entirely against the

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Department of the Army, Chapter 3 in *FM 5-0 Operations*, (Washington, DC: GPO, March 2010), 3-7 – 3-13.

American cause, and look on us as notorious rebels that ought to be subdued at any rate; but I don't doubt but after being acquainted with the cause they would become good friends to it. The remote situation of this town on the back of several of the Western Nations; their being well supplied with goods on the Mississippi, enables them [to carry] to furnish the different nations [with goods], and by presents will keep up a strict friendship with the Indians; and undoubtedly will keep all the Nations that lay under the influence at war with us during the present contest, without they are induced to submission; [that being situated above the mouth of the Ohio] they will be able to interrupt any communication that we should want to hold up and down the Mississippi, with a strong guard; having plenty of swivels they might, and I don't doubt but would keep armed boats for the purpose of taking our property. On the contrary, if it was in our possession it would distress the garrison at Detroit for provisions, it would fling the command of the two great rivers into our hands, which would enable us to get supplies of goods from the Spaniards, and to carry on a trade with the Indians [*line obliterated*] them might perhaps with such small present keep them our friends.

I have always thought the town of Kuskuskies to be a place worthy of our attention, and have been at some pains to make myself acquainted with its force, situation and strength. I can't suppose that they could at any [time] raise more than six [or seven] hundred armed men, the chief of them [are French the British at Detroit being at so great a] distance, so that they [blank *in MS.*] more than [*blank in MS.*]

An expedition against [Kaskaskias would be advantageous] seeing one would be attended with so little expence. The men might be easily raised [*blank in MS.*] with little inconvenience Boats and canoues with about forty days provisions would [answer] them: they might in a few days run down the river with certainty [to the] Wabash, when they would only have about five to march to town with very little danger of being discovered until almost within sight, where they might go in the night; if they got wind [of us they might] make no resistance; if [they did] and were able to beat us in the field, they could by no means defend themselves for it they flew to the fort, they would loose possession of the town, where their provisions lay, and would sooner surrender than try to beat us out of it with the cannon from the post, as [they] would be sensible that should [we fire] it before we left it, which would reduce them to the certainty of leaving the country or starving with their families, as they could get nothing to eat.

Was I to undertake an expedition of this sort, and had authority from the Government to raise my own men, and fit myself out without [much delay] I should make no doubt of being in [full possession of the country] by April next.

I am sensible that the case stands thus – that [we must] either take the town of Kuskuskies, or in less than a twelve month send an army against the Indians on the Wabash, which will cost ten times as much, and not be of half the service.²⁰⁰

Clark's Memoir also provides insight into how Clark thought about his problem:

The whole of my time when not employed in reflecting on things in general, particularly Kentucky, how it accorded with the interest of the United States, whether it was to their interest to support her, etc. This led me to a long train of thinking, the result

²⁰⁰ Clark to [Patrick Henry?] 1777 in the *Clark Papers*, ed. James A. James, 30-32.

of which was to lay aside every private view, engage seriously in the war and have the interest and welfare of the public my only view until the fate of the fall of the continent should be known. Divesting myself of the prejudice and partiality in favor of any particular part of the community, but so pursue what I conceived to be the interest of the whole. This path influenced my conduct through the course of the war and enabled me to better judge of the importance of Kentucky to the Union, situated, as it was, in the center, almost of the Indians, who had already generally engaged in the Kentucky war, as an impediment in their way to the more interior frontier; that as soon as they should accomplish the destruction of it they would bodily let loose on the frontier; that, instead of the states receiving supplies from them, they would be obliged to keep large bodies of troops for their defense, and almost impossible to move an enemy at so great a distance to attack their towns, if they could find them; and that by supporting and encouraging the growth of Kentucky, those obstacles would, in a great measure, be removed; for, should the British officers find their policy mistaken in carrying on the war against Kentucky by the Indians, and withdraw them from and bind their whole force against the interior frontier, as a certain mode of destroying the states, we might, with a little assistance, at any time, march from the country with ease to any part of their country we chose (this is the only circumstances that can excuse their conduct). Those ideas cause me to view Kentucky in the most favorable point of view, as a place of the greatest consequence, and ought to meet with every encouragement, and that nothing that I could engage in would be of more general utility than its defense, and as the commandants of the different towns of the Illinois and Wabash, I knew, were busily engaged in exciting the Indians, their reduction became my first object. Expecting, probably, that it might open a field for further action, I sent two young hunters (S. More, and B. Linn) to those places as spies, with proper instructions for their conduct, to prevent suspicion. Neither did they, nor anyone in Kentucky, ever know my design until it was ripe for execution. They returned to Harrodstown with all the information I could reasonably have expected. I found from them that they had but little expectation of a visit from us, but that things were kept in god order, the militia trained, etc., that they might, in case of a visit, be prepared; that the greatest pains were taken to inflame the minds of the French inhabitants against the Americans, notwithstanding they could discover traces of affection in some of the inhabitants; that the Indians in that quarter were engaged in the war, etc.

