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TWO TOWNS, MULTIPLE PLACES: RACE AND IDENTITY ON THE EARLY
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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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To Minnesota, my home

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Abstract

In order for us to understand and reconceptualize race in the early republic, we ought to examine the symbiotic relationship between Prophetstown and Vincennes during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The relationship between these two communities in Indiana Territory was not one defined primarily by racial ideologies. Though historians have often characterized both settlements as diametrically opposed, the settlements were in fact faction-ridden, making the relationship between the two more a relationship of factions rather than races. Vincennes and Prophetstown serve as an excellent example in understanding the regional, and even local, variations within racial constructs. Though racial ideologies imply a hierarchy on a global scale, racial relationships are often not constant and differ by time and place. Local and regional variables are as important to the construction and use of race as are ideologies. Race relations were not the primary reason for armed conflict between Prophetstown and Vincennes at Tippecanoe in November of 1811. Divided by internal factionalism, each town looked toward the other as a means to vocalize and address its own internal debates. Contrary to the usual arguments, neither town united behind a racial identity nor attacked the other in order to protect their community. When analyzed closely, it becomes apparent that the Shawnee Prophet (Tenskwatawa) and the governor of Indiana Territory (William Henry Harrison) used racial rhetoric to unite their factionalized towns. This rhetoric has overshadowed the multiplicity of peculiar connections (debates over unfree labor, biased Indian agents, Indian manipulating the Americans) and interests that pushed the towns toward conflict. The bloodshed that erupted between the two communities at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 was a product of various issues complicated by the

interests of Indian and European American cultures. The inhabitants of both communities found themselves in opposition because of the peculiar and often highly complicated methods through which they dealt with the factionalism in their towns.

Most historians have adopted a racial perspective when analyzing the relationship between Prophetstown and Vincennes because they have focused so heavily on Tenskwatawa rather than his town.¹ They concentrate on the Prophet's distaste for European Americans rather than delve deeply into his religious beliefs and the relationships he fostered within his town. When historians have discussed the Prophet's teachings, they often do so without fully considering the motives of Tenskwatawa's supporters. These depictions state that the Prophet not only constructed a unified town dedicated to the revitalization of Indian culture but that he also commanded a large army of Indian warriors devoted to destroying the Americans. This characterization ignores the ways in which his supporters continued to challenge and frustrate Tenskwatawa's efforts to centralize authority over disparate Indian communities. When historians used the Prophet's racial rhetoric as proof of unity, they overlooked the fact that his words were a reaction to disunity at Prophetstown. Characterizations of a united Prophetstown were in fact a product of historical interpretations that have not considered three important factors: the historical context of the Wabash-Maumee Valley, the factionalism that was rife throughout the valley, and the complicated relationships within Vincennes and Prophetstown.

¹ Benjamin Drake, *Life of Tecumseh and his Brother the Prophet with a Historical Sketch of the Shawanoe Indians* (Cincinnati, E. Morgan & Co., 1850); R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (Macmillan Press, 1999); Stephen Warren, *The Shawnee and their Neighbors, 1795-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

The tendency of American Indians and European Americans to resist racial and ethnic unification after 1800 was no where more apparent than at Prophetstown and Vincennes. The atmosphere in both towns was heavily racist, but the behavior of the people living in both towns was often not so. One could spend a day at Prophetstown and hear Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh deliver lengthy diatribes about how Indians and European Americans had been created separately and how European American culture was undermining and destroying Indian kind. Yet, after hearing Tenskwatawa's speeches, many of the Indians at Prophetstown ignored his stipulations and acted in a fashion that threatened the racial vision embodied by Prophetstown. The town of Vincennes was quite similar in many respects. Weekly newspaper sermons published by the ever-paranoid Elihu Stout announced the diabolical plans of the nearby Indians who hoped to destroy Vincennes. Governor Harrison paraded the militia around town to emphasize the threat posed by the Prophet's forces. Nonetheless, residents of Vincennes willingly aided the Indians throughout the region in order to protect their cultural and national identities. It was impossible for anyone to escape the racial dialogues and hatreds present in both towns, but it was relatively easy for both Indians and European Americans to circumvent the issue.

Life in the Wabash-Maumee Valley was too complicated for people to rely on a hard-and-fast system of racial classification. Racial ideology rests on a simplistic notion that humans originated from separate creations, but identities in the Wabash-Maumee Valley were often contingent on a variety of relationships unrelated to racial histories. Few residents thought racial theory would improve their lives. Harrison's and Tenskwatawa's efforts to rework territorial relationships proved impossible because they

had to convince their supporters that their racial vision was the best possible means to promote peace, economic development, and political progress. While racial violence did erupt periodically in the valley, it was largely due to the intra-community factionalism at Prophetstown and Vincennes. Most communities were unable to reconcile the racial rhetoric of their leaders with the practical realities of life.

