

# Re-evaluating “The Fort-Wayne Manuscript”

## William Wells and the Manners and Customs of the Miami Nation

WILLIAM HEATH

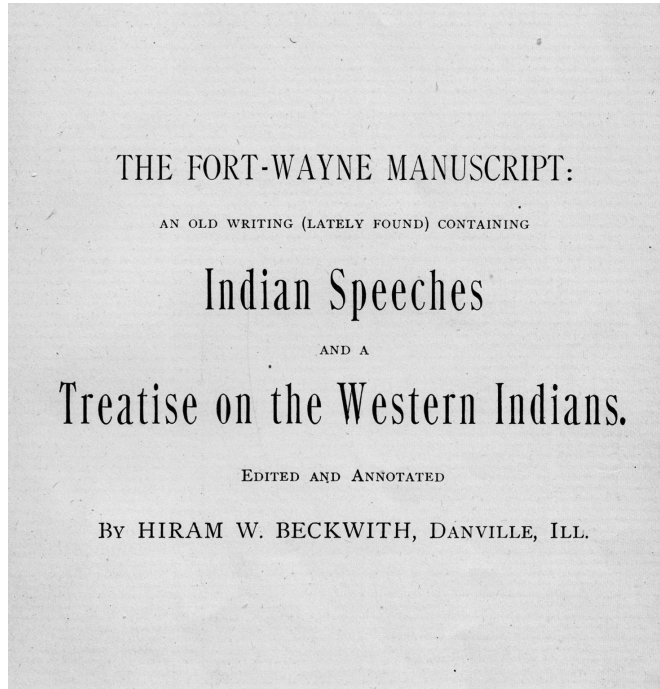
In April 1882, Hiram W. Beckwith of Danville, Illinois, received an unusual package: a handwritten manuscript of twenty-eight pages of foolscap sent to him by S. A. Gibson, superintendent of the Kalamazoo Paper Company.<sup>1</sup> The sheets, which appeared to have been torn from a larger manuscript, were part of a bundle of old paper that had been shipped for pulping from Fort Wayne, Indiana, to the company mills in Michigan.<sup>2</sup> Gibson must have realized that the material was of historical interest when he sent it on to Beckwith, who was known for his research into the frontier history of the Northwest Territory. Indeed, the packet

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<sup>1</sup>Hiram W. Beckwith (1830-1903) was Abraham Lincoln's law partner from 1856 to 1861 and a close personal friend. He edited several volumes in the Fergus' Historical Series and served from 1897 to 1902 as president of the Historical Society of Illinois.

<sup>2</sup>The bundle of papers was “The Fort-Wayne Manuscript,” box 197, Indian Documents, 1811-1812, Chicago History Museum.



The title page of Hiram Beckwith's "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript." Although the text was printed without attribution to an author, an advertisement in the back of the volume suggested that the piece was written by early nineteenth-century Indian agent William Wells.

Hiram Beckwith, ed., "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript," in Fergus' Historical Series, vol. 26 (Chicago, 1883).

included several speeches given by various Indian chiefs at two councils held in the fall of 1811 at Fort Wayne and a letter dated January 25, 1812, from the great Miami war chief, Little Turtle, to Gov. William Henry Harrison.<sup>3</sup> In addition, it contained a brief historical account of various battles fought by Indians and whites mainly in the Northwest Territory, starting with Pontiac's Revolt in 1763 and concluding with the battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. Finally, and most importantly, the manu-

<sup>3</sup>I have omitted these speeches from this essay for the purpose of brevity and because a scholarly version of them is available on microfilm: *The Papers of William Henry Harrison*, ed. Douglas E. Clanin (Indianapolis, 1999), reel 3, 731-34, 756-67, 784-93, 833-36.

script included a description of the Miami Indians' manners and customs, including their vision quests, courtship and marriage rituals, adoption ceremonies, methods of warfare, religious beliefs, forms of entertainment, and burial practices. In 1883, Beckwith's edited version of "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript" appeared in volume 26 of the Fergus' Historical Series, a set of volumes primarily focused on the history of the Northwest Territory and published by the Fergus Printing Company of Chicago. The first part of volume 26 reprinted William Henry Harrison's 1838 *Aborigines of the Ohio Valley*; the second part was Beckwith's "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript," which was itself divided into two sections: the first titled "Indian Speeches at Fort Wayne" and the second, "The Manners and Customs of the North-Western Indians."

In his introduction, Beckwith claimed the unnamed author of "Manners and Customs" must have been "a well-informed and candid writer. His statements of facts, dates, names, etc., harmonize in the main with creditable works since in print.... He must have had an intimate and long acquaintance with the Indians; and the information preserved in his manuscript...is, for the most part, not only new, but valuable historical matter."<sup>4</sup> Beckwith did not speculate about who might have written this valuable treatise on Miami culture. However, the publisher's advertisement on the volume's next-to-last page explicitly stated a connection between "The Manners and Customs of the North-Western Indians" and one of the most important participants in Indian-white relations in territorial Indiana. It stated that the material had come "from MSS., supposed to be in the handwriting of Capt. William Wells."<sup>5</sup> This supposition, however, was neither confirmed nor denied, leaving the authorship of "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript" unknown.

More than sixty years before Beckwith's edited document, "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript," two articles titled "Indian Manners and Customs" and "Indian History" had appeared in the February and May 1820 issues of *The Western Review & Miscellaneous Magazine*. The

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<sup>4</sup>Hiram W. Beckwith, ed., "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript: An Old Writing (Lately Found) Containing Indian Speeches and a Treatise on the Western Indians," in William Henry Harrison, *A Discourse on the Aborigines of the Ohio Valley in which the Opinions of its Conquest in the Seventeenth Century by the Iroquois or Six Nations...are Examined and Contested*, Fergus' Historical Series, vol. 26 (Chicago, 1883), 62. "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript," hereafter FWM, begins on page 53.

<sup>5</sup>Harrison, *Aborigines of the Ohio Valley*, 97.

authorship of each article was attributed to former Indian agent William Wells. The first paragraph of "Indian Manners and Customs" began:

The following account of the manners and customs prevalent among the North Western Indians is taken from a manuscript of Mr. William Wells, who was himself long among them, and who obtained from personal observation a knowledge of most of the facts he communicates.

The "Indian History" simply stated it was "From the Manuscript of Mr. William Wells."

Within the 1883 "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript" the two articles are found as a single essay, the aforementioned "The Manners and Customs of the North-Western Indians." The basic contents of "Indian History" preceded that of "Indian Manners and Customs."

Who, then, was William Wells, whose document was first published in 1820 and then rediscovered and republished in a different form in 1883?

William Wells was born in 1770 beside Jacobs Creek in western Pennsylvania, the son of Samuel Wells and Ann Farrow Wells.<sup>6</sup> In 1779, the family flatboated down the Ohio to the Falls at Louisville, Kentucky, and lived in various nearby stations along Beargrass Creek. Ann died shortly thereafter, and Samuel was killed in the Long Run massacre in September 1781. William was placed under the care of William Pope, a prominent figure in Louisville. In March 1784, Wells and three other boys were camping and hunting at Robert's Pond, near the Ohio River, when they were captured by Indians. Wells was taken to Snake-fish Town (Kenapakomoko) on the Eel River, about five miles north of present-day Logansport, Indiana. Wells, now named "Wild Carrot," was adopted by the village chief, "The Porcupine." The boy was adept at languages and assimilated quickly. Over the next few years, like Indian boys his age, he learned to become a Miami: he blacked his face and fasted,

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<sup>6</sup>Paul Hutton, "William Wells: Frontier Scout and Indian Agent," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 74 (September 1978), 184-220; and Harvey Lewis Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle* (Urbana, Ill., 1987). See also William Heath, *Blacksnake's Path: The True Adventures of William Wells* (Westminster, Md., 2008).





A portrait of William Wells. Wells was raised among the Miami Indians and fought with them in several important battles. In later years, however, he became an Indian Agent for the federal government.

Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Museum

experienced a vision quest and received the name “Blacksnake,” became a skilled hunter and warrior, took a wife, and fathered a son. It is likely he participated in Harmar’s Defeat in October 1790, when Little Turtle’s Miami and their Delaware and Shawnee allies defeated Kentucky militia and the U. S. Army, first on the Eel River and a few days later at Kekionga. The following August, Gen. James Wilkinson attacked Snakefish Town while Wells and most of the other warriors were away, taking many captives including Wells’s wife and son. That fall, Wells took as his new wife Little Turtle’s daughter, Sweet Breeze.<sup>7</sup> During the same period,

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<sup>7</sup>Wells and Sweet Breeze had four children who survived them both. She died in 1805.



Little Turtle, Chief of the Miami. He was born in the 1740s in what is now northeast Whitley County, Indiana. Until his death in 1812, he maintained a close relationship with Wells.

Courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society

he fought for Little Turtle in a much greater Indian victory, St. Clair's Defeat, on November 4, 1791.<sup>8</sup> During the following year, Wells went to Cincinnati to free his first wife and son, along with the other captives. He accompanied Gen. Rufus Putnam to Vincennes, where the Indians signed a treaty that secured the release of the prisoners.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>The standard study of these battles is Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War* (Norman, Okla., 1985). See also Leroy Eid's two essays, "The Slaughter was Reciprocal: Josiah Harmar's Two Defeats," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly*, 65 (Spring 1992), 51-67; and "American Indian Military Leadership: St. Clair's 1791 Defeat," *The Journal of Military History*, 57 (January 1993), 71-88; see also Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York, 1991).

<sup>9</sup>Rowena Buell, ed., *The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam*, (Boston, Mass., 1903); Paul A. W. Wallace, ed., *Thirty Thousand Miles with John Heckewelder* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1958), 258-93.

On a previous trip to Vincennes to sell furs, Wells had come to the attention of the fort's commandant, leading to his brothers Carty and Sam making contact with him at Snake-fish Town. Sam urged Wells to come to see him in Kentucky; Wells visited but then decided to return to his Miami family. Eventually Sam was able to convince him to switch sides and offer his service to Putnam, who, following the treaty, hired Wells to work for the United States. He left his first Indian wife and his son with the Miami, taking with him Sweet Breeze and their children. Wells went on several dangerous spying missions to Indian councils in 1792 and 1793 before becoming head scout for Gen. Anthony Wayne. He recruited an elite group of men, many of whom had lived among the Indians. They ably performed their scouting missions, took prisoners for interrogation, and made sure Wayne's army was not ambushed and destroyed as Harmar's and St. Clair's had been. Shot in the wrist on one daring exploit, Wells ceased his spying activities shortly before the decisive battle of Fallen Timbers on August 20, 1794; however, he was still able to offer Wayne crucial strategic advice.<sup>10</sup> The following year Wells served as the translator between Little Turtle and Wayne at the Treaty of Greenville, which ceded all but the northwest corner of Ohio to the settlers.<sup>11</sup> During these negotiations, and again later when Wells took a delegation of Indians to Philadelphia to meet with President George Washington, various Miami chiefs expressed the wish that Wells might become their agent.

For much of the rest of his life, Wells served as general advocate, Indian agent, assistant agent, and translator for the Miami at Fort Wayne. His career was controversial; he offended many people and made numerous enemies, several of them in high places. Although he was the agent to the Miami Nation, he clearly favored the Little Turtle faction, and this caused many resentments. He and Little Turtle wanted

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<sup>10</sup>On Wells and his spies, see John McDonald, *Biographical Sketches of General Nathaniel Massie, General Duncan McArthur, Captain William Wells, and General Simon Kenton...* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1838), 183-96. The most detailed study of Wayne's campaign is Alan D. Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness: Anthony Wayne's Legion in the Old Northwest* (Norman, Okla., 2004). On Wells's spying activities, see also Heath, *Blacksnake's Path*, 167-210. On Wells's advice to Wayne before the battle of Fallen Timbers, see Lymon C. Draper Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Frontier Papers, 5U, reel 55, 119-125.

<sup>11</sup>Transcripts of the treaty can be found in Frazer Ells Wilson, *Around the Council Fire: Proceedings at Fort Greene Ville in 1795, culminating in the signing of the Treaty of Greene Ville by General Anthony Wayne and the Indian chiefs of the Old Northwest* (1945; Dayton, Ohio, 1975); John A. Murphy, ed., *The Greenville Peace Treaty: the actual speeches of the council* (1882; Pataskala, Ohio, 1997).

the Indians to learn to farm under their leadership, which led to disagreements with the Quakers who directed the government-funded program.<sup>12</sup> In addition, John Johnson, the Fort Wayne factor, accused him of various nefarious schemes. It was Johnson who reported that Wells had gone on the warpath as a young man with the Miami and used his white skin to lure flatboats to the Indian side of the Ohio River where they could be ambushed. He also said that Wells had boasted about how many soldiers he had killed at St. Clair's Defeat.<sup>13</sup> Since the Quakers were not having much success teaching the Miami men to farm, they blamed Wells's complaints about the program for its failure. At the same time the Shawnee Prophet began his campaign to get Indians to return to their old ways, while his brother Tecumseh planned a pan-Indian resistance to American incursions. Wells warned the secretary of war of these developments on July 14, 1807, stating that the followers of the Prophet were "religiously mad."<sup>14</sup> His dire predictions, along with accusations of corruption, further alienated him from his superiors in Washington, D.C. In March 1809, Wells was fired as Indian agent.<sup>15</sup>

Over the next three years Wells tried to regain his old position, but most of his efforts proved futile. Wells found himself trapped between Tecumseh's militant resistance and Gov. William Henry Harrison's insatiable greed for more land concessions from the Indians. Wells cooperated

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<sup>12</sup>Gerald T. Hopkins, *A Mission to the Indians...to Fort Wayne, in 1804...*, comp. Martha Tyson (Philadelphia, Pa., 1862). Wells's difficulties are captured in his correspondence with Secretaries of War William Eustis and Henry Dearborn, Letters Received Secretary of War, Registered Series, RG 75 (M 15, M 271) and RG 107 (M 221, rolls 9-15), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). See also Joseph A. Parsons Jr., "Civilizing the Indians of the Old Northwest, 1800-1810," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 56 (September 1960), 195-216.

<sup>13</sup>John Johnson to William Eustis, November 6, 1810, Letters Received Secretary of War, Registered Series, RG 107, M 221, roll 38, NARA. See Leonard U. Hill, *John Johnson and the Indians in the Land of the Three Miamis* (Piqua, Ohio, 1957); Gayle Thornbrough, ed., *Outpost on the Wabash, 1787-1791: Letters of Brigadier General Josiah Harmar and Major John Francis Hamtramck, and other letters and documents selected from the Harmar papers in the William L. Clements Library*, Indiana Historical Society Publications, vol. 19 (Indianapolis, 1957); Paul Woehrmann, *At the Headwaters of the Maumee* (Indianapolis, 1971).

<sup>14</sup>Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States: Vol. VII, The Territory of Indiana 1800-1810* (Washington, D.C., 1939), 465.

<sup>15</sup>John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York, 1997); and Sugden, *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnee* (Lincoln, Neb., 2000), which cites Wells's 1820 "Indian History" essay as well as Beckwith's FWM. Also see Bil Gilbert, *God Gave Us This Country: Tekamthi and the First American Civil War* (New York, 1989); and R. David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership* (Boston, Mass., 1984). Wells's letters to the secretary of war, circa 1805-1812, are located at the NARA, see footnote 12.

with Harrison on several treaties, gaining government support for Little Turtle but alienating groups of Indians in the process. He found himself hated by many of the warriors and distrusted by the government, having pledged himself to serve policies he questioned.<sup>16</sup> He stood on a shrinking middle ground, torn by conflicting emotions, vacillating between either protecting the rights of the long-suffering Indians or supporting the land-hunger of the rapidly advancing settlers. As the Indian-white crisis deepened, Wells felt that his counsel was increasingly ignored. Despite his frustration, Wells helped organize the councils held in Fort Wayne in the fall of 1811. The transcripts show him working for peace and contain testimonials to his usefulness, such as Potawatomi chief Five Medals's statement: "Father, if you should want to say anything to us, speak to us through our old friend, Capt. William Wells, in whom we all have entire confidence, and then your words will be attended to immediately."<sup>17</sup>

At about this time, Wells must have begun to write down his memories of Indian battles and the manners and customs of the Miami. After his death in the 1812 Fort Dearborn massacre, portions of Wells's writing were obtained by William Gibbes Hunt, editor of *The Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine*, who, in 1820, published the material in two parts.<sup>18</sup> Hunt defended the accuracy of the first essay, "Indian Manners and Customs," with an editorial paragraph (see page 161) in which he stated that the account was "taken from a manuscript of Mr. William Wells...who obtained from personal observation a knowledge of most of the facts he communicates."<sup>19</sup> The second, entitled "Indian History. From the Manuscript of Mr. William Wells," presents a brief history of the major Indian battles fought from Pontiac's Revolt (called "Pantaock" in the essay) to the battle of Fallen Timbers. The article's direct, unembell-

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<sup>16</sup>Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman, Okla., 2007); Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington, Ind., 1996).

<sup>17</sup>"FWM," 75. First published in *Liberty Hall* [Cincinnati] September 25, 1811.