When I left Kentucky, October 1st, 1777, I plainly saw that every eye was turned toward me, as if expecting some stroke in their favor.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Clark, *Clark's Memoir*, 468-469

APPENDIX C: Clark's Instructions

These three excerpts trace the political authority, mission orders and commander's intent provided to George Roger's Clark prior to the execution of his Illinois campaign.

The basis for Governor Patrick Henry's authority for implementing the Clark expedition is "An act for better securing the commonwealth, and for the farther protection and defence thereof," which was passed by the General Assembly of Virginia at the October session, 1777.

That portion which applies is quoted below:²⁰²

And to provide for the farther protection and defence of the frontiers, Be it farther enacted, That the governor, with the advice of the privy council, may order such part of the militia as may be most convenient, and as they shall judge necessary, consistently with the safety of the commonwealth, to act in conjunction with any troops on any expedition which may by undertaken by desire of the United States of America, in congress assembled, against any of our western enemies; and also that the governor, with advice of the privy council, at any time within nine months after the passing of this act, may empower a number of volunteers, not exceeding six hundred, to mark against and attack any of our social enemies, and may appoint the proper officers and give the necessary orders for the expedition."²⁰³

With the concurrence of the Governor's privy council, on January 2, 1778, Patrick Henry issued the following public orders to George Roger's Clark as a deception:

You are to proceed without Loss of Time to inlist Seven Companies of Men officered in the usual Manner to act as Militia under your Orders They are to proceed to Kentucky & there to obey such orders & Directions as you shall give them for three Months after their arrival at that place, but to receive pay &c. in case they remain on Duty a longer Time.

You are empowered to raise these Men in any County in the Commonwealth and the County Lieutenants respectively are requested to give you all possible assistance in that Business.²⁰⁴

Governor Henry also issued Clark his secret instructions and true mission:

²⁰² Editor's note in *Two Letters of Patrick Henry Authorizing Clark Expedition*, January 2, 1778 in Seineke, 215.

²⁰³ *Hening's Virginia Statutes at Large*, Vol. IX, 374-375 cited in *Ibid*.

²⁰⁴ *Two Letters of Patrick Henry Authorizing Clark Expedition*, Williamsburg, January 2, 1778 in Seineke, ed. 214-215.

You are to proceed with all convenient Speed to raise Seven Companies of Soldiers to consist of fifty men each officered in the usual manner & armed most properly for the Enterprize & with the Force attack the British post at Kaskasky.

It is conjectured that there are many pieces of Cannon & military Stores of considerable Amount at that place, the taking & preservation of which would be valuable acquisition to the State. If you are so fortunate therefore as to succeed in your Expedition you will take every possible Measure to secure the Artillery & Stores & whatever may advantage the State.

For the Transportation of the Troops, provisions & down the Ohio, you are to apply to the Commanding officer at Fort Pitt for Boats, &, during the whole Transaction you are to take especial Care to keep the true Destination of your Force secret. Its Success depends on this. Orders are therefore given to Captn Smith to secure two men from Kaskasky. Similar conduct will be proper in similar cases.

It is earnestly desired that you show Humanity to such British Subjects and other persons as fall in your hands. If the white Inhabitants at that post & the neighborhood will give undoubted Evidence of their attachment to this State (for it is certain that live within its Limits) by taking the Test prescribed by Law & by every other ways & means in their power, Let them be treated as fellow Citizens & their persons & property duly secured. Assistance & protection against all Enemies whatever shall be afforded them & the Commonwealth of Virginia is pledged to accomplish it. But if these people will not accede to these reasonable Demands, they must feel the miseries of War, under the direction of that Humanity that has hitherto distinguished Americans, & which it is expected you will ever consider as the Rule of your Conduct & from which you are in no Instance to depart.

The Corps you are to command are to receive the pay & allowance of Militia & to act under the Laws & Regulations of this State now in Force as Militia. The Inhabitants at this Post will be informed by you that in case they accede to the officers of becoming Citizens of this Commonwealth a proper Garrison will be maintained among them & every Attention bestowed to render their Commerce beneficial, the fairest prospects being opened to the Dominions of both France & Spain.