Two Towns, Multiple Places: Race and Identity on the Early Republic's Frontier: An Introduction

During the opening decade of the nineteenth century, two towns on the Northwest frontier stood in apparent opposition to one another. Native Americans established Prophetstown as a haven against the cultural assault of European Americans. European Americans, in the meantime, had established Vincennes as an outpost in what they saw as a bountiful wilderness surrounded by savages. This simple dichotomy, however, does not even scratch the surface of the complex story of divisions and factions in both communities. Understanding the conflicts within and between these two communities reveals the intricate interactions between American Indians and European Americans and demonstrates the centrality of emerging notions of identity and race on the frontier in the early republic. During the early years of the conflict centered around these two communities, ideas about identity and race were ambiguous and unclear. But as the two communities moved toward overt conflict, those ideas about identity and race slowly clarified. In the years after men from Vincennes destroyed Prophetstown, and as European American settlers streamed into the region, identity and race became increasingly rigid along lines of red, white, and black. However, despite the crystallization of racial ideology during this period, large numbers of American Indians and European Americans resisted racial unification in order to protect their cultural identities.

In 1808, the Shawnee leader Tenskwatawa and his followers established a new village along the Wabash River in present-day Indiana. They hoped that this town would serve as a religious haven where Indians of all nations could visit and learn of

Tenskwatawa's prophetic visions.¹ Tenskwatawa believed that his town would lessen Indian dependencies on European Americans by facilitating the growth of an independent and united Indian community throughout North America. Consuming alcohol, trading land and pelts for manufactured goods, and abiding by European American cultural mores had disrupted Indian communities and made many Indian groups dependent upon the French, British, and Americans. Because Tenskwatawa based many of these ideas about Indian-European American relations on his religious views, European Americans referred to him as the Prophet.

However, Tenskwatawa's mission proved problematic because residents of Prophetstown refused to unite fully behind the Prophet's vision, and because few Indian communities were willing to subvert their local interests to the pan-Indian goals of the Prophet.² From 1808 to 1811, the Prophet worked diligently to construct a community at Tippecanoe, but watched as the European Americans, and even his fellow Indians, turned against him. Indians and non-Indians alike feared that the Prophet's message would spur violence in the valley and result in the destruction of both European American and nearby Indian communities.

Divisions within the Wabash-Maumee Indian nations promoted a more radical characterization of Prophetstown. Although Miami, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk,

¹ Gregory Dowd states that "Tenskwatawa promoted pan-Indianism not with words alone, or only with the elaboration of separation theology, but with the time-honored if paradoxical political device of secession. Like the Susquehanna Delawares and Shawnees who had fled Anglo-Iroquois by both removing to Ohio and settling in polygot villages in the early eighteenth century. He did so first at Greenville (1806-8), in symbolic defiance of the Treaty of Greenville, and later at Tippecanoe (1808-1812)." Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 143.

² Local interests refer to the social, economic, and political relationships constructed between peoples and places in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. These ranged from spiritual connections to specific areas in the region, to familial relationships with the French, to the importance trading centers played for regional exchange networks.

and an assortment of other Indians lived at Prophetstown, they experienced and refashioned the Prophet's message and guiding nativist philosophy on their own terms. Some lived at Prophetstown but continued to attack Indian and European American communities throughout the frontier region. However, most non-Indians interpreted this militant behavior as a reflection of Tenskwatawa's teachings, rather than of his inability to control his followers. Furthermore, divisions within the Miami polity forced some Miami Indians to associate with the Prophet in order to challenge their own corrupt leaders. European Americans claimed that Tenskwatawa had won the Miami Indians to his cause when in fact the Miamis were only using the Prophet as a tool to threaten their fellow Indians. In addition, many Miami provided the Americans with substandard intelligence that made Tenskwatawa out to be a maniacal leader bent on destroying the Americans. In turn, they hoped the Americans would protect Miami interests and refrain from negotiating with a Shawnee leader who had little business living in Miami country. While the Prophet hoped to prevent Indians from associating with European Americans, suspicions that he wanted to destroy all non-Indians rested more on unreliable intelligence and ethnocentric beliefs about Indians.

