

## Documents

### A NEW LETTER ABOUT THE MASSACRE AT FORT DEARBORN

Edited by JOHN D. BARNHART

Eyewitness accounts of the Fort Dearborn Massacre are few, most of the few are very brief, and two at least are not very trustworthy. For these reasons the appearance of a second letter of Walter K. Jordan, who was present at the massacre, is a matter of interest and of some importance. The account which the letter contains is substantially the same as given in a previous letter, but its publication should help to settle some doubts about Jordan.

A review of the previously known narratives aids in the evaluation of the new letter. Dr. Milo M. Quaife discussed this material in his *Chicago and the Old Northwest*.<sup>1</sup> Captain Nathan Heald, the commandant of Fort Dearborn, prepared an official report,<sup>2</sup> which was written with candor a few weeks after the massacre. Although it is very brief, it is probably our most important account. A still more concise statement is found in Captain Heald's journal.<sup>3</sup> Lieutenant Linai T. Helm in the summer of 1814 prepared an account which is longer than that of his superior officer.<sup>4</sup> It might have been of great value if he had not assiduously sought to discredit Captain Heald, misstating facts in order to accomplish his purpose. This account remained unknown for three-quarters of a century, but it influenced another narrative which has been followed by most of the later writers. This is the well-known story of Mrs. Juliette A. Kinzie, *Wau Bun*.<sup>5</sup> Her account of the massacre first appeared in 1844 in a pamphlet,<sup>6</sup> and twelve years later in book form. It is impossible to grant it the distinction of being as it claims an eyewitness account, for the author was not present at the massacre. She was related by marriage to the Kinzie fam-

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<sup>1</sup> Milo M. Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest, 1673-1835* (Chicago, 1913), 378-401.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 406-408.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 402-405.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 415-421.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Juliette A. Kinzie, *Wau Bun or the Early Day in the Northwest* (Chicago, 1856).

<sup>6</sup> *Narrative of the Massacre at Chicago, August 15, 1812, and of Some Preceding Events* (Chicago, 1844).

ily and to Mrs. Helm, who was also a Kinzie. John Kinzie, the trader at Fort Dearborn, lost heavily when the fort was evacuated. He endeavored at the time to persuade Captain Heald to disobey General William Hull's order of evacuation. Mrs. Kinzie's narrative is not only marked by the prejudices of her family and of Lieutenant Helm, but also by misstatements of fact and by a great fondness for the dramatic and the romantic.

It abounds in details that could not possibly have been remembered by Mrs. Kinzie's supposed informants; in others that could not have been known to them; and in still others that could never have occurred. Undaunted by the absence of records, Mrs. Kinzie repeats speeches and dialogues verbatim, as she, apparently, conceived they should have been recited.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast is the *History of the Late War in the Western Country* by Robert B. McAfee. It is one of the best contemporary narratives of the War of 1812, and it contains a brief description of the massacre as reported by Sergeant William Griffith who was present. Although it does not pretend to be in his exact words, it does seem to be "a plain, unvarnished statement of facts, furnished by an eye witness," as claimed by McAfee.<sup>8</sup>

Another short account of the massacre was published by Dr. Quaife in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, entitled "The Story of James Corbin, A Soldier of Fort Dearborn."<sup>9</sup> It was dictated on July 8, 1826, by an illiterate and uneducated man, but it has the character of a truthful narration of events personally known to the narrator. Its brevity, however, limits its value.

Other items have appeared from time to time, some of considerable importance. The discovery of General William Hull's order to evacuate Fort Dearborn was of great signifi-

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<sup>7</sup> Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 384. For a longer criticism of Mrs. Kinzie's account see Milo M. Quaife, "Some Notes on the Fort Dearborn Massacre," in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Association, Proceedings for the Year 1910-1911* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1912), 112-138, and James R. Haydon, "John Kinzie's Place in History," in the *Illinois State Historical Society, Transactions for the Year 1932* (n.d., n.p.), 183-199.

<sup>8</sup> Robert B. McAfee, *History of the Late War in the Western Country* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1816), 98-101, see 101.

