

William Henry Smith Memorial Library
of the
Indiana Historical Society

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Sketches and plans of three early forts and several interesting letters were acquired by the library at the auction sale of the James McHenry Papers in New York in May. McHenry was aide-de-camp and private secretary of General George Washington, aide-de-camp of Gilbert Motier Marquis de Lafayette, and secretary of war from 1796 to 1800. His papers, which included many documents and letters from the years as head of the War Department, had been preserved by descendants until this sale, which, in worthwhile and interesting material, was one of the outstanding auctions of recent years.

A ground plan of Fort Knox, Vincennes, 1788, shows, with accompanying notes, barracks for officers and men, two-story blockhouses with platforms to mount cannon on upper floors, a sunken magazine, a blacksmith's shop, the main gate over which is built a guardhouse, the sally port, and palisades standing eleven feet above ground. The scale of the plan is given. This plan gives slightly more information than and shows interesting variations in details and size from a plan to which date 1788 has been given, which is in the War Department files and of which the Indiana State Library has a photostat.

The plan of Fort Finney, which was built at the mouth of the Miami in 1785, shows the type of construction of the buildings and the location in reference to the Ohio and Great Miami rivers and a neighboring ravine. Dimensions are given for the buildings, council house, kitchen and vault outside the palisades of the fort, blockhouses at each corner, guardhouse and commissary's store, and magazine within the nine-foot high palisades with main gate over which the flag flies, and two sally ports. Loopholes in the blockhouses for firing are indicated.

For the second Fort Finney, erected on the Indiana shore at the Falls of the Ohio in the winter of 1786-1787, there are delicately tinted drawings of the interior of the fort as seen from the main gate and the exterior from the

southeast and, on a third sheet, two plans. One shows location of the fort in reference to the river, Silver Creek, Louisville, and Clark-Ville. The other plan shows buildings with doors and chimneys indicated and pickets between the buildings. The plans show the fort was on a hill overlooking the river and indicate springs at the foot of the hill. This sheet carries the name of the mapmaker, Captain Jonathan Heart.

Both the Fort Finneys were constructed under the supervision of Captain Walter Finney and were named for him. There is material on the building of the one at the mouth of the Miami in Major Ebenezer Denny's journal and in that of General Richard Butler. A main purpose of this fort and the council house built near it and shown on the plan was to provide a meeting place for certain of the Indians and commissioners who had been appointed to arrange a treaty with them. General Butler and George Rogers Clark were two of these commissioners. A letter from Clark written from this fort in November, 1785, was purchased by the library earlier this year. After the conference with the Indians was concluded, this fort was more or less abandoned. Lieutenant Denny mentioned also the Fort Finney at the Falls of the Ohio; and Sergeant Joseph Buell, who spent the month of June, 1787, there, tells of it in his journal.

A member of the Indiana Historical Society donated the funds necessary for purchase of these plans and drawings of the forts.

Undated, but probably of about the same period as the construction of these forts, are two pages of instructions for "construction of Forts against Indians."

Letters of Alexander Hamilton, April 29 and May 2, 1799, to McHenry, deal with a galley built at Pittsburgh and to be used by General James Wilkinson or Colonel John F. Hamtranck for auxiliary protection on the Mississippi.

William Henry Harrison, writing McHenry from Fort Washington (Cincinnati), August 13, 1797, gives information concerning the movements of certain persons suspected of promoting sedition. War with France seemed imminent at that time.

General Arthur St. Clair, July 18, 1796, also gives McHenry information about a person under suspicion whose movements he had been asked to report. This letter is not printed in the *St. Clair Papers*, but those of May and of

September 6, 1796, so printed deal with the same matter.

James Röss, of Pennsylvania, writing to McHenry April 3, 1797, concerning Indians, the French and the western frontier, speaks in glowing terms of the General John Gibson who was later to be secretary and acting-governor of Indiana Territory.

General Anthony Wayne sends McHenry, February 22, 1796, a list of ordnance and artillery stores wanted for the Legion in 1796; also, probably the same year, an estimate of the number of troops and cannon needed to garrison the posts of "Michillimackinac, Detroit, Miamis, Niagra."