<sup>18</sup>William Gibbes Hunt (1791-1833) came to Lexington, Kentucky, in 1815, and in 1819 began publishing *The Western Review*, which was closely associated with Transylvania University and its celebrated polymath professor Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, whose essay on "Fishes of the River Ohio" is alternated with Wells's "Indian Manners and Customs." Although the *Western Review* lasted only two years, it "stands out as the best thing of its time yet attempted in the West." Earl L. W. Heck, "William Gibbes Hunt," *Lexington Herald*, April 17, 1932, p. 10. I want to thank Leroy V. Eid, Professor Emeritus at the University of Dayton and an excellent military historian of the American frontier, for first calling my attention to these essays.

<sup>19</sup>William Wells, "Indian Manners and Customs," *The Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine* 2, no.1 (February 1820), 45-49, 110-12, 160-63.

ished language, its uncorrected grammatical and spelling errors, and its general air of authority appears to me to confirm Hunt's attribution to Wells. Even the author's disavowal of firsthand knowledge of certain events ("My knowledge of the actions that were fought between [the Indians and the French and British] is derived from the old Indians whom I have conversed with on that subject, and is perhaps not to be depended on") suggests the perspective of a close observer such as Wells.<sup>20</sup>

While Hunt expressed no doubts about the manuscript's authenticity, he did not state how he had acquired it. One possible clue appears in a footnote included in an essay entitled "Harmar's Expedition," which appeared in the April 1820 issue of Hunt's magazine, between the publication dates of the two Wells pieces. The essay's author, known only as "G," acknowledges receiving information from Wells, "who was with the Indians at the time."<sup>21</sup> If "G" had been in direct contact with Wells before the latter's death, perhaps he was the person who passed Wells's manuscript on to Hunt.

Wells may have intended for his writings to form part of an autobiography. Certainly he had a fascinating story to tell, and Hunt implied that the essays had been drawn from a larger manuscript. John D. Hunter's captivity narrative, published in 1823, combined an account of the "Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes" along with the "Life of the Author."<sup>22</sup> Perhaps Wells had a similar plan in mind for his manuscript. Except for a year or so of schooling in Louisville before his capture, Wells was self-taught. He had a gift for languages, however, and was capable of recording the story of his remarkable life. Wells was a significant participant in major events of his time and place, and he had the rare ability to see both the Indian and white sides of issues. On the other hand, Wells's untimely death may have robbed him of the chance to write a full account of his adventures.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>William Wells, "Indian History," *The Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine* 2, no.4 (May 1820), 201.

<sup>21</sup>G, "Harmar's Expedition," *The Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine* 2, no. 3 (April 1820), 181.

<sup>22</sup>John D. Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi* (1823; New York, 1975).

<sup>23</sup>Milo M. Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest, 1673-1835: A Study of the Evolution of the Northwestern Frontier, Together with a History of Fort Dearborn* (1913; Urbana, Ill., 2001); Darius Heald Interview, May 25-26, 1868, Draper Notes, 21S, reel 50, pp. 40-65, Draper Collection.



And yet, as the advertisement in the back of the Fergus' Historical Series volume 26 suggests, more of Wells's work may have survived than historians have generally acknowledged. In spite of claims contained in Hunt's 1820 paragraph and in the 1883 advertisement, few historians of the period have made significant use of the documents contained within "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript"; none have linked its "The Manners and Customs of the North-Western Indians" to Wells. The most recent study of Miami history and culture, Stewart Rafert's *The Miami Indians of Indiana*, makes no mention of Beckwith's 1883 work, although Rafert briefly refers to Wells three times and makes extensive use of another reliable account from this period, *Meearmeeear Traditions*, compiled by C. C. Trowbridge for Gov. Lewis Cass in 1825.<sup>24</sup> Harvey Lewis Carter's 1987 book *The Life and Times of Little Turtle*, the standard biography of the Miami chief and his son-in-law William Wells, also overlooks "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript."<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, Carter does cite a source entitled "A discription of the Emigration, Habits, &c. of the N. Western Indians, As Received from the Most Intelligent and Ancient Indians"—written in 1817 by an author who called himself William Turner of Wellsington—which includes a number of details to be found (albeit with different wording) in the *Western Review* articles of 1820.<sup>26</sup> Further, the typescript of Turner's manuscript, held at the Newberry Library in Chicago, is similar to, but not exactly the same as, "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript." The three sources are almost certainly related to one another. Who then was William Turner, and what was the relation of his 1817 work, either to the 1820 articles or to the later Fort Wayne Manuscript?

In 1810, William Turner arrived at Fort Wayne as a surgeon's mate. During the Indian councils of September 11 and October 2, 1811, he

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<sup>24</sup>Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1996* (Indianapolis, 1996), 53, 70, 74; C. C. Trowbridge, *Meearmeeear Traditions*, ed. Vernon Kinietz (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1938). Hereafter abbreviated as MT.

<sup>25</sup>Harvey Lewis Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle: First Sagamore of the Wabash* (Urbana, Ill., 1987). Hutton, "William Wells," does not cite the FWM. Bert Anson, *The Miami Indians* (Norman, Okla., 1970), uses Trowbridge, but not the FWM.

<sup>26</sup>William Turner, "A Discription of the Emigration, Habits, &c. of the N. Western Indians. As Received from the Most Intelligent and Ancient Indians," from the John Howard Payne Papers (Ayer MS689, vol. 10, no.2), Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago. I am grateful to Jo Ellen Dickie for sending me a copy of the handwritten original in 2008.

served as a witness and made a faithful transcription of Wells's translation of the Indian speeches at the council as they were given. The year after Wells was killed, Turner resigned his commission and began a campaign to obtain Wells's old job as Indian agent for the Miami at Fort Wayne. In 1815, Turner married Wells's and Sweet Breeze's daughter, Anne. He began to style himself William Turner of Wellsington, after the formal name given to Wells's extensive land holdings in Fort Wayne. In letters to her sister, Anne expressed dissatisfaction with her life, lamenting Turner's frequent absences, his excessive spending, and his drinking. Despite his shortcomings, Turner managed to be named secretary to the Treaty of St. Mary's in 1818, and shortly thereafter he was finally appointed Indian agent for the Miami. However, this long-sought position was short-lived; in 1820 he was fired for "unsatisfactory conduct" and he died in 1821, no doubt as a direct result of his heavy drinking.<sup>27</sup> Like many frontiersmen of his time, Turner was a man on the make, determined to get what he wanted by whatever means necessary. He did possess some degree of knowledge about Miami life and customs, through his work with Wells.

Based on my study of the documents, I believe that, following his marriage to Anne Wells in 1815, William Turner came into possession of a copy of the Wells manuscript from which the 1820 *Western Review* articles were drawn. In 1817, probably in order to enhance his qualifications as Indian agent, he claimed authorship for himself, revising phrasing, correcting diction, and changing details. Then, some time between 1817 and his own death in 1821, Turner apparently made a few further revisions in the manuscript, which was finally published anonymously as "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript" in 1883.<sup>28</sup>

In the pages that follow, I have reproduced the first printed versions (1820) of "Indian Manners and Customs" and "Indian History,"

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<sup>27</sup>Marilyn V. Wendler, *The Kentucky Frontiersman, the Connecticut Yankee, and Little Turtle's Granddaughter: A Blending of Cultures* (Maumee, Ohio, 1997) has information on William Wells's children, including Turner's marriage to Anne, 40-63. Much information about the family can be found in the Wells Family Papers File, Fort Wayne Historical Society, and the Wolcott Family Files, the Wolcott House Museum Complex, Maumee, Ohio.

<sup>28</sup>A comparison of the handwritten versions of the Turner manuscript and the FWM yields inconclusive results. In my amateur opinion, the calligraphy is similar but not exactly the same; and neither provides a perfect match with Wells's letters to the secretary of war, circa 1812. The essential issue, of course, is to establish that Wells was the author of the original manuscript published in *The Western Review*.



since they appear to present Wells's authentic work and voice, supplementing those texts with certain selected historically significant paragraphs from the Turner manuscript of 1817 (within { } marks) and "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript" of 1883 (within [ ] marks). I have also inserted explanatory footnotes for clarification.