It is in Contemplation to establish a post near the Mouth of the Ohio. Cannon will be wanted to fortify it. Part of those at Kaskasky will be easily brought thither or otherwise secured as circumstances will make necessary.

You are to apply to General Hand for powder & Lead necessary for this Expedition. If he can't Supply it the person who has that which Capt Lynn brot from Orleans can. Lead was sent to Hampshire by my Orders & that may be delivr'd you.²⁰⁵

Governor Henry expanded his guidance to Clark after composing diplomatic correspondence to Spanish commander, Bernardo de Galvez. Upon sending Colonel David Rogers on a diplomatic mission to New Orleans, Governor Henry wrote to Clark:

Colo David Rogers is to go to New Orleans on the Business of Trade mention'd to you, & I have opened the secret Nature of your Expedition to him as it was necessary

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

for his safety. I wish I had known of his being acquainted with all the places you are going to. He is intimately acquainted in all that Country having been often times through every place there & can give you valuable Intelligence & Advice. I wish you to avail your self of his Counsel & proceed as you find the Interest if your Country directs when you get to the place you are going to. What I have in View is that your Operations should not be confin'd to the Fort & the Settlement at the place mention'd in your secret Instructions, but that you proceed to the Enemy's Settlements above or across, as you may find it proper.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Henry to Clark, Williamsburg, January 15, 1778 in *ibid*, 218.

APPENDIX D: Clark's Letter Before His Attack on Vincennes

Clark wrote the following letter to Patrick Henry on February 3, 1779 from Kaskaskia. He sent John Montgomery to Williamsburg in August of 1778 in order to update Henry and obtain for additional orders and reinforcements. Governor Henry dispatched his response in mid December, 1778 and the letters had yet to reach Clark.

More importantly, at the same time in December, Lieutenant Governor Hamilton's counteroffensive seized Vincennes and intercepted the garrison's alerts. This left Clark totally surprised by the development. With the prospect defending without reinforcement until spring, Clark took immediate action to regain the initiative and attack Hamilton at Fort Sackville.

His letter to Henry exemplifies his reframing of the problem without the interference of hindsight. It demonstrates his understanding of many elements of operational design. And it provides evidence of his willingness to accept risk in accordance with his mission orders.

Dear Sir,

As it is near twelve Months Since I have Received the last Intelligence from you I almost Dispair of any Relief or notice taken of this Cuntry, I have had many Months past had Reports of an army Marching against Detroit but no Certainty a late Meneuvr . of that Famous Hairbuyer Lieutenant Governor Hamilton of Detroit, Totally Supprised us on the 16th of December Last he with his body of Fve Hundred Men Chiefly Savages attacked & took possession of Post St. Vincent on ye Waubash what few men was in garrison not being able to withstand his force he is Influancing all the Indians he possibly Can to join him But none of the Nations that I have Treated with would listen to him. I have for some time Expected an attact from him he has Blocked up the Ohio for some time with a party of French and Indians.

I fortunately yesterday got every piece of Intelligence that I could wish for bay a Spanish gentleman that made his escape from Mr. Hamilton. He was weakened himself by sending a number of parties to war against the Frontiers Strongly Fortifying himself has no Suspition of a Visit from an Enemy. [Hamilton] has Ninety Regulars in Garison and about Fifty Indians not yet set out that is to war. [Hamilton also possesses] three field pieces and two swivels. Being Sensible that without Rheinforcement (which I have at present harly right to Expect) that I should be obliged to give up the Cuntry to Mr. Hamilton as he intents to actact me without a turn of Fortune. I am Resolved to take the advantage of his present Situation and Risque the whole on a single Battle and Shall set out in a few Days with all the force I can Raise amounting only to one Hundred & seventy (Captain J. Bowman, J. Williams, R.M. McCarta, & T Charlaviel) the Stores and Forts I leave to the Care of a few Militia and take only those with me that know will Die by me I have fited out a small Galey Mounted with two four pounders and four large swivels and Forty Men to Transport my Artillery and Clear the ohio River she takes her station Ten Leagues below St. Vincent until further orders. If I am defeated She Drops Down the Mississippi and joins Colonel Rogers. If I fall through in this Expedition the

whole Cuntry is lost and I believe Kentucky also, but great things have been Done by a few Men perhaps we may be fortunate. I have this Consolation I know that my party will never Quite me and Sensible that I shall be Excused by you when you know my Reasons I know the Case is Desperate if I was sure of a Reinforcement I should not attempt it.

I have wrote to Col. Rogers not to enter the Ohio until further Intelligence from me. I learn that by stratigem he has his goods past the British posts on the Mississippi.