<sup>9</sup> Milo M. Quaife, "The Story of James Corbin, A Soldier of Fort Dearborn," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1914- ), III (1916-1917), 219-228.

cance in evaluating Mrs. Kinzie's account.<sup>10</sup> The letter of Charles Jouett to President James Monroe of April 3, 1817, and the letter of John Kinzie to President James Monroe of April 4, 1817, are of similar importance although they give little or no direct information about the massacre.<sup>11</sup> Another contemporary letter, Captain D. Curtis to Cullen C. Witherell, Fort Wayne, October 4, 1812, is important chiefly for information it contains about the siege of Fort Wayne.<sup>12</sup> The fate of the survivors was the chief concern of Judge Augustus B. Woodward in his letter to Colonel Henry A. Proctor of October 7, 1812.<sup>13</sup> Each of these letters, however, makes at least a brief reference to the massacre.

It is against this background that the letters of Walter K. Jordan must be evaluated. Jordan had left his family in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, and had become a member of the garrison at Fort Wayne, Indiana Territory. When Hull's order reached that garrison asking that cooperation be given to Captain Heald in carrying out the evacuation of Fort Dearborn, Captain William Wells, a famous Indian scout and the uncle of Mrs. Heald, volunteered his services. At the head of a band of Miami warriors he left Fort Wayne for Fort Dearborn. Jordan, who bore the rank of corporal, also accompanied him. Apparently they started on August 8, arrived on the 13, and departed on the 15. Jordan was present at the massacre. Being among the survivors, he became a prisoner of the Indians, escaped, and returned to Fort Wayne. He was present when that fort was besieged and when it was relieved by William Henry Harrison. After these harrowing experiences he wrote two or possibly three letters. On October 12, 1812, he wrote to his wife "Betsy,"<sup>14</sup> and on December 17, 1812, he wrote to Joseph Hunter of Mercer County, Pennsylvania. He may also have written a second letter to his wife on October 19.

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<sup>10</sup> Hull's order is given in Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 216, note 583.

<sup>11</sup> These letters are in Haydon, "John Kinzie's Place in History" in the Illinois State Historical Society, *Transactions for the year 1932*, pp. 183-187.

<sup>12</sup> This letter was published in Friend Palmer, *Early Days in Detroit* (Detroit, 1906), 880-885. It does not appear to be as well known as it should be.

<sup>13</sup> Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 422-424, and 396-397.

<sup>14</sup> Logan Esarey (ed.), *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison* (2 vols., *Indiana Historical Collections*, VII and IX, Indianapolis, 1922), II, 165-167.

There appeared in *Niles' Weekly Register*, May 8, 1813, what purported to be an "Extract of a letter from Walter Jordan, a non-commissioned officer of the regulars at fort Wayne, to his wife in Allegheny county, dated fort Wayne, October 19, 1812." Whether it is an extract of a third letter or a poorly copied portion of the letter of October 12, it is not possible to determine. It would seem quite reasonable to assume that his wife carried out his request to send a copy of the letter of October 12 to Joseph Hunter, omitting the very personal portions at the end in which Jordan told of his wages and sent endearing remarks to his family. It is possible that his wife was as poor, or a poorer scribe than he and that the extract was recopied before reaching *Niles' Register*, which may account for some of the differences between the portion printed and the original. The *Niles' Register* extract gives evidence that Jordan's spelling and poor choice of words were corrected. In order to show the possible relationship, the two are given side by side.

[Extract from *Niles' Weekly Register*.]

"I take my pen to inform you that I am well, after a long and perilous journey through the Indian country.

Captain Wells, myself, and an hundred friendly Indians, left fort Wayne on the first of August to escort captain Heald from fort Chicauga, as he was in danger of being captured by the British, Orders had been given to abandon that fort, and retreat to fort Wayne, a distance of 150 miles. We reached fort Chicauga on the 10th of August, and on the 15th we prepared for an immediate march, burning all that we could not fetch with us.

On the 15th, at 8 o'clock we commenced our march with our small force, which con-

[Letter of October 12, 1812.]