Vincennes, located on the Wabash River about 180 miles southwest of Prophetstown, was not a simple outpost of European American civilization. Instead, like Prophetstown, it was a community riven by divisions. As each of those divisions contested one another, they seized upon the image of Prophetstown as a foil for their own political and economic purposes. This process of creating Prophetstown as an external idea intensified antagonisms that were ultimately unleashed in the Battle of Tippecanoe. French explorers founded Vincennes in the 1730s and it developed into a lucrative

trading post for Indians and European Americans throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But American efforts to manage trade and the socio-political development of the town in the period after the Revolutionary War upset this balance. As French and American residents wrestled over control of the local economy, they disagreed over the role Indians would play.³ The Americans sought to displace the French and Indians in an effort to expand agricultural production and to implement what they saw as more progressive institutions and values.

Both the French and American visions of the frontier proved disastrous for Prophetstown. The French wanted to rid the territory of Prophetstown because Tenskwatawa's politics undercut their trade and the political relationship with the Miami Indians based upon marriage and personal connections. The Prophet and his brother Tecumseh demanded that Indians stop trading with European Americans and refrain from ceding lands to them as well. French residents feared that if Indians stopped ceding lands, they would no longer be able to siphon off goods from annuity payments or affirm traditional social relationships with the Indians through the distribution of provisions. The French depended upon the Indian trade largely because the Americans had taken control of most other economic ventures. Given the French interests in protecting trade, they manipulated intelligence about Prophetstown in order to make it appear more threatening to the Americans at Vincennes. Indiana Territory governor, William Henry Harrison relied on this intelligence and based many of his policies towards the local Indians on his understanding of Prophetstown. By characterizing Prophetstown as

³ I use the term American to define European Americans who considered themselves citizens of the United States of America.

militant, the French hoped to convince the Americans to destroy the town, thereby protecting the needs of the French and Miami.

The divisions within Vincennes went beyond a split between French and American interests and included conflict among Americans over the issue of slavery. Here, too, an image of Prophetstown as antagonistic to European American interests was also important. Unable to compromise over the role slavery would play in the development of the territory, the Americans began fighting each other for control of territorial politics in order to institute their policies. Much of this debate focused on Harrison's governance and policies, in particular his handling of Indian affairs, and eventually, he associated an oppositional political faction with Prophetstown as a way to attack his enemies. Harrison and his supporters continually challenged their political enemies by connecting them with the Tenskwatawa, his brother, and their militant designs on Vincennes. The Harrisonians hoped to silence their enemies but they did not fully consider the extent to which they created a militant Prophetstown instead.

The relationship between these two communities in Indiana Territory was not one defined primarily by racial ideologies. Whether one was French, Potawatomi, American, or Kickapoo, local interests continued to shape relationships between European American and Indians in the Wabash-Maumee Valley rather than one's race. Indians and European Americans chose to protect their ethnic traditions over the needs of their racial group. In order for us to understand and reconceptualize race in the early republic, we ought to examine the symbiotic relationship between Prophetstown and Vincennes during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Though historians have often characterized both settlements as diametrically opposed, the settlements were in fact faction-ridden, making

the relationship between the two more a relationship of factions rather than races. Vincennes and Prophetstown serve as an excellent example in understanding the regional, and even local, variations within racial constructs. Though racial ideologies imply a hierarchy on a global scale, racial relationships are often not constant and differ by time and place. Local and regional variables are as important to the construction and use of race as are ideologies. Race relations were not the primary reason for armed conflict between Prophetstown and Vincennes at Tippecanoe in November of 1811. Divided by internal factionalism, each town looked toward the other as a means to vocalize and address its own internal debates.

Contrary to the usual arguments, neither town united behind a racial identity nor attacked the other in order to protect their community. When analyzed closely, it becomes apparent that the Shawnee Prophet and the governor of Indiana territory used racial rhetoric to unite their factionalized towns. This rhetoric has overshadowed the multiplicity of peculiar connections (debates over unfree labor, biased Indian agents, Indian manipulating the Americans) and interests that pushed the towns toward conflict. The bloodshed that erupted between the two communities at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 was a product of various issues complicated by the ethnic interests of American Indians and European Americans. The inhabitants of both communities found themselves in opposition because of the peculiar and often highly complicated methods through which they dealt with the factionalism in their towns.

