

General Charles Scott and His March To Ouiatenon

By J. W. WHICKCAR, Attica, Ind.

The state of Virginia financed George Rogers Clark and his little volunteer army was a part of the state militia of Virginia, on which account the state of Virginia claimed and actually took possession of all of the northwest territory. This territory was first governed by the laws of Virginia and her institutions were established here. When Virginia beheld from the sunset side of her western mountains the northwestern territory and sent her militia to do battle for its possession, she claimed it beyond the rivers that skirted her western boundaries to the Father of Waters, from the northwest corner of the Lake of the Woods to the mouth of the Ohio. Out of this territory has been carved six of the great north central states, and these six states now stand as enduring and lofty monuments to the magnanimity and princely liberality and devotion of Virginia to the general government.

"Since God gave the fruitful land of Canaan to Moses and Israel, such a gift of present and future empire has never been made to any people", as this territory which made these sovereign states, drained by the Mississippi river and its eastern tributaries, an empire of present and future wealth, capable of supplying all the needs of the restless, ceaseless current of humanity in these great and growing states.

It was Virginia's title to the northwestern territory that England acknowledged in the treaty of 1783. Previous to this, in the various treaties of the white people, at the conclusion of other wars in which the native Red man took no part and had no interest, this territory was bartered and traded as a pawn, to be used in driving a good bargain at the conclusion of war, the title passing as part of the terms of the various treaties. With the Red man of the forest this land was not a thing to pawn and barter, to him it was a sacred thing, a gift of the great Manitou to the Indian, a perpetual benediction

of love from the source of his being. Here was established the family from which he sprang, and here were the graves of his fathers and his loved ones; here he had loved, and wooed and mated, and here his children were born; here he had quenched his thirst from bubbling springs, and lived beneath the spreading branches of boundless forests, or gone to the chase for furs and raiment, food and tents for shelter. He pitched his tent beneath the twining vines, where his children could play and his squaw could care for the family, protected by its shelter from the rays of the summer sun, the rain and the storm. He too had his religion and his faith in a neverending summer land of the soul, he hoped for sparkling streams and rivers and the fadeless verdure of an eternal forest, "The Happy Hunting Ground", where sorrow never entered, misfortune, sickness and death never came. His hope and faith in his religion was as fixed and unfaltering as any of the bravest disciples that ever died for the cause of the Cross. He sang his death song under slow tortures, recounted his deeds of merit and proclaimed his hope and faith in eternal happiness beyond his earthly trials, and anticipated a blissful reward hereafter with all the calmness and confidence of a christian philosopher.

The Indian who inhabited this country at no time recognized the title of ownership of it in any government of the white race. They denied the claims of titles made by France, by England, by the state of Virginia and by the United States. They claimed this northwest territory as their own, and along the valley of the Wabash, from the mouth of the Tippecanoe river to where the waters of the Vermilion mingled with the Wabash, all of this valley, from the Tippecanoe to the Vermilion, was "Ouiatenon". But with this the Red man was not content, and, as other races, he visioned happiness beneath an arched canopy of blue, set with different stars, and wandered far away in search of the fulfilment of this hope. They always returned to Ouiatenon.

On the 1st day of April, 1791, Antoine Gamelin, an intelligent French merchant, was sent up the Wabash from Vincennes by Major John Hamtramck, then commandant under St. Clair at Vincennes, for the purpose of making a sincere

and honest offer to bring about peace with the Indians in the upper Wabash country. Gamelin stopped in the Piankeshaw village on the Vermilion river near where it empties into the Wabash and the Kickapoo village in the same neighborhood, and from there he visited the Kickapoos on Kickapoo creek, and Pine creek across the river from Attica, and on the 14th of April, 1791, held a council with the Wea and Kickapoo Indians at Ouiatenon. Here he found everything hostile. As a Frenchman he was welcomed, but was plainly told that it was useless to ask them (the Indians) to restrain their young men, for they were "being constantly encouraged by the British", and one of the chiefs said to him, "Know ye, that the village of Ouiatenon is the sepulchre of all our ancestors".