Reading these materials together, and at least tentatively ascribing to Wells their common origin, improves our understanding of Indian-white relations in early Indiana in several ways. The first part of Wells's account is illuminating in relation to Indian battles, especially those of the 1790s in which Wells participated; the second part on "Manners and Customs" richly supplements Trowbridge's seminal document by providing first-hand observations of how the Miami lived in the late eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries. Wells's knowledge was based on his life among them from 1784 to 1792, as well as on his subsequent twenty years of service mainly at Fort Wayne. Trowbridge's account relied almost exclusively on his interviews with two elderly chiefs, Le Gros and Jean Baptiste Richardville (Peshewa, "The Wildcat"), during the winter of 1824-25. Therefore, when the two accounts are in conflict, Wells's statements might be more reliable than those found in Trowbridge, since the Miami were clearly suffering considerable dissolution at the time of his interviews and his informants were very old. Le Gros, for example, says that nowadays "children abuse their parents and very often when intoxicated, beat them," and "now nothing is more common, particularly when they are drunk, to abuse & sometimes beat their wives."<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, *Mecarmeeear Traditions* has much more information on women than does Wells's account; it includes detail on the role of women chiefs, females going on the warpath, mourning rituals, adoption ceremonies, the naming of children, courtship rituals and marriage practices, women's work, as well as the men known as "White Faces," who assumed the roles of women—all material covered only sketchily by Wells.<sup>30</sup> Obviously, the advantage of a amalgamated version of the "Indian Manners and Customs" section of "The Fort-Wayne Manuscript," is that scholars of the period now have two invaluable sources to consult when they study Miami history and culture during this fascinating period.

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<sup>29</sup>MT, 40, 47.

<sup>30</sup>MT, 14-15, 17, 26, 29, 32, 36-38, 44-48, 68.

## INDIAN HISTORY.

*From the Manuscript of Mr. William Wells.*<sup>31</sup>

The French was the first nation of white people that ever was known among the north western Indians. When the British and French commenced a war against each other in North America, the north western Indians joined the French, and several of the six nations joined the British.<sup>32</sup> My knowledge of the actions that were fought between them is derived from the old Indians whom I have conversed with on that subject, and is perhaps not to be depended on.

After the British got possession of this country from the French, a Tawway chief, by the name of Pantaock,<sup>33</sup> renewed the war against them, and took in one day all the posts that were occupied by them on the Lakes and their waters, Detroit excepted, by stratagem. After this, in 1774, the war broke out between the north western Indians and the Whites. The principal action that was fought between the parties was at the mouth of the great Kanhaway.<sup>34</sup> There were three hundred Shawanees and Delawares, and a few Miamies, Wyandots, and Mingoes, commanded by the celebrated Shawanee chief, called Comstock. This was the war which ended at the treaty of Greenville.<sup>35</sup> Although, at different times, individual nations of Indians would treat, or pretend to do so, with the Americans, it was only a temporary thing, for it frequently happened, while a party of Indians was treating with the whites, that

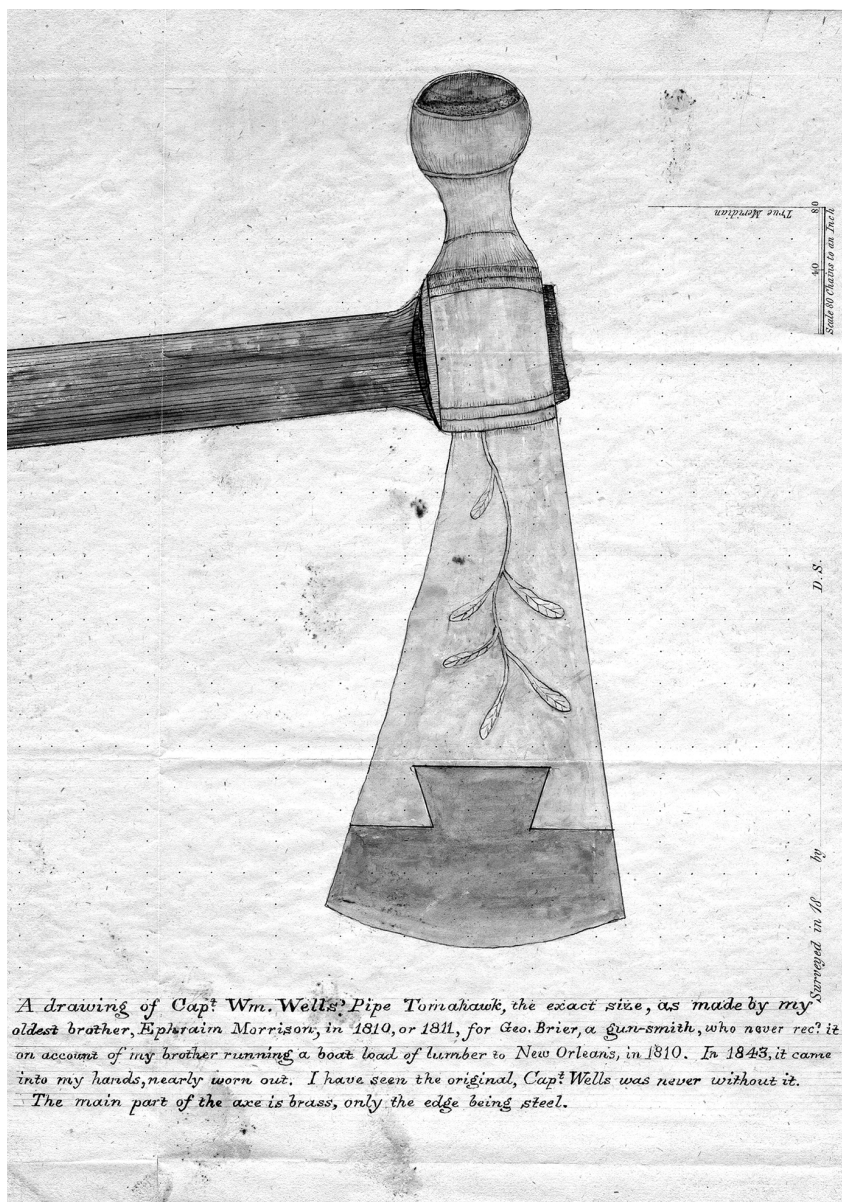
<sup>31</sup>Wells, "Indian History," 201.

<sup>32</sup>The Six Nations, or Iroquois, whose territory covered upstate New York west of the Hudson River, consisted of the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora.

<sup>33</sup>Pontiac was an Ottawa chief; and the coordinated Indian attacks in 1763 on British frontier posts were largely a response to Indian resentment that their principle partners in the fur trade would no longer be the French. White, *The Middle Ground*; Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore, Md., 2002).

<sup>34</sup>Lord Dunmore's War of 1774 had its origins in the cold-blooded killing of Chief Logan's relatives near Mingo's Bottom on the Ohio River. In retaliation, Logan's men raided the settlers in the area. At the battle of Point Pleasant, October 10, 1774, the Shawnee chief, Cornstalk, was heard urging his warriors to "Be strong! Be strong!" This hard-fought struggle, which lasted much of the day, was decisive in terms of the settlement of Kentucky. The site of the battle is near where the Kanawha empties into the Ohio. Reuben G. Thwaites and Louise P. Kelley, eds., *Documentary History of Dunmore's War: compiled from the Draper Manuscripts in the library of the Wisconsin Historical Society and published at the charge of the Wisconsin Sons of the American Revolution* (Madison, Wisc., 1905).

<sup>35</sup>The Treaty of Greenville was signed in the summer of 1795. Wells apparently saw the war for the West as a sustained twenty-year struggle, which, following a period of peace, was then renewed by Tecumseh.



William Wells's pipe tomahawk, as drawn by Ephraim Morrison c. 1810 for gunsmith George Brier. Of the weapon, Morrison's brother wrote that "the main part of the axe, only the edge being steel."

Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Museum

some of their own people would be killing those with whom their chiefs were treating.<sup>36</sup>

The Indians, who opposed general Sullivan [in 1799], were the combined forces of the Six Nations. Their numbers, and by whom they were commanded, I do not know.<sup>37</sup> The Indians that defeated general Crawford at Sandusky were the Wyandots, Delawares, and Shawanees, and a few of the Six Nations or Senecas, Potawatamies, and Ottoways, said to be eight hundred in number.<sup>38</sup> I never heard who commanded them. As the Indians always keep the number of their killed and wounded as much secret as possible I shall not undertake to say what number fell in either of the actions above mentioned.

Bowman's campaign was against the Shawanees on the Little Miami river. I am not acquainted with any of the particulars of the action that took place between him and the Indians.<sup>39</sup> My knowledge also of the different campaigns carried on against the Shawanees on Mad River and Big Miami by general Clark is not to be depended on.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>The Treaty of Paris, September 3, 1783, considered the Indian allies of the British as defeated peoples, although no chiefs were consulted or present. When they learned the terms, the Indians of the Midwest took great offense. A series of treaties relating to land along the Ohio River at Forts Stanwix (1784), McIntosh (1785), Finney (1786), and Harmar (1789) were signed by peace chiefs who often did not speak for the warriors; the Miami did not sign any of the treaties. They did agree to a treaty with General Putnam at Vincennes in 1792, which recognized the right of individual Indian nations to sell or not sell their lands, but it was rejected by the United States Senate.