This is not to say that American Indians and European Americans did not participate within a larger racial dialogue as they defended their ethnic interests.⁴ Racial

⁴ I identify ethnicity as a population's shared social organization, religious faith, language, origin stories, and physical similarities. Ethnicity does not necessarily include shared racial ties.

ideology during this period was not as rigid as it was by the mid 1850s. While some people like Harrison identified Indians as biologically inferior to whites, Indians like Tenskwatawa tended to identify themselves as a separate race through their creation stories. However, for many, participating in a racial dialogue was an unintended consequence. The French struggled to protect their ethnic identities by turning European Americans against the Prophet, yet at the same time they associated most Indians with a militant Prophetstown. They characterized Indians as behaving collectively in relation to the Prophet's nativism. Although the French intended to protect themselves and their Miami counterparts, they indirectly created racial fears for Harrison's consumption. Harrison was a willing recipient. His beliefs that Indians were predisposed to war and unable to reason as effectively as European Americans only added to the larger racial dialogue. The Prophet, too, believed that the Great Spirit had created European Americans and American Indians separately and that both groups should remain segregated. His nativist rhetoric was inherently racial in that it identified hereditary differences between white and red peoples. Whether it was Tenskwatawa's belief in polygenesis, the French associating all the Indians with Prophetstown, or Harrison's conviction that Indians were innately inferior, all played a part in the social construction of race during this period.⁵ Yet, few people were as willing as Harrison and Tenskwatawa to place racial interests first. The unintended racial rhetoric was the product of certain ethno-polities protecting their history, sense of identity, and geographical and cultural roots.

⁵ Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,": *New Left Review*, CLXXXI (May/June 1990), 95-118. In this article, Fields argues for the social construction of race.

It is by decentering the Prophet and Harrison from the narrative that we can best understand the extent to which residents of Prophetstown and Vincennes resisted racial unity. Most historians have adopted a racial perspective when analyzing the relationship between the two towns because they have focused so heavily on Tenskwatawa rather than his town.⁶ They concentrate on the Prophet's distaste for European Americans rather than delve deeply into his religious beliefs and the relationships he fostered within his town. When historians have discussed the Prophet's teachings, they often do so without fully considering the motives of Tenskwatawa's supporters. These depictions state that the Prophet not only constructed a unified town dedicated to the revitalization of Indian culture but that he also commanded a large army of Indian warriors devoted to destroying the Americans. This characterization ignores the ways in which his supporters continued to challenge and frustrate Tenskwatawa's efforts to centralize authority over disparate Indian communities. When historians used the Prophet's racial rhetoric as proof of unity, they overlooked the fact that his words were a reaction to disunity at Prophetstown. Characterizations of a united Prophetstown were in fact a product of historical interpretations that have not considered three important factors: the historical context of the Wabash-Maumee Valley, the factionalism that was rife throughout the valley, and the complicated relationships within Vincennes and Prophetstown.

The Prophet's rhetoric has allowed historians to contextualize Tenskwatawa's behavior within a larger racial dichotomy. By focusing on his language, historians

⁶ Benjamin Drake, *Life of Tecumseh and his Brother the Prophet with a Historical Sketch of the Shawanoe Indians* (Cincinnati, E. Morgan & Co., 1850); R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (Macmillan Press, 1999); Stephen Warren, *The Shawnee and their Neighbors, 1795-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

connected Tenskwatawa and his town to a nativist tradition embodied by Neolin and Handsome Lake's efforts to rid Indians of their dependency on European American culture. Historiographical trends that emphasized biographical analyses, rather than community-centered studies, have allowed race to be the determining construct in these studies.⁷ The relationship between Harrison and the Prophet was largely racial in nature but their rhetoric did not reflect the feelings of many of their contemporaries. Historians' willingness to concentrate on a few actors ignores the many interests and peoples who played an important part in the region's affairs. Often, these scholars evaluate the racial interests dividing the European American and American Indian political figures in the region. Race certainly played a key role in how the major political actors related to each other, but the racial rhetoric between the major players did not necessarily reflect the feelings of their communities at large. One historian has noted that leaders like Harrison and Tenskwatawa "shared a single-minded obsession with coercive, and centralized, authority."⁸ These men believed that "a handful of leaders, united around a single ideology, could speak and act for thousands of others."⁹ Many historians have focused

⁷ Until recently, most of the historiography has focused on the key biographical players in the Wabash-Maumee region. These include R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1998); Harvey Lewis Carter's *The Life and Times of Little Turtle: First Sagamore of the Wabash* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); and Robert Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007). More recent monographs have approached the region through chronologically expansive analyses of the Indian peoples involved. These monographs include Stephen Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors, 1795-1870*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994* (Indianapolis, Ind: Indiana Historical Society, 1996); Bert Anson's *The Miami Indians*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), and to a lesser extent Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge studies in North American Indian history. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁸ Warren, *The Shawnee and their Neighbors*, 19. Warren analyzes the attempts Shawnee leaders like the Prophet, Tecumseh, and Black Hoof played in shaping a national Shawnee identity, but concludes that the Shawnee continue to identify primarily with their village.