Marauding bands of all the tribes in and about the territory of Ouiatenon journeyed far to the east, and far to the south, in search of spoils, and adventure, and to attack the scattered settlements of the white man then coming into the frontier forests. It was these attacks of the marauding bands that justified General Charles Scott and his seven hundred and fifty Kentucky soldiers in their march to Ouiatenon in the spring of 1791.

The Indians felt secure in the land of Ouiatenon. The French had been in this country as early as 1688, and the English had a trading post called Ouiatenon as early as 1718. The English colonel, George Groghan, who was in charge of the Indian department for the British government, visited the Ouiatenon territory and stopped at the trading post in 1765, and at that time found fourteen French families living there at the fort. At this time the Ouiatenon country was the most densely populated by the Indians of any in the United States, and it has been estimated that there were 15,000 Indians living in that territory.

A letter to Thomas Jefferson, dated August 7, 1785, gives an account of a council of many of the Algonquin tribes at Ouiatenon. Charles A. Goodrich says, in his history, that

between the years 1783 and 1790, not less than 1500 inhabitants of Kentucky, or emigrants to that country, *and probably double that number*, had been massacred by the Indians, and that repeated efforts had been made by the government to obtain peace, notwithstanding which

the butcheries of the savages still continued in their most appalling forms.

Another historian estimates that during this same period 2,000 children were carried captive from Kentucky by the Indians, and Elmore Barce says that 15,000 horses were stolen from the Kentuckians by the Indians during this period. Many of the marauding Indians in Kentucky, who took part in the killing of the citizens and carrying away the children and the horses, were from Ouiatenon, and when these Kentuckians enlisted under General Scott in 1791 to march to Ouiatenon, they were a determined body of men, bent on revenge for the depredations the Indians of this locality had made in their marauding warfare in Kentucky. Many of them had lost their children or their parents, killed by the Indians, and nearly all of them had lost horses, stolen by the Indians of the Ouiatenon country. The government, owing to the pressing demands of the western people, had authorized the establishment of a local board of war for the district of Kentucky. This board was composed of Brigadier General Charles Scott, leader of the Kentucky militia, Harry Innes, John Brown, Benjamin Logan and Isaac Shelby, and they were vested with discretionary powers for the defense of the settlement, and the prosecution of the war. The government had now fully determined on a definite plan of action.

On the 2nd of January, 1791, between sunset and daylight, the Indians surprised the new settlement on the Muskingum, called the Big Bottom, forty miles above Marietta, killing eleven men, one woman and two children, and General Rufus Putnam wrote to President Washington on the 8th of the same month saying that the little garrison at Fort Harmar, consisting of a little over twenty men, could afford no protection to the settlements, that the whole number of efficient men in the Muskingum country would not exceed 287 and that many of them were badly armed, and that unless the government speedily sent a body of troops for their protection they were a ruined people. Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky were all being sorely pressed by savage incursions, and Barce says that it was a fortunate circumstance for the future of the

great west that George Washington was then President of the United States.

On the 16th of May, the American prisoner, Thomas Rhea, captured by a party of Delawares and Munsees, arrived at Sandusky. An Indian chieftain was there with 150 warriors, and parties of Indians were coming in daily with prisoners and scalps, and on the 24th of May the alarm came that a large body of American troops, in three columns, was moving towards the Miami towns. The Indians burned their houses and moved to the Maumee, where they were living in clever cabins built by the Pottawattomie and other Indians, and stores of corn, pork and beans and other provisions, together with arms and ammunition, the English were daily issuing to the Indians. The savages were coming in in parties of one, two and three, and as many as four and five hundred at a time, and receiving supplies from the English and the French Canadians, and preparing for an attack on the Americans. The Indians in the Ouiatenon country were allied to the British and were taking part in these arrangements for war, and on the 19th of March, 1791, the secretary of war issued orders to General Charles Scott of Kentucky to lead an expedition against the Wea or Ouiatenon towns on the Wabash. The expedition was not to proceed until the 10th day of May, as hopes were entertained that John Proctor might negotiate a peace. The force to be employed was to consist of 750 mounted volunteers and officers. All the Indians who ceased to resist were to be spared. Women and children and as many warriors as possible were to be taken prisoner, but to be treated with humanity. This expedition was to be led by Charles Scott, brigadier general, then in command of the Kentucky militia.