Betsy I now lift my pen to inform you that I am In a good State of health after a long and (sore)<sup>15</sup> Journy threw the indian Cuntry I Started (from) fort wayn on the 1 of august With Cap Wells and (100) pretended indian friends to goe to fort dearbourn on lake michigan wich is 200 miles from fort wain to gard in Cap Hell [Heald] and his Company to fort wain as he was in danger of Being takin By the British and had received orders to avacuate that fort and march to fort wayn. Wee got to fort dearbourn (on the 10th of) august unmolested destroyed all that wee Could not fetch With-us and preparad for a march on the morning of th[e] 15 the morning of the 15 now arives the Most Limentable Day I Ever Saw

<sup>15</sup> Newspaper clipping in possession of the family was used to supplement sentences of the original letter where the paper was torn. These phrases and words are enclosed in parentheses and those inserted by the editor are in brackets.

sisted of captain Wells, myself, and our 100 Confute Indians, captain Heald's 100 men, ten women, and twenty children; in all 232.

We had marched half a mile, when we were attacked by 600 Kickapoo and Wynbago Indians. In the moment of trial our Confute savages joined the savage enemy, Our contest lasted ten minutes, when every man, woman and child was killed except 15. Thanks be to God I was one of those who escaped. First they shot the feather of my cap, next the epaulet from my shoulder, and then the handle from my sword. I then surrendered to four savage rascals. The Confute chief, taking me by the hand, and speaking English said, 'Jordan, I know you, you gave me tobacco at fort Wayne. We wont kill you, but come and see what we will do with your captain;' so leading me to where Wells lay, they cut off his head and put it on a long pole, while another took out his heart and divided it among the chiefs, and eat it up raw. Then they scalped the slain and stripped the prisoners, and gathered in a ring with us fifteen poor wretches in the middle. They had nearly fell out about the divide, but my old chief the White Raccoon, holding me fast,

they made the divide and departed to their towns.

Heels men Consists of 100 men 10 —woman and 20 Children total amounting—130—. Wels and my-Self and our 100 pretended friends making in all 232 now Wee leave fort dearbourn about 8 O Clock in the morning Bound for fort Wayne and Marched about 1 mile when we wore atacked with 500 kikepoos and winabagoes indians and our pretended friends (joined) them. our engagement last about 10 (minutes) When there was Every man wooman and Chid (killed) But 15 and thanks be to god I was one of them tha first Shot the fether out of my Cap the nex Shot the appolet of my Shoulder and the 3 Broke the handle of my Sword I had to Surrender My Self to 4 Damd yallow indians tha Marche up to whar Wells Lay and one of them Spok English and Said Jordan I now you you gave me some toBacco at fort wain you Shant Be kild but See What I will doe with your Captain

He then Cut of his head and Stuck it on a pol while another tuck out his hart and divided it among the Chieffs and tha Eate it up raw When tha Culped [scalped] all tha gatherd in a round ring with With [sic] us poore Devils in the midle and had like to fall out hoo Should have the prisoners But my old Chief The White Raccoon held me by the hand th[ey] striped all of us to our Shirts and trowsers and Evyry family tuck one as long as wee Lasted and then Steard for thare Towns Evyry man to his tent O Israel but I will Just inform you when I got to my strange lodging I loke about Like a cat in a Strange garrett. (But I) made My Self as Comfortable as possible I [could] under My present SircumStance nite Came on tha

They tied me hard and fast that night, and placed a guard over me. —I lay down and slept soundly until morning for I was tired—in the morning they untied me and set me parching corn, at which I worked attentively until night. They said that if I would stay and not runaway, that they would make a chief of me, but if I would attempt to runaway they would catch me and burn me alive. I amused them with a fine story in order to gain their confidence;

and fortunately made my escape from them on the 19th of August, and took one of their best horses to carry me, being seven days in the wilderness. I was joyfully received on the 26th at Wayne. On the 28th they attacked the fort, and blockaded us

until the 16th of September, when we were relieved by Gen. Harrison."