⁹ Ibid.

chosen to focus on the ideology underlying efforts at unification rather than to examine more closely the actions of thousands of others.

Such an approach ignores the various cultural interests of the region and silences many other Indians and European Americans who played a vital role in the region's history.¹⁰ Tenskwatawa's and Harrison's attempts to institute a central authority in their towns did not produce unified communities because many of the Indian and European American groups refused to abandon their traditions. The racial rhetoric of leaders like the Prophet, his brother Tecumseh, and William Henry Harrison reflects their inability to unite their communities. In trying to forge unity, these men spoke in racial terms to better characterize their enemy and garner support for their cause. Their racial language reveals only one layer of the dynamic between the two communities, which is why concentrating on the peoples and the factionalism of the communities shows how Harrison and the Prophet became important symbols for Indians and European Americans alike.

This dissertation reorients the discussion of the Prophet, William Henry Harrison, Tecumseh, and their relationships by placing their communities first. Understanding the Prophet, Tecumseh, or Harrison means examining the communities out of which they emerged. The two communities must be reevaluated outside of the racial dichotomy that is often applied to the relationship between the two towns. Looking beyond the racial categories allows us to include groups like the French and Kickapoo who played an important part in the factionalism of the two respective towns rather than simply fitting

¹⁰ Utilizing a Shawnee Indian chief or an American governor to generalize about multi-ethnic communities is problematic. While such an approach may not entirely ignore the other groups involved (French, Miami, Kickapoo, Potawatomi), it often evaluates their motives and behavior within a interpretive framework that is shaped by the historical actions of the Shawnee or Americans.

them within the larger racial dichotomy. Such an approach reflects Giovanni Levi's contention that microhistory is "the attempt to study the social not as an object invested with inherent properties, but as a set of shifting interrelationships existing between constantly adapting configurations."¹¹ The people and conflicting interests in each settlement played an important part in shaping the ideals, policies, actions, and rhetoric of its leaders. Yet, in many instances, leaders like Tenskwatawa or Harrison represented only a fraction of their larger society. Harrison and the Prophet demanded that their followers adapt or leave rather than address the conflicting interests present within each of their towns. As a result, Indians and European Americans failed to unite and the disputes within Prophetstown and Vincennes had disastrous implications for the rest of the region. Cultural differences fueled intra-community factionalism at Prophetstown and Vincennes, and this factionalism pushed both towns towards inter-community violence. The racial violence often attributed to the Battle of Tippecanoe was actually the product of many diverse and complicated relationships that produced the factional strife and diplomatic negotiations. The battle was not merely a matter of "red" Indians opposing the expansion-minded "white" European Americans. Rather, the battle, like the relationship between Prophetstown and Vincennes, was a battle of factions often overshadowed by racial rhetoric.

Framing the national and racial dialogues instigated by Prophetstown and Vincennes within the historical context of the Wabash-Maumee factionalism allows us to see how local communities used the two towns to protect their interests. Rather than abandon their traditional roles of operating, most Indians and European Americans

¹¹ Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd. edition (Pennsylvania University Press: University Park, PA, 2001), pp. 114.

continued to defend their wellbeing. Indian communities in the valley traditionally constructed socio-economic relationships through trade with European and Indian partners at Vincennes, Ouiatenon, and the Miami cultural center at Kekionga. However, once the Americans seized control of trade by destroying Kekionga and displacing the French at Vincennes, Wabash-Maumee Indian communities used land cessions to protect their interests. These cessions enabled some Indian communities to maintain a semi-independent lifestyle, a strategy that became more difficult once Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh sought to discipline and undermine Indian communities that negotiated with the Americans. When the Shawnee brothers punished local Indian communities for dealing with the Americans by killing wayward leaders, they did not care that those communities were behaving within the traditional framework of the Wabash-Maumee Valley in order to protect their autonomy.¹² The traditional inhabitants of the valley found themselves caught between two growing settlements. It is not surprising that some Indians saw the nativist Prophetstown as equally disruptive as the American-controlled Vincennes because it undermined the society that they had constructed throughout the eighteenth century. The Miami, often characterized as accommodationists, were in fact defending their autonomy and hegemony by opposing Prophetstown and negotiating with the Americans. Their behavior was consistent with Miami history in the region: a focus on individual Miami interest rather than those of Indians in general.