If I have success you shall immediately have an Express.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Clark to Henry, Kaskaskia, February 3, 1779 in *The Secret Orders & "...great things have been Done by a Few Men..." Letters of Patrick Henry and George Rogers Clark Issued in Facsimile* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974), 8-9.

APPENDIX E: Key to Military Symbols

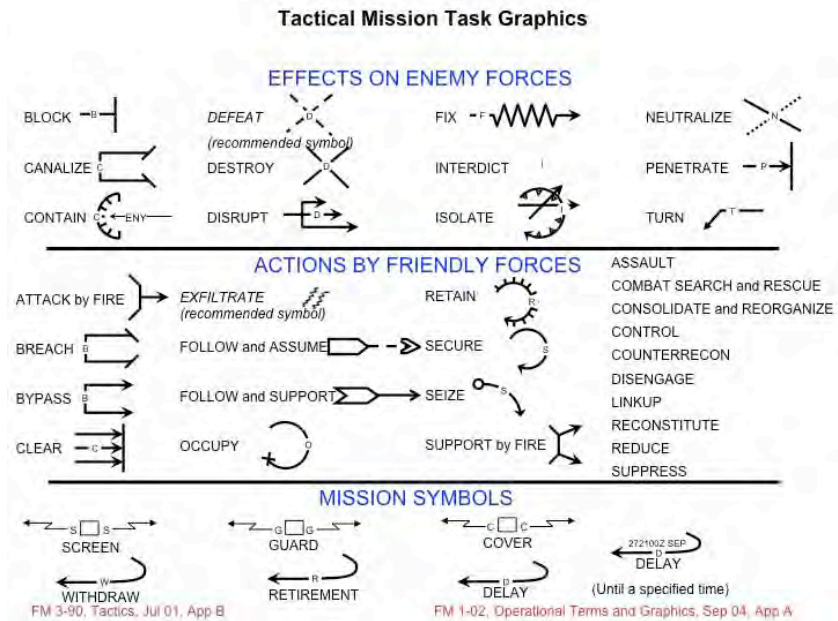
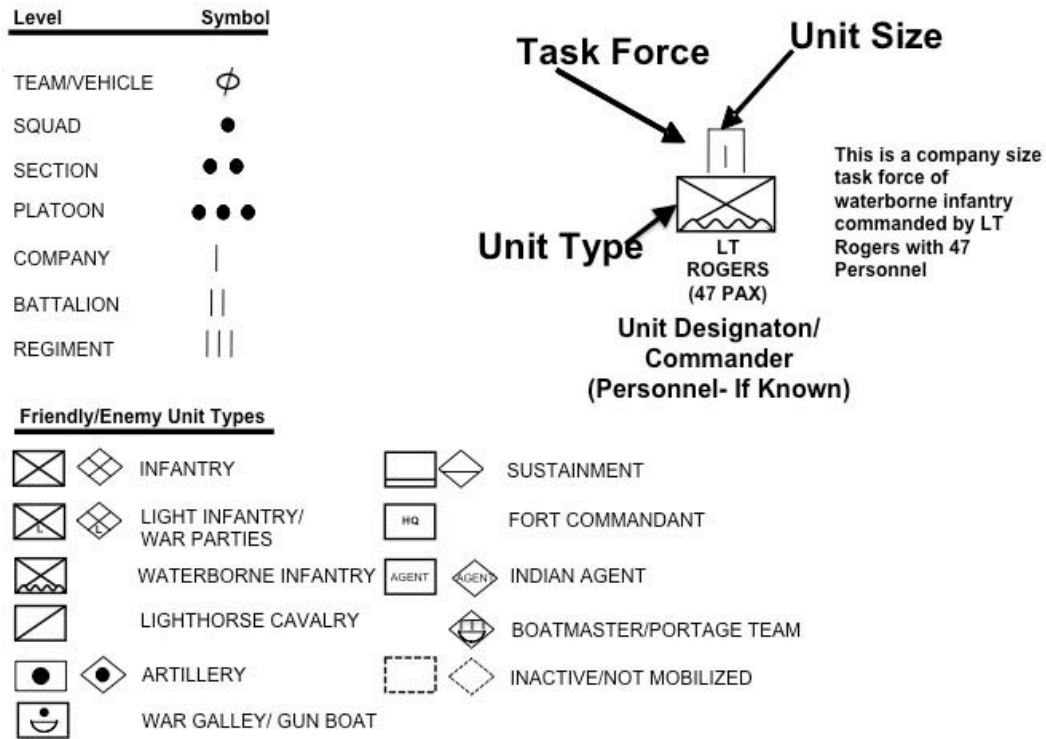


Figure 13: Key to Military Symbols and Tactical Mission Tasks

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