(tied me) hard and fast and placed a guard over me I laid down (and) slept Sound till morning for I was tired tha untied me in the Morning and Set me to parching Corn. I worked all day very atentive at nite my old Chief told that if I would Stay and not run away that I Should be a Chief But if atempted to run away tha would Catch me and Burn me alive I told him a fine Story So th[ey] did not ty me that nite as for the particulars I havnt room to (write them) but I (made my escape) on the 19 and Stole one of thare horses and Came to fort Wayn on 26th Being 7 days in the wilderness Where I was recvd Joyfully on 28th the indians attacked fort wain so tha Cut of all interCours tha thaut to Starve us out but one friend indian Came in and wee Sent him to govnrnor harrison Witch Cam to our relief on the 16 of Septem With 3 thousand volenteers When the governor came on he Broke our Captain for Cowardise I Just mention this that if it is my lot to fall that you may now how to Comat at my rite I Belong to

Captain James Rhay the 1 Ridgement of infantry our paymaster was [manuscript torn] Detroit So I have not recevd one Cent of pay but half of (my bounty) witch was 8 dollars I now am 3 Sargent my pay is (7 dollars) a month I onely Served 15 days as a privet What Spare time (I have) I assist the Comosary So that keps me in tee Sugar and so forth after all my funn I weigh 190 one word to you Bety for if I was now speaking to you it would my Language I have two litters of yourn Before me and Some of the soft hair of yor head and Some in a Small plat round My neck I mus just that I am Sorry to See your pen Breath ridicule for if I diserve it it wont cure it dont conclud from those words that I am tired of your letters But tell me how you live and the Childern is and fo God Sake try to Send Mountford to scool it ant on time in ten that I can rite to you But you Can rite When you pleas. I gave 50 cents for this paper Direct your Letter to the Care of Lieutanant ostrander for we have no Cap now tell me if the men is Drafted in your Cuntry You will do W K Jordan favor if you send Hunter a copy of this Leter So give my Comps to all inquiring

friends give my Best respects to your father and mother and all your brothers and this Line of kisses to my Harts Delite — — — — —  
and the Boys tell them what you please and these for your Self — — —  
— So I Conclud With My Best Respects to you till death or till I see  
[you] So I Subscribe My name this 12 nite of October 1812.—————

W. K. Jordan Sergeant

The hitherto unpublished letter was apparently nearly obtained by Dr. Quaife in 1920, but the fact that no one was permitted to read the original and that it seemed possible that it was a copy of the letter to "Betcy" served to add confusion. Both letters are now in the possession of Howard and Catherine Keach of Bedford, Indiana. Mr. Keach is a great-great-grandson of Walter K. and "Betcy" Jordan. The letters and some other family items have been handed down in the family, which moved first to western Virginia and then to Indiana. The letters were brought to a history class at Indiana University by Mrs. Virginia Toole of Bedford. The letter of December 17th follows:

Sir after My respects

I now lift my pen to inform you that I am Just now Sitting By a good fire in a warm room in fort wayn garison after a troublesome summer with the indians I rote a full aCount of My Being takin prisoner with the indians I told betcy to send you the Letter or the Copy of it and wished one o you to send an answer and as yet I have got none I now will Just mention some of the perticulars I started from fort wayn on the 1 of august to go to Chicaugo 200 miles distant from fort wayn with Cap Wells and 100 friend[ly] indians to condut Cap Heel [Heald] and his Company to this plase Wee arrived [there?] on the 9 and started on the 15 for fort wayn Marched about 2 miles whare wee ware atack with about 500 indians and then our friend indians Joind them then thare was 600 indians against 100 and 30 Men women and Childern our ingageMent Lasted about 20 Minuts Whare our 100 and 30 was Redused to 15 Souls of wich thank god I was one During the ingagement the fether was Shot out of my Cap the aplett of[f] of my Shoulder and the handle broke of my Sword But receivd no bodely wound the[y] sculped all the ded and wounded and then Joind to divide the prisoners when one indian Came up to me and Said Jordan no Hurt you you gave me tobacco at fort wayn But See what I will doe to your Captain he then Cut of his head and Stuck it on a pole then Cut him open and tuck out his hart and gave a pease of it to Each Chief that Stud round him Know the prisoners is divided and I gow to the river Deplaines With my Chief the White Raccoon when I came to the Camp I looked like a Cat in a Strange garort [garrett] as for What happened hear I Cant now tell you all I Stood 3 days and 3 nits the 4 nite I Started now being about 300 miles distant from fort wayn I need not Stop hear to tel you how I got to fort wayn but so it is thank god I got Safe Hear whare I was