<sup>37</sup>The campaign of Gen. John Sullivan of New Hampshire in the summer of 1779 mainly attacked the Cayuga and Seneca along the Chemung and Genesee Rivers. Captain John Butler of the British Indian Department and Chief Joseph Brant tried to ambush the Americans and fought several skirmishes with them, but in their relentless campaign the Americans burned every village they could find and destroyed a huge quantity of Indian corn. This was a severe blow to the Six Nations, who had for some two hundred years often controlled the balance of power between British and French settlers in the Northeast. Colin C. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York, 1995).

<sup>38</sup>Although not present, Col. William Crawford paid the price for the cold-blooded slaughter of at least ninety Moravian Indians at Gnadenhutten, Ohio, March 8, 1781, by David Williamson's militia from western Pennsylvania. Crawford, his superior, was captured and then tortured to death on March 11, 1782. Frederick Drimmer, ed., *Scalps and Tomahawks* (New York, 1961), 119-41.

<sup>39</sup>John Bowman and three hundred Kentuckians attacked Blackfish's village, Old Chillicothe, on May 29, 1779. The Shawnee chief was mortally wounded in the battle; the Americans lost ten men.

<sup>40</sup>George Rogers Clark led two attacks against Shawnee villages in Ohio. In August 1780, Clark's men burned Old Chillicothe and then sacked Pekowi and Kispoko Town on the Mad River. In November 1782, Clark's Kentuckians attacked and burned New Chillicothe on the Big Miami River and several other Shawnee towns in the vicinity. John Bakeless, *Background to Glory: The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1957).

When general Harmer arrived at the Miami town he sent Colonel Hardin in search of the Indians with a body of men.<sup>41</sup> When he met three hundred Miamies on the head of Eel River, commanded by the celebrated Miami Chief, Little Turtle, an action took place, the whites were defeated, and the Indians had one man killed and two wounded. The Indians that fought the troops under the command of colonel Hardin, in the Miami town, were the three hundred above mentioned, and commanded by the same chief, also a body of five hundred Indians, composed of Shawanees, Delawares, Chippeways, Potawatamies, and Ottoways. The Shawanees were commanded by their own chief, *Blue Jacket*, the Delawares by *Buckingeheles*, and the Ottoways and Chippeways by *Agashewah*, an Ottoway chief. The Indians say they had fifteen killed and twenty five wounded.<sup>42</sup> General Scott's Campaign was against the Weas Town on the Wabash,<sup>43</sup> where he met with little or no opposition, as the warriors of the Weas expected that he was going against the Miami Town, and had all left their own village to meet him at that place. Eight men and two women were killed by the troops under general Scott. The number of women and children, taken prisoner by him at the Weas, I do not remember.

General Wilkinson's campaign was against the Eel River town, where there were but a few women and children, ten old men, and three young ones who made no defence; four men and one woman were killed, the number of women and children taken not recollected.<sup>44</sup> In the

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<sup>41</sup>Wells's account of Harmar's Defeat, October 19-22, 1790, is especially valuable; he probably had firsthand knowledge of what happened. When General Harmar and over 1,000 men arrived at Kekionga on October 18, they found the extensive Miami settlement abandoned and the log buildings on fire. Assuming that the Indians had fled, on the next day John Hardin led 150 Kentucky militia and 50 regulars toward the Eel River in search of stragglers; instead they were ambushed by Little Turtle, whose small village was nearby, and lost about 60 men. Three days later Harmar stopped his homeward march to send 400 men to attack the Indians who had returned to Kekionga, but he was outsmarted once again by Little Turtle, reinforced by Blue Jacket's Shawnee and Buckongahelas's Delaware warriors. In this even larger defeat Harmar lost at least another 120 men. Wells's account reaffirms that Little Turtle was a master at improvising on the spot. Sword, *Washington's Indian War*; Eid, "Two Defeats."

<sup>42</sup>Turner's account expands the Indian casualties to 25 killed and 50 wounded.

<sup>43</sup>On June 1, 1791, Gen. Charles Scott and his Kentuckians attacked Ouiatenon, the main Wea town near present-day Lafayette, Indiana, and the Kickapoo village on the opposite bank of the Wabash. They killed about 40 Indians in all and took over 100 women and children captive.

<sup>44</sup>On August 7, 1791, a Kentucky force led by the notorious Gen. James Wilkinson attacked Kenapakomoko (Snake-fish Town) where Wells was brought as a captive in 1784 and adopted.

autumn of 1790, an army of Indians, composed of Miamies, Delawares, Shawanees, and a few Potawatamies, three hundred in number, commanded by *Little Turtle*, attacked Dunlap's Station, on the Big Miami River. This post was commanded by lieutenant Kingsbury.<sup>45</sup> The Indians had ten killed and the same number wounded.

There were eleven hundred and thirty three Indians in the army which defeated general St. Clair in 1791. The number of different tribes is not recollected. Among them were Miamies, Potawatamies, Ottoways, Chippeways, Wyandots, Delawares, Shawanees, and a few Mingoies and Cherokees.<sup>46</sup> Each nation was commanded by its own Chief, and the Chiefs appeared to be all governed by *Little Turtle*, who made the arrangements for the action, and commenced the attack with the Miamies under his immediate command. They had thirty killed, and, it is believed, fifty wounded.<sup>47</sup>

In the autumn of 1792, an army of three hundred Indians, under the command of *Little Turtle*, composed of Miamies, Delawares, Shawanees, and a few Potawatamies, attacked colonel John Adair under the walls of fort St. Clair, where they had two men killed.<sup>48</sup>

On the 30th of June 1794, an army of Indians, composed of

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<sup>45</sup>Dunlap's Station was a ten-cabin settlement defended by a low palisade and blockhouses. Lt. Jacob Kingsbury commanded fewer than forty able-bodied men. On January 8, 1791, the Indians captured Abner Hunt, but failed to set the station on fire with flaming arrows. After a siege of some twenty-four hours the warriors tortured Hunt to death and left. Whether *Little Turtle* or *Blue Jacket* or someone else was the commander during this failure to take such a small fort is in dispute. Sugden, *Blue Jacket*, 110-111.

<sup>46</sup>The site of St. Clair's Defeat is present-day Fort Recovery, Ohio. St. Clair's force camped for the night, mistakenly thinking they were a day's march away from Kekionga. Wells participated in the battle; his sharpshooters concentrated on killing the army's artillerymen. At dawn on November 4, 1791, *Little Turtle* attacked the Kentucky militia, who fled in panic into the main camp, causing general confusion. The rest of the Indians, led by their war chiefs, attacked from all sides, throwing back various counterattacks before overrunning the American position. Remnants of St. Clair's men broke through a thin place in the Indian encirclement and retreated pell-mell to Fort Washington in Cincinnati. Official casualties were 632 killed and 264 wounded, which represented two-thirds of St. Clair's more than 1,000 regulars and 200 militia. An estimated 100 wagon men and female camp followers were also killed. Sword, *Washington's Indian War*; Eid, "St. Clair's Defeat."

<sup>47</sup>Turner expands this figure to 40 killed and 75 wounded.

<sup>48</sup>On November 6, 1792, Col. John Adair and about 100 men were ambushed near Fort St. Clair; most of Adair's men fled back to the fort, and *Little Turtle's* men captured over 150 horses. Six soldiers were killed, including Col. Richard Taylor, father of Zachary Taylor. Years later *Little Turtle* met Adair in Frankfort, Kentucky, and jokingly reminded him, "A good general is never taken by surprise." Calvin M. Young, *Little Turtle (Me-she-kin-no-quah): The Great Chief of the Miami Indian Nation; being a sketch of his life with that of Wm. Wells and some noted descendants* (Greenville, Ohio, 1917), 67.



Ottoways, Chippeways, Miamies, Wyandots, Pottowatomies, Shawanees, and Delawares, with a number of French and other white men in the British interest, attacked Fort Recovery.<sup>49</sup> The Indians were commanded by the Bear Chief, an Ottoway. The white men attached to the Indian army, it is said, were commanded by Elliott and M'Kee, both British officers: the garrison was commanded by captain Gibson of the fourth sublegion.<sup>50</sup> The Indians have told me repeatedly that they had between forty and fifty killed, and upwards of one hundred wounded, a number of whom died. This was the severest blow I ever knew the Indians to receive from the whites. The Indians that fought general Wayne on the 20th of August were an army of eight hundred, made up of Wyandots, Chippeways, Ottoways, Delawares, Shawanees, Miamies, and Potawatamies, with a number of white traders from Detroit. The Indians were governed by British influence, and had no commander of their own; consequently they made but little resistance. It is said they had twenty killed and fifteen wounded.<sup>51</sup> This battle was what may be called the finishing blow, as no action of consequence has taken place between the whites and Indians since that time.