The 10th day of May arrived, but Proctor was not heard from. The hostilities of the savages were daily increasing. Scott delayed a few days longer in the hope that intelligence might arrive, but on the 23rd day of May, 1791, he crossed the Ohio river at the mouth of the Kentucky river and launched into the wilderness. Before him lay 155 miles of forest, swamp and stream. The rain fell in torrents and every river was beyond its banks. His horses were soon worn out

and his provisions spoiled, but he and his brave army pressed on.

The Kentucky river enters the Ohio very nearly opposite the point where the line divides Jefferson and Switzerland counties in Indiana. Scott's march led through Switzerland, Jefferson, Jennings, Scott, Bartholomew, Shelby, Johnson, Marion, Hendricks, Boone, Montgomery and Tippecanoe counties, and before he left some of his army had gone through Fountain and into Warren counties. The march was along the head waters of the White river. Scott marched to Ouiatenon twelve years after George Rogers Clark had taken Vincennes, five months before St. Clair's defeat, three years before Wayne fought the battle of Fallen Timbers (Scott was with Wayne in this battle) and twenty years before the battle of Tippecanoe. Without bearings, without compass, guided by the North star, he entered a forest that had never been penetrated before by the Americans. Soon his provisions failed. His horses tired but he marched on, fording the flooded creeks and bottom lands, wet from the cold spring rains, he and his Kentuckians marched through the unbroken forests. His march was practically a straight line. The army found game, deer and water fowl, and parched corn and dried venison sufficient for their food.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the first day of June, 1791, they stopped for dinner on a beautiful stretch of prairie. Dinner over, before twelve o'clock they were mounted and moving on. Scott was in the Shawnee prairie, south and east of the Wea Plains, when his army saw a lone Indian horseman to the right, northwest of them. They tried to intercept him, but the Indian had a good mount, knew the country and rode away.

Dividing the Wea from the Shawnee prairie is a ridge of high hills, at that time covered with heavy timber. Cutting the ridge in two was a gap in which no timber grew. The lone Indian horseman rode through this gap in a southwesterly direction, about three miles from where he first entered it. Scott's army followed him as closely as it could. When they got through the timber and through the gap they stood at the foot of the Round Top Hills, and beheld north of them,

for the first time that an American army had ever gazed upon it, the beautiful Wea Plain, the land of Ouiatenon. Colonel Richard P. DeHart describes the occasion thus:

Awake from dreams, the scene changes. The morning breath of the first day of summer has kissed the grass and flowers, but it brings no evil omen to the Kickapoo villages on this shore, nor to the five Wea towns on the adjacent plain. High noon has come, but still birds and grass and flowers bask in the meridian splendor of a June sunshine, unconscious of danger, or the tramping of hostile feet. One o'clock, and over High Gap hostile horsemen are galloping. They separate; one division wheels to the left, led by the relentless Colonel John Harden, still smarting from the defeat of last year by the great Miami, Little Turtle. But the main division, led by the noble Scott, afterwards the distinguished soldier and governor of Kentucky, moves straight forward, on to Ouiatenon.

Barce says:

On the morning of June 1st, 1791, the landscape of the Wea was a thing of beauty. To the north lies the long range of Indian hills, crowned with vast trees and scarped with many sharp ravines. At the south edge of these hills flows the Wabash, winding in and out with graceful curves, and marked in its course by a narrow fringe of woodland. To the east lies Wea Creek, jutting out into the plain with a sharp turn, and then gliding on again to the river. Within this enclosure of wood and stream lie the meadows of the Ouiatenon, dotted here and there with pleasant groves and filled with the aroma of countless blossoms.

When General Scott and his 750 mounted men rode through the gap in the high land and timber, and paused at the foot of the Round Top Hills, and looked across the meadows of the Wea Plains, lying gently and peacefully between them and the Wabash river, he or one of his soldiers, raised his rifle and shot at the lone Miami chieftan as he rode off in the direction of Ouiatenon. The Indian Hills echoed back across the peaceful, placid Wabash the reverberating sound of the tocsin of war. This army bore the beacon light of a new government through the wilderness to the frontier, to blaze the way for civilization. The sound of this rifle resounded along the Wabash down to Black Rock, past whose cliffs and bluffs the river coursed its winding way, and the men on horseback from the south, the American cavaliers, beheld the

beautiful, fertile valley of the Wabash. This valley had been the home and hunting ground of the Red man of the woods, wild in his habits, satisfied with his mode of living, finding his food, his raiment and his shelter in the woods bordering the river and the prairies beyond, and now for the first time the cavalier had reached the Red man's home, his stronghold, had reached Ouiatenon.