recevd with Joy this being the 28 day of august on the 29 the garison was suround With about 9 or ten Hundred indians tha Kepus in the garison until the 14 of September During this time Wee lost 10 Men all our in ter Cours was Cut of hear in the woods hemd up By the indians, our red Bretheren I will now Just observe that the indians had taken 2 forts before and was determaind that fort Wayn Should be the 3 one there was onely 75 fiteing Men in the garison offisers and all I dont now what you may think of the fite But I thought it long anuff the garisons that was taken is Mackenaw and Chicago whare to the Later I was witness But govenor harson [Harrison] Came to our Relief with 3 thousand volonteers witch Soon dispercd the indians and gave us Liberty to See the outsid of the garison again—there is one thing that I am Sory to tell that My Captain Rhay was broke for Coowardise our 2 Lieutanant and [Sergn?] Confined him to his room and when the general Came he was Broke I have nothing to tell onely that I have raisd from a private to a Sargent I would not wish to live Better than I doe I have good warm Cloos and plenty of them and the Soldiers has to Cut wood and Cook So all that all I have to doe is to Mount gard Every 5 nite I Cant give any true aCount about our army for wee have not had an Express this 2 months on the aCount of high water we now Send an Express this [manuscript torn] to Hear what tha are doing pleas to rite Conserning the drafts whether tha ware hevly or not and dont forget to tell me how the Last Election Went I hav not recvd one cnt of pay as yet but I have a handful when it Comes I was apoinde Sargant Last July I asist the Comisary Some and that keps me in pocket mony one Request is to try to find out how the Childern is Comeing on and dont rite anythn about them if you dont now it to Be true If god Spars us both it is likely that Wee will [manuscript torn] fase to fase in about 5 years Now please to Excuse the Silenc of my pen to you hugh I long for a lettr from your hand for I Supos Wil is tow ful of fun Saly Robrt and John is two litle if you get this Lette giv Betsy word of it and See if She got any that I Sent her and Let me now With this I Conclud With My Best Respects to all inquiring friends

Walter K Jordan Serg  
Decmbr 17th 1812

N B I am Commanded 837 Cap Hugh Moore

To Jos Hunter  
Send Betsy this letter

One must inquire whether these manuscripts are forgeries or genuine letters. This is particularly true since Dr. Quaife in his *Chicago and the Old Northwest* rejected the extract of the Jordan letter which appeared in *Niles' Weekly Register* as a "worthless fabrication." It should be noted that the original letters of October 12 and December 17 were not then known to scholars and were not therefore included in this judgment. Dr. Quaife is not to be criticized for rejecting this extract, for the inaccuracies and the term "Confute

Indians" certainly were enough to arouse great suspicion.<sup>16</sup> After the letter of October 12 was published, Dr. Quaife revised his previous conclusion about Jordan.<sup>17</sup> The early publication of what probably was a portion of the letter to "Betsy," indicates that one letter at least was in existence as early as May 8, 1813. The appearance of the letters today tend to confirm the belief that they are very old. They are written on good substantial paper in the same poor handwriting and are torn along the folds from much handling. Professor Logan Esarey published the letter of October 12<sup>18</sup> having satisfied himself that the letter to "Betsy" was an actual account of the massacre. The appearance of the second or later letter, which was apparently in the hands of another branch of the family until recent years, and its similarity in respect to paper, penmanship, and contents seems to establish the genuineness of both letters.