[The Indians that fought the troops under the command of Governor Harrison, on the 7th of November, 1811, were composed of Shawanoes, Puttawatamies, Kickapoos, Wyndbagoes, Taways, and a few Muscoes, amounting in all to one hundred and fifty, agreeable to the most correct information that could be procured from the Indians that

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<sup>49</sup>Following their victory of November 4, 1791, the Indians hid the cannon they had captured nearby. When Wells switched sides and became a scout for General Wayne, he pointed out where several of the cannon were hidden; these became a crucial part of the defenses of Fort Recovery, which was built on the site of the battle and placed under the command of Capt. Alexander Gibson. In spite of Little Turtle's advice to ambush only wagon-supply trains traveling between American outposts, the Lake Indians led by the Bear Chief of the Ottawa insisted on attacking the fort on June 30, 1794, and suffered a costly defeat that undercut the entire Indian effort to resist the advance of Wayne's well-trained legion.

<sup>50</sup>Matthew Elliott and Alexander McKee, both of whom were married to Shawnee women, had great influence with the Indians of the Northwest Territory and encouraged them to resist the Americans. Larry L. Nelson, *A Man of Distinction among Them: Alexander McKee and the Ohio Frontier, 1754-1799* (Kent, Ohio, 1999); Reginald Horsman, *Matthew Elliott: British Indian Agent* (Detroit, Mich., 1964).

<sup>51</sup>Wells, as head spy for Wayne, played a prominent role in this campaign. Blue Jacket had replaced Little Turtle as the commander of the Indian force, and he made the decision to place his warriors among fallen timber left by a tornado. This fortified position limited the Indians' ability to maneuver against Wayne's bayonet charge, and support from British troops in nearby Fort Miami never materialized. Although Indian losses were low, the defeat was decisive. Sugden, *Blue Jacket*, 172-87.

were in the action.<sup>52</sup> The Indians lost twenty-five men killed in the action. The number of wounded has not been ascertained. This is the last action that was fought between the Indians and the whites.<sup>53</sup>

The Indians and whites lived in peace and friendship from the treaty of Greenville, which was held in 1795, until the first raising of the Shawanoe Prophet, which was in 1807, from that time until the 7th November, 1811, the time that the Prophet's followers fought the troops under the command of Governor Harrison; that treacherous and nefarious scoundrel has been fostered by the British Government, and caused a considerable number of the North-Western Indians to be unfriendly toward the United States, and occasionally committed depredations of murder on our Western frontiers.]

There was not always a separate cause for each campaign of the Indians against the whites.<sup>54</sup> The war, which began in 1774, caused by the ill treatment the Indians received from the whites on the frontiers of the white settlements, was continued by the Indians owing to the great influence the British had among them. This influence was kept up by the large supplies of arms and ammunition the Indians received from the British government every year. From this it is evident that if the United States had got possession of the posts on the Lakes, which the British government agreed to deliver up to them in 1783, there would have been no Indian war after that time.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>This paragraph appears in Turner and the FWM, but not Wells's published account of 1820. The heightened rhetoric and different spellings of tribal names suggest that Turner embellished a sketchy account left behind by Wells, perhaps as an addendum to his original manuscript. Wells was not present at Tippecanoe, but his brother Sam led the Kentucky militia. The statement of 150 warriors involved, while lower than most estimates, is supported by some Indian testimony. Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 231-32.

<sup>53</sup>When Tecumseh went south to recruit more men, Harrison moved against Tippecanoe, or Prophetstown, where the Shawnee Prophet held sway. Although Tecumseh had instructed his brother to avoid hostilities, when Harrison's force of about 1,000 men arrived, the Prophet told his men that they would be victorious if they attacked at night and killed Harrison. After several hours of fierce fighting in the dark, the Indians were defeated and dispersed and Harrison burned the town. It is revealing of Turner's limited expertise that he made no effort to update Wells's manuscript by adding information about the War of 1812.

<sup>54</sup>This paragraph resumes the 1820 account.

<sup>55</sup>According to the Treaty of Paris, the British were to cede their frontier forts and the Americans were to compensate the Tories for their lost property. Both sides reneged on the agreement. Wells, in his letters to the secretary of war, frequently cited "the intrigues of British agents." For the tendency of Americans to blame all their troubles with the Indians on the British, see Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer*.



## INDIAN MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

The Miami Nation is composed of the oldest inhabitants of this country. Whence they emigrated is not known. The Eel River tribe, the Weas, Piankishaws and Kaskaskias, are branches or tribes of the Miami nation, and all speak one language.<sup>56</sup> The Delawares emigrated to this country from the east and are called by the other Indians *Elinohbah*, or people from the sun rise. The Shawanees came from the west or from Florida. The Wyandots, Chippewas, Ottowas, Pottowatamies, and Kickapoos emigrated from the north and north west. The Winnebagoes and Melomanees, who inhabit the west side of Lake Michigan, emigrated from the west, the Sacks, Foxes, Jawwees, Emassalees, and Nawtowsessees, also from the north west.

Though there is a great difference in the languages of these Indians, there is but little difference in their customs and manners. They are warm friends and determined enemies: they will go great lengths to serve their friends, and equally far to punish their enemies. The men are trained to hunting and war, whilst all the menial work is left for the women.

Each nation is divided into villages, and each village has one or more chiefs according to its size, who keep their servants in order by persuasion, as arbitrary power is never used except in cases of murder. There are but few chiefs whose influence extends farther than among the people of their respective villages.

The bodies of the children, both male and female, are early inured to hardships by their being compelled to fast and to bathe their bodies every day in cold water. The time a child must fast is regulated by its age. Thus a child of eight years old will fast half a day and one of twelve or more will go without food and drink all day. The child, while it is fasting, has its face blacked and is made to wash before eating. The face of the male is blacked all over; that of the female on the cheeks only. The male quits this practice at the age of eighteen years, and the female at the age of fourteen. When the boy arrives at the age of eighteen, it is said by his parents that his education is complete and that he is old enough to be a

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<sup>56</sup>Turner says, "...with a slight variation speak the same language." Turner, "A Discription," 39. He also identifies where the various tribes are located, circa 1817, although he mistakenly places the Miami on the Wabash and Mississippi, when he probably means the Mississinewa River. Trowbridge in his prefatory letter to Gen. Lewis Cass notes that, "the Miamies understand perfectly the Kaskaskias, Peorias, Weas & Piankeshaws, because these tribes have all descended from them." *MT*, 2.

man. His face is then blacked for the last time; he is taken a mile or two from any house, where he has a small hut built for him out of bushes or weeds. After this he is addressed by his father or guardian in the following words: "My son, it has pleased all the great spirits that dwell above the skies and those that dwell on the earth that you should live to see this day: they have all seen your conduct since I first blacked your face: they know whether you have at all times strictly adhered to the advice I have given you; and I hope they will reward you accordingly. You must remain here until myself or some other friend shall come for you." The man then returns home, takes his gun, and goes hunting while his son is left five or six, and sometimes eight, days without any thing to eat or drink. When the father has procured meat for a feast, he invites some of his neighbours to come and partake of what he has: they accompany him to where his son has been for days: the boy is then taken home and bathed in cold water, his head shaved all over except a small part on the top. Food is then given him which had been prepared in a separate vessel for that purpose. After he has done eating, a looking glass and a bag of vermilion or paint are given him.<sup>57</sup> He is then told by the company that he is a man and he is ever afterwards considered as such by the people of the village. Immediately after an Indian boy's face is blacked, which is at day break, he takes his bow and goes to the woods, and does not return until the usual time for him to wash his face and get something to eat.

I have frequently accompanied Indian boys when their faces were blacked and I never knew a single instance of their eating or drinking while they were in that situation or without the knowledge of their parents. Their minds are operated on by fears: they are made to believe that if they should eat or drink with their faces blacked it would be followed by immediate punishment from the great spirits who watch strictly over their actions.

{When a female arrives at the age of puberty, which is generally from thirteen to fifteen years after birth, and her monthly discharges or cattenenia commences, she is separated from the family, and a small hut is built for her some distance from the house where her parents reside. She is put in the hut prepared for that purpose where she remains until

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<sup>57</sup>Trowbridge discusses face painting and vision quests in less detail than Wells, but he does concur that "this change of the paints is considered an important era in the life of an Indian." *MT*, 56, 67-8.

the menstrual discharge ceases, during which time but a small quantity of nutriment is allowed, and no person is permitted to visit or associate with her.

During this state of nature call, her provisions are prepared in a separate dish at a fire made for that purpose. Her clothing and cooking utensils during this time are considered unclean, and after this call of nature ceases, she is directed to bathe herself in cold water; after which a sweat house is prepared; she is taken into it by her mother, or some female friend, and is scarafyed on her legs and arms with a sharp flint; after this operation is over they conceive her system perfectly purified, she is then admitted into the family as purified for association. This practice prevails and is strictly adhered to by the females of all ages.

It is from these early habits, that the system of the Indians are prepared to endure the fatigues, hardships, and inclemencies to which they are always subject.