Scott stopped only long enough at the foot of the Round Top Hills for the shot to be fired in the direction of the lone horseman, and to give his orders to his officers. He and Col. James Wilkinson rode after the horseman, toward Ouiatenon, northwest three miles, on the river bank. Colonel John Harden, with his sixty mounted infantry, and a troop of light horses under Captain McCoy, rode to the left where off to the distance of two miles they could see a small village and four miles further on, was another village. These villages were temporary only, established by a few Kickapoo warriors who had come across the river to hunt with the Miami. The Miami chieftain rode to Ouiatenon and alarmed his tribes. The Kickapoos had no knowledge of the approach of the army until Colonel Harden and his mounted men were within a mile of their village. These Indians mounted their horses and rode for the Kickapoo ford. This ford was eight miles distant down the river, the only ford with a rock bottom between the Tippecanoe river and the Vermilion, the best and safest ford, the only place, on account of the river being up, where the river could then be forded. Harden's men followed close onto the Kickapoos. The Kickapoos rode straight for the ford and across the river, Harden's men following, and in Warren county, about two miles north of the mouth of Pine creek, Harden fought the Battle of Kickapoo. Here he knew he had killed six warriors and captured a few women and children, and as he returned he picked up those that were left behind, and at six o'clock in the evening, when he joined Scott and Wilkinson, he reported having killed six warriors and taken fifty-two prisoners. Upon the approach of Scott and Wilkinson to Ouiatenon, a small Indian camp in the bottom lands of the Wabash river, near the mouth of Wea creek, these Indians got into their canoes and crossed the Wabash. A

brief skirmish ensued, during which several Indian warriors were killed and two Americans wounded.

Scott's victory was complete. His men had committed no depredations, they had taken no scalps, they had acquitted themselves with credit, and proved their bravery. A large quantity of corn, a variety of household goods, peltry and other articles were burned with the Ouiatenon village, which consisted at that time of about seventy houses, many of them well furnished. Scott lamented that the condition of his troops prevented him from sweeping on to the head of the Wabash. He said he had the kind of men to do it, but he lacked fresh horses and provisions, and was forced to return to Kentucky.

On the 4th of June he released sixteen of the weakest and most infirm of his prisoners and gave them a written address of peace to the Wabash tribes. This address was written in a firm, manly tone, and on the same day, the 4th day of June, he destroyed the villages about Ouiatenon and the growing corn and gardens, and started on his return trip to Kentucky. This grand old Revolutionary soldier had done well, (he was yet to fight with Wayne at the battle of the Fallen Timbers) and with only five wounded, and without the loss of a single man, and without a discreditable deed committed by one of his troops, he had killed thirty-two warriors and taken fifty-eight prisoners. Forty-one of these prisoners he delivered to Captain Joseph Ashton of the First United States regiment, at Fort Steuben (Clarksville), and thus finished the first march of an American army into the northwest territory, to there float the American Flag and establish the government of the United States of America.

Scott was born in 1733, in Cumberland county, Virginia. He was a private with Braddock and Washington at Braddock's defeat in 1755. He raised the first regiment of men that was raised for the war of the Revolution south of the James river. He was a colonel at the Battle of Trenton, and was made a lieutenant general in 1777. He was sent to reinforce Maxwell in New Jersey and was with mad Anthony Wayne at Stoney Point in 1779. He was present and heard Washington's instructions to General Charles Lee, and afterwards was a witness at Lee's trial. He took part in the battle

of Monmouth and was taken prisoner at Charlottesville. He marched from the mouth of the Kentucky river to Ouiatenon and fought the battles along the Wabash June 1, 1791, and later was with mad Anthony Wayne at the battle of Fallen Timbers. He was governor of Kentucky from 1808 to 1812, and died, highly honored, at the age of 80 years, in 1813. Such was the character and reputation of the man who led this army in 1791.