The accuracy and truthfulness of the letters must also be considered. Jordan was as careless of dates and numbers as many indifferent history students. Captain Wells left Fort Wayne on August 8, but in both letters Jordan seems to have stated that they left on the first. The figure, however, is hard to decipher and may have been a 4 or 7. He stated that they arrived on the tenth in the first letter and on the ninth in the second letter. The date of the massacre he has correct in both letters. The number of Indians accompanying Wells to Chicago he gave in each letter as 100. The other accounts differ but all give a smaller number. Heald gave the number as "about 30," Helm as 27, and McAfee as "about 50." It would seem that Jordan exaggerated but that no one was certain of the exact number. In the letter to "Betsy" he wrote that the persons leaving Fort Dearborn, not including Indians, totaled 132 or 100 men of Heald's force, 10 women, 20 children, and Wells and Jordan. In the letter to Hunter he wrote that there were 130 men, women, and children. These are larger than the estimates made by Heald, Helms, and McAfee, all of whom differ with each other. Jordan gave the number not killed as, 15, apparently referring only to men. Heald stated in his official account that

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<sup>16</sup> Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 395-396.

<sup>17</sup> Milo M. Quaife, *Checagou; from Indian Wigwam to Modern City, 1673-1835* (Chicago, 1933), 122, 133, 135, and 149-150.

<sup>18</sup> Esarey (ed.), *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, II, 165-167.

26 men and eleven women and children were saved, and in his journal he recorded the survivors as 27 men and 11 women and children. Helm's account is contradictory, and comparative numbers are confused. The account in McAfee says that "the ranks were so reduced, as scarcely to exceed 20 effective men." In one letter Jordan wrote that the engagement lasted about ten minutes while in the other about twenty minutes. All of these figures make it evident that Jordan was careless about numbers and dates and that none of the accounts agree. It is not surprising that in the excitement of the massacre Jordan should have become somewhat confused, but not all of the inaccuracies can be explained as confusion. The exaggerations and the reference in the letter of October 12 to criticism by his wife indicate that he was endeavoring to make himself appear important to his wife and friends. Surely a forger would not have been so careless. The inaccuracies lessen the value of the letters, but not their genuineness.

The identity and something of the character of Jordan can be established. According to the records of the War Department, Walter K. Jordan was born at Washington, Pennsylvania, and was enlisted on March 10, 1812, at Pittsburgh, when twenty-nine years of age.<sup>19</sup> The family bible lists the marriage of William [*sic*] Jordan and Elizabeth Wort, and the members of her family from 1748 to the present. The Orderly Books of the garrison of Fort Wayne contain several references to him. He was appointed corporal on July 24, 1812, by Captain J. Rhea, the commandant. On December 26, 1812, he was charged with neglect of duty on the previous evening (Christmas), to which he pled guilty and prayed the mercy of the court. He was reduced to the rank of a private, but was reinstated as a corporal on January 7, 1813, at the request of the officers of the company. Evidently excessive Christmas celebration was not regarded too seriously. He served as a witness at a court martial on January 25, and June 16. On August 23, 1813, he was charged with counterfeiting and forging a permit to buy one pint of whiskey. For this he was again reduced to the rank of a private. The last pages of the orderly book are missing and we do not know whether he was reinstated or not. It is a

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<sup>19</sup> Major General J. A. Ulio, Adjutant General, to John D. Barnhart, February 1, 1944.

little difficult to estimate the seriousness of the court martials for they were unbelievably frequent at this frontier post, even the commanding officer resigning because he had been guilty of disgraceful conduct during the seige of the fort.<sup>20</sup> Discipline must have been very weak. Jordan did not live to rejoin his family, his death occurring on April 6, 1814.<sup>21</sup>

Another point that requires clarification is Jordan's rank and his reference to the sword, epaulet, and feather which he wore. He signed the letter of October 12, "W. K. Jordan Sergeant," and in the letter of December 17, he states, "I was apointed Sargant Last July." On July 24, 1812, he was appointed corporal, but there is no record of his appointment as sergeant. In the second letter he wrote "During the ingagement the fether was Shot out of my Cap the aplett of of my Shoulder and the handle broke on my Sword But receivd no bodely wound." We have only his word for this story, but an inquiry directed to the Smithsonian Institution brought a letter from J. E. Graf, associate director, stating that the uniform of the corporal in 1812 included these items.<sup>22</sup>

Fortunately one of the accounts previously referred to narrates the departure of Captain Wells from Fort Wayne for Fort Dearborn and refers to "one of our soldiers" who went with him. Since the other accounts of the massacre do not mention Jordan, this reference to "one of our soldiers" is the only known confirmation of his claim to have gone to Fort Dearborn that has come to light. The writer also tells the news of the massacre as it came back to Fort Wayne by an Indian and perhaps, though he is not mentioned, by Jordan. This part of the letter may be quoted.