If a female is pregnant when traveling, and her time of parturition comes on, she will at the call of nature stop at the first convenient stream or pool of water, where she will be delivered; she will then wash her child in cold water, and wrap it in her blanket, or any old cloths she may have: she will then wash herself, and in two hours, be prepared to proceed on her journey.<sup>58</sup>

Polygamy is permitted among the Indians.<sup>59</sup> A man may have as many wives as he pleases, and young men are instructed by their parents to get as many as they can, but by no means to involve themselves or friends in any quarrels with their neighbours. The marriage ceremonies observed among the Indians are of three different sorts. 1st. When the parties can agree, no farther [*sic*] ceremony is necessary. 2nd, when a young man is fond of a young woman, and she will not consent to have him unless he first obtains the consent of her parents, which must be attempted by a present suited to the character and condition of the girl. If the present is received the marriage is completed; if it is returned, it is

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<sup>58</sup>These four paragraphs are from Turner's 1817 manuscript; they also appear, with variations, in the FWM. This additional material is worth including because it appears to offer relatively valid information about Miami female customs. Trowbridge provides no comparable information on the taboos related to the menstrual cycle.

<sup>59</sup>Trowbridge discusses courtship and marriage, noting that "An Indian is allowed to have as many wives as he can maintain," adding that one of his informants, Le Gros, "once knew a woman to have two husbands at the same time and to live with them both happily." *MT*, 41-46.

understood that they will not consent to the match. But the third mode is considered the most honorable, and most binding upon the parties concerned. When an Indian has a son whom he wishes to see married to some good woman, he assembles his friends and relations and advises with them what woman his son shall marry. When a choice is made, the relations of the young man collect what presents they think sufficient for the occasion, go to the parents of the intended bride, make their wishes known, leave the articles they take with them, and return without waiting for an answer.

The relations of the girl then assemble and consult on the subject, and, if they agree to the match, they collect suitable presents, dress the girl in her best clothes, and take her to those who made application for the match, when it is considered that the marriage is completed. If on the contrary she or her friends disapprove the match, the presents from the friends of the young man are returned, which is considered as a refusal.

When an Indian wishes to go to war, he informs one or two of his most intimate friends of his intention, and asks them if they will go with him. The party is then made up by their informing as many as they wish. Their intentions are kept a secret from all others, as the man who is to command wishes to have those only who will at all times cheerfully obey his orders. The party always leaves the villages in the night secretly. When they encamp the captain places the oldest in front and the youngest in the rear. The former do all the hunting for the party and keep a strict watch for the enemy: the latter cook, make fires, and mend the moccasins [sic] of the party.<sup>60</sup>

Every war party has a small budget called the war budget, which contains something belonging to each of the party, and representing some animal, as for example a snake's skin, a buffalo's tail, a wolf's head, a mink's skin, or the feathers of some extraordinary bird. This budget is considered sacred, and is carried by some person chosen for that purpose, who always marches in front, and leads the party to the enemy. He is never passed on the march by any of the party, while he has the budget on his back. When the party halts, the budget is laid on the ground in front of them, and no person is permitted to pass it without orders from

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<sup>60</sup>Trowbridge adds that the elder men camp on the south side of the fire and are called "Those who are respected," while the young men sit on the opposite side and are called "Those who respect." *MT*, 20.

proper authority.<sup>61</sup> No one is allowed to lay his pack on a log, nor is any one suffered to talk about home or about women while the party is going towards the enemy. When a four-legged animal is killed by the party, the heart is carefully preserved by a person appointed for that purpose. When they encamp, a fire is built by the side of the war budget, and the heart of the animal slain is cut up into small pieces and burnt. The sticks intended to roast meat on are formed with a slit, in which the meat is placed: the other end being sharpened for the purpose of sticking them in the ground.<sup>62</sup> No person is allowed to step across the fire: every one must go round it and always in the same direction with the sun.

When the enemy is to be attacked the war budget is opened, and each man takes out his emblem and ties it to that part of his body directed by his ancestors. An Indian when he attacks his enemy is generally nearly naked, and his body is painted with different colours, commonly red. After the action is over, each person returns his war bag to the commander of the party, who wraps them all up carefully and gives the budget to the man who has taken the first prisoner or scalp and he is entitled to the honor of leading the party home in triumph. The war budget is then hung in front of the door of the person that carried it on the march against the enemy, where it is left hanging for thirty or forty days, and some one of the party sings and dances near it. When the man who commanded thinks proper, he assembles the party and a feast is prepared for the people of the village, who sing and dance all night. Those of the party who injured the enemy most serve out the feast to the people. The war budget is then opened by the man that commanded, each of them takes his war bag, and the party is dissolved.

Every Indian has one or more of the skins or images, which are called in Miami *Corpennah*, and which they continually worship.<sup>63</sup> They say that when the creator formed them he gave them those things, and

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<sup>61</sup>Turner says "a war budget is formed of a leather bag." Trowbridge states that "They always march in single file and never pass the carrier of the medicine bag." He even cites rare instances where a female seeking to avenge the death of her friends is allowed to carry the war bundle. Turner, "A Discription," 51; MT, 20, 26.

<sup>62</sup>Turner elaborates, "The stick is peeled, sharpened at one end only, it is then split half its length, in which split the meat is placed and the sharp end of it stuck in the ground for the meat to cook. They never cook the meat entirely done on their march towards the enemy; as they conceive the more blood they eat, the more heroic and vicious they will be in battle." Turner, "A Discription," 52.

<sup>63</sup>Turner spells this word "Corpenyomer"; it is also spelled that way in the FWM.

told them that if they would worship them, they would live to an old age and be happy. Some member of every family therefore worships these instruments regularly every month, sometimes oftener, by preparing a kettle full of victuals and a few pipes of tobacco, and singing all night the songs he has been taught by his ancestors, which may be called religious songs. He invites his neighbours to come and eat the victuals, and when they are assembled states the cause of his calling them together, after which they proceed to eating with a great deal of ceremony. Each person throws a little of the victuals into the fire before he puts any in his mouth. Few Indians will give an opinion respecting a future state of existence. They say that those things are only enquired after by fools and white men. Some of them have told me that there were two other worlds to which the ghosts of this world go; one the place of residence of the great and good spirit, and the other that of the bad, that the ghosts of good men live with the good spirit and the ghosts of bad men with the bad spirit.<sup>64</sup> When asked what qualities are necessary for a good man, they would reply, to be a good father, a good husband, a good warrior, and a lover of his nation. The Indians generally appear to care but little about a future state of existence and only appear to be anxious to live to old age. When an Indian dies, his relations black their faces and fast for a certain time fixed by the head of the family. The neighbours assemble and bury the dead, after which the heads of those families who are friendly towards the family of the deceased take some article of clothing and go and address the friends of the deceased in the following words: 'Friends, we are sorry that it has pleased the great spirit to call one of your family from you, but this is not uncommon among us people of this world. Our friend is only going on his journey a few days before us. We have come therefore to invite you to mourn no longer, and to cover the body of our departed friend.'<sup>65</sup> They then return, and the articles of

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<sup>64</sup>Trowbridge states that "They do not universally believe in the existence of a Supreme and ordinary deities, as do the other Indians." As to the afterlife, he finds that "They entertain no doubt of a future state of rewards and punishments, correspondent to their good and evil conduct on this life," but he later adds that "They have no ideas respecting a final judgment," *MT*, 51, 53, 56.

<sup>65</sup>The phrase "to cover the body" generally refers to appropriate gifts and rituals at the time of a death. Trowbridge quotes a similar speech that says the dead go on a journey to the west where they will be joined "at an appointed time" by the people who are still living. *MT*, 30-34.

clothing they left are preserved for the person that is to be adopted in the place of the deceased.<sup>66</sup>

When an Indian loses one of his friends by death, he believes that if the place is not supplied by adoption, more of his friends will die.<sup>67</sup> Should the deceased be a male, the most intimate male friend is chosen to fill his vacancy: if a female, her most intimate female friend is chosen. If the deceased be a person of respectability it frequently happens that two persons are chosen to fill the vacancy.

When every thing is ready, the person or persons are sent for, and the ceremony begins. If the deceased were a warrior, the adoption is exhibited by the warriors of the village who assemble at the house of the deceased, dance the war dance, and sing the war song in rotation. The warrior goes through all the actions he performed when he was engaged with his enemy, after which he repeats to the assembly the number of actions he has been in and the number of scalps he has taken, occasionally giving the same yells and using the same words he uttered when he was in battle. During all the time there is a constant yelling of the war whoop by the assembly. When the warrior has gone through such of his war exploits as he thinks proper, he hands the war club to some other warrior, and sits down: the other rises and repeats as many of *his* war exploits as he thinks proper in the same way, and thus the dance is continued until each warrior of the village is called on to relate his war exploits. Some are even called on two or three times. The assembly is then dismissed by the speaker of the friends of the deceased, who declares that their hearts are glad. The person adopted, who during the dance sits among the relations of the deceased, is then moved by his new relations to a private room, where he receives every thing that belonged to the deceased, as well as the articles of clothing that had been received from the neighbours. He is then told that he is one of the family and is considered as such, and that he is entitled to the same authority in the nation as the person whose place he fills.

When a common man, woman, or child dies, the adoption is exhibited by a few people of both sexes playing some favourite game of the deceased.

When an Indian goes to the grave of his friend or relation he addresses himself to the grave as though the corpse were living, and

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<sup>66</sup>Wells, who was captured and adopted, would know this at first hand.

<sup>67</sup>Trowbridge discusses adoption ceremonies, especially "the Discovery dance," *MT*, 34-37.

relates every misfortune that has happened in the family since it was buried. He then leaves there a piece of tobacco, some victuals or spirituous liquors, if he have any, and departs.

The Indians are an indolent people, and are therefore fond of any kind of amusement that may serve to pass away time and make them merry. They have a variety of games too tedious to mention,<sup>68</sup> and are remarkably honorable in paying their gambling debts.<sup>69</sup> They have a variety of dances. The morning dance begins in the evening and continues until morning when the feast is served up to the company. Another dance is performed by a certain society. Each member of the society is supposed to possess secret arts by which he can destroy the life of his neighbours when he pleases, without its being known to them or any one else. Persons of both sexes are adopted into this society with a great deal of ceremony.<sup>70</sup> When they dance it is common for each person to have an otter skin. The oldest members place themselves in the middle of the floor, and the dance begins by their singing the songs of the society. A circle is formed around the singers and each person commences dancing with his otter skin in his hand. After a few minutes some one of the company makes a noise like an otter, shakes his skin and walks or dances round the inside of the circle, suddenly making a motion with his skin at some one of the company, who screams out and falls as if he had been shot. In a few moments he recovers and in his turn loads his otter skin, pretending to cough up the ball he was just shot with. When it appears that the ball is in his mouth, he puts the nose of the otter skin to his mouth and his piece is loaded. He then goes round the circle as was before done, and shoots any one he pleases.<sup>71</sup> In this way the dance is

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<sup>68</sup>Turner adds: "Their games are cards, Moccasin, shooting, sliding a crooked stick on the snow or ground throwing a small stick out of the hand, and a variety of others too tedious to mention." Turner, "A Discription," 53-54. The FWM notes that "the game of Moccasin is most generally practiced among them," FWM 94. Trowbridge describes the moccasin game in detail, which involves competing teams guessing which moccasin hides a bullet. *MT*, 61.

<sup>69</sup>Trowbridge provides descriptions of various Indian games, but he does not agree with Wells that Indians were "honorable" when it came to gambling: "They often bet so high & lose so much that quarreling & bloodshed are consequences of this game [Bowls], simple as it is." *MT*, 59-65.

<sup>70</sup>Trowbridge's informant, Le Gros, gives an elaborate account of a Medicine Society, sometimes referred to as a Man-Eating Society, which formerly flourished among the Miami. *MT*, 77-90.

<sup>71</sup>Trowbridge also describes this curious custom, stating that "they go through the ceremony of shooting each other with skins of animals, as has been seen." *MT*, 22.



continued for such a length of time as the managers think proper. No person can quit the dance until it is broken up by them. The members of this society were formerly much feared by their neighbours, but are now treated with great contempt.

The begging dance is performed by young men and boys, who dress like warriors and go about through the village singing war songs and dancing. It is customary for the heads of families, at whose house they dance, to give them something. This is the dance they generally exhibit among white people. There are a number of other dances, such as the bear dance, the turkey dance, the new corn dance, and pipe dance, &c.

When business of importance comes before an Indian chief, he calls a council of the heads of each family of his village, and lays the business before them on which he means to deliberate.<sup>72</sup> An orator then rises, and, after stating the importance of the business, gives his opinion to the council. Should the council concur with him, nothing more is said, but the council is adjourned by the chief. Should a difference of opinion prevail among the counselors, the subject is debated by the different parties, after which the chief adjourns them as before. When the chief gives his final answer to any thing that is thought of importance, it is done in the presence of his counsellors. No business is done by him privately. No crime among the Indians is punished with death, excepting murder; in which case the chiefs and old men assemble and inquire into the nature of the act, and if, after they are informed of the particulars of the transaction, they are of opinion that the accused acted in his own defence, or that there was something that authorised him to kill the other, they make a present to the friends of the deceased, and tell them they have wiped away the blood, but that if they are the cause of spilling more blood, the vengeance of the village will fall on them. If, on the contrary, they find the person has been murdered without cause, they say nothing to his relations, but leave them to punish the murderer as they think proper, which is generally with death.

The Indians live in villages from April to November, during which time the women cultivate corn, beans, potatoes, pumpkins, and other common vegetables. The men seldom assist their women in farming. Little Turtle and a young Weas chief are the only two Indians that I know

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<sup>72</sup>The next three paragraphs are completely missing from Turner and the FWM.

of that use the plough. The remainder of the year is spent in hunting. The Indians appear to decrease in number, particularly those who live nearest the white settlements, perhaps in consequence of the scarcity of game and their continual intoxication. The Indians divide the time as the whites do, by moons, and into four seasons, autumn, winter, spring and summer. January is called Buck moon, February the Bear, March the Young Bear, April the Crow, May the Crane, June the Whippoorwill, July the Cornhilling moon, August the Roasting Ear, September the Hard Corn, October the Little Fire, November the Big Fire, and December the Young Buck moon.<sup>73</sup>

The Indians hold property individually, but are not so fond of it as the whites are. They are much kinder to their neighbors and to strangers than the whites are.

The Indians have no laws, no coercive power, nor any kind of government. Their only contracts are their manners and customs, and that moral sense of right and wrong, which, like the sense of tasting and feeling in every man, makes a part of his nature. An offence against them is punished with contempt and exclusion from society, &c.

The Indians believe that the thunder and lightning and other disturbances of the natural world, are independent and distinct powers or beings, and worship them occasionally.

The Powwowers or Priests were formerly in high estimation, as it is believed that they are the agents of the different powers, or great spirits that govern the universe, and that they have power to kill or cure as they think proper. They generally act as doctors, and sometimes go through the village early in the morning preaching, and tell the people what to do during the day.<sup>74</sup> They are not so much respected now as they formerly were. I have never understood that the North Western Indians buried their dead in any other way, than as at present. Some lay the dead body on the top of the ground, make a crib or pen over it, and cover it with bark. Others dig graves and lay the corpse in, and cover it first with bark and then with earth. Others still make a coffin out of strong boards,

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<sup>73</sup>Wells and Trowbridge generally agree on the Miami moons, although Trowbridge calls September "Elk" instead of "Hard Corn" and November "Running moon—for Deer" rather than "Big Fire." *MT*, 50.

<sup>74</sup>The FWM adds: "Those supposed inspired beings generally act as doctors, and it is not uncommon for them to extract a hair ball on the whisker of a bear, a wolf, or a panther, from the body or joint of their patients (or at least make them believe so)." *FWM*, 95.

in which they put the corpse and hang it up in the top of a tree. It is customary to bury as much of the deceased's property with the body as can conveniently be put into the grave with it. [They frequently put a piece of bread or meat and a carrot of tobacco under the head of the person to be interred, as they believe they will be in need of some refreshment on their journey. They generally celebrate the death of a distinguished chief or warrior by drinking, feasting, dancing, and singing.

The Indians are subject to all the different diseases that the whites are (the gout not excepted).]<sup>75</sup>



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<sup>75</sup>Wells may have added this material following the death of Little Turtle, July 14, 1812, who suffered from the gout. Or Turner, who was a doctor, may have added it. When told that gout was a gentleman's disease, Little Turtle replied, "I have always believed that I was a gentleman." Young, *Little Turtle*, 150. A century later, in July 1912, the grave of Little Turtle was discovered at 634 Lawton Place in Fort Wayne. His grave goods, now on display at the Fort Wayne History Center, included a dress sword, which was sent to him by President Washington, and the following items of silver: eight armlets, two anklets, three medals, six pendants, two bead necklaces, twenty-three crosses, four brooches, and a pair of large ear hoops. Trowbridge notes that "it is not common to see large quantities of silver works placed in a grave." *MT*, 33. Other grave goods included a pocketknife, a clasp knife, a drinking cup, a spoon, a pair of scissors, a hammer, a gun, a bullet mold, a pistol, a flintlock, an axe, a tomahawk, a pair of steel spurs, three large skinning knives, a copper kettle, a flask, and a bottle of vermillion paint. Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle*, 228-29.