Nothing here of an important nature transpired till about the 7th of August, when our captain received a note from General Hull, stating that Fort Dearborn was to be evacuated, and requesting the captain to communicate the same to Captain Wells and Wm. Stickney, and for them to point out the most safe and expeditious route for Captain Heald to take from Chicago to Detroit. The gentlemen were consulted on the subject, and concluded that by way of this place would be the best route, and in order to secure as much of the public property at that place as possible, Captain Wells thought proper to

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<sup>20</sup> Bert J. Griswold (ed.), *Fort Wayne, Gateway of the West, 1802-1813* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, XV, Indianapolis, 1927), 55, 327, 366-367, 377-380, 382, 387, 394, 395, and 400.

<sup>21</sup> Major General J. A. Ulio, to John D. Barnhart, February 1, 1944.

<sup>22</sup> Letters of J. E. Graf to John D. Barnhart, February 9 and March 11, 1944.

use his endeavors to that effect. Accordingly, on the 8th Captain Wells, with a party of thirty-five Miami Indians with their pack horses, and one of our soldiers with five of the public horses, started to assist Captain Heald in the evacuation of Chicago. On the morning of the 19th one of the Indians that accompanied Captain Wells returned, bringing intelligence that on the morning of the 15th (or as he calculated time, four nights ago), Captain Heald and his company, with Captain Wells, were all cut off; the particulars of which he thus related. They arrived at Chicago on the 13th, where were encamped then about 500 Indians of different tribes, some of whom were known to be at enmity with our government. Captain Wells being well acquainted with Indian customs, and seeing the difficulties likely to attend Captain Heald in getting away from his post, used every exertion in his power to effect an evacuation without the loss of men; he even gave up all the arsenal and magazine stores to satisfy their savage ferocity, but to no effect, and then agreed to deliver up all the cattle (about 100 head) and made them several other valuable presents in hopes of being permitted to depart in peace. The fatal morning arrived, and while the bloodthirsty savages were killing and dressing their beaves, the garrison was evacuated. Captains Heald and Wells marching in front, the baggage wagon next, the women and children next to it, followed by the soldiers and the thirty-five Indians with their pack horses bringing up the rear. They had not passed one mile from their little asylum when the alarm was given that the enemy, about 400 in number, was close upon them. A kind of hollow square was formed immediately, encompassing the women and children, and two rounds fired, but being overpowered by numbers, the brave, the innocent fair and the helpless, fell a prey to the savage cruelty of the tomahawk and scalping knife. We have since been told by another Indian that Captain Heald and lady (both wounded), W. Flanzay and wife, Lieutenant Helms and wife, and nineteen soldiers were made prisoners and sent to Detroit, from whence they are to be transported to Montreal or Quebec, with other prisoners taken at the capitulation, which perhaps you know more about than I do. Thus ends the fate of Chicago and its worthy commander, the success of this post and the fate of its great worthy and intrepid commander.<sup>23</sup>

The value of Jordan's letters may now be estimated. They do not add very much to what we knew from the other accounts nor do they help materially the solution of any of the important problems connected with the massacre. They confirm the confusion existing at the time of the massacre and the brutality of the Indian attack. They agree with the accounts of Heald and Helm as to the approximate location of the attack. They do not mention the distribution of the stores but refer to their destruction. They add a detail about the fate of Captain Wells. Other accounts refer to his heart

<sup>23</sup> Palmer, *Early Days in Detroit*, 881-882. This is the letter by Captain D. Curtis referred to *ante* page 189.

being eaten by the chiefs, only Jordan mentions his head being cut off and placed upon a pole. Since other narrators mentioned that the heads of several victims were cut off, it is entirely possible that Wells suffered this fate. They also tell Jordan's experience which was unusual but not improbable. They are at least additional contemporary, eyewitness accounts. They are not unique in being inaccurate and they do give additional evidence of the intense hostility which some of the Indians felt towards the Americans.