For the region's more recent native immigrants, such as the Kickapoo, and Potawatomies, Vincennes and Prophetstown were tools to legitimize their recent presence in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. It is essential that we discuss the histories of the French,

¹² Alfred Cave, "The Failure of the Shawnee Prophet's Witch-Hunt," *Ethnohistory* Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), 445-448.

Miami, Piankashaw, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Delaware, and Shawnees communities in order to understand their motives for associating with the nativists or the Americans. These immigrants took advantage of the politics and language of nationalism in the 1800s to maintain their local autonomy, much like they had used the French and the English for the same purpose during the eighteenth century. The pan-Indianism often associated with Prophetstown was as much a product of the factional nature of the region as it was a result of Tenskwatawa's nativist rhetoric.

It was within these peculiar and intertwined relationships that a number of circumstances converged to create violence between Indians and European Americans. The primary relationship between Vincennes and Prophetstown was not one defined solely by race. Instead, varying interests and intra-community factionalism pushed the two communities toward each other. Joshua Piker argues that "colonial-era communities, European American and Native American alike, are broadly comparable and that each people's experiences have relevance for our understanding of the other."¹³ Like Piker, I believe that it is important to "trace out the ties binding native and newcomer, Indian towns and the 'little communities' of Euro-America," but also to examine and evaluate the identities that changed or grew out of the dialogue between these two communities.¹⁴ While Piker compared the Creek town of Okfuskee to European American communities more generally, this project traces the interactions between Prophetstown and Vincennes. It evaluates the competing interests within each town and the ways in which those conflicting interests propelled the two towns towards conflict.

¹³ Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Town in Colonial America* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4. Darrett Rutman, "Assessing the Little Communities of Early America," *William and mary Quarterly* 43 (1986): 163-178.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Consequently, this dissertation reexamines the relationship between the communities at Vincennes and Prophetstown in light of the intra-community factionalism within the two towns. The first chapter, “The Factional History of the Wabash-Maumee Valley,” analyzes the history and profile of the region prior to American intervention in the area. It traces the growth of a lucrative trading network and the rise of the Miami nation as the central pivot on which Indian and non-Indian peoples turned. This chapter situates Vincennes and Prophetstown within a continual history of factionalism in order to better evaluate the interests of the various Indian and European American peoples involved. The second chapter, “Two Towns, Multiple Places,” examines the foundation of Vincennes from 1800 to 1808 and Prophetstown from 1806 to 1808. It identifies the diverse nature of both towns, specifically the ways in which residents identified each other and their place in the region. Both towns existed within a much longer and complicated history than has been fully comprehended, and this played an important part in the development of two divided communities. The following chapter, “A Town Divided: Vincennes Fights the Prophet,” delves deeply into the interpersonal relationships and disputes within Vincennes. French traders, increasingly desperate to protect their remaining trading and social connections, sought to dismantle Prophetstown and expel the militant Indians from the region. The Americans hoped to do the same and turned to the French go-betweens for help without fully realizing just how much the French manipulated American perceptions of Prophetstown. Biased intelligence provided by the French only amplified the Americans’ obsession with Prophetstown because it affirmed Harrison’s rhetoric. Harrison’s rhetoric about Indian affairs was not simply the product of what the French go-betweens told him, but also the result of a

major dispute in Vincennes over the legality of unfree labor in the territory. To a great extent, the French intelligence complemented an American town likely to confront Prophetstown. The information that the French provided legitimized Governor Harrison's rhetoric about Prophetstown.

"The Prophet and His Town," the fourth chapter, deals with the disconnect between the Prophet and his town. In particular, it examines the larger problems surrounding the French traders and Miami Indians who sought to destroy Prophetstown. Studying the dynamics within Prophetstown shows how Indians throughout the region continued to frustrate Tenskwatawa's vision, whether they claimed to support the Prophet or not. The factionalism throughout the area makes the fifth chapter, "The Many Battles of Tippecanoe," particularly important. This chapter evaluates the tactical and historical importance of the Battle of Tippecanoe by looking beyond the propaganda surrounding the battle to uncover the actual events that framed it. The aftermath of the battle serves as a tool to examine the ways in which Vincennes and Prophetstown each remained internally divided even after a costly and bloody battle in November of 1811. Racial unity in the region remained elusive even after physical violence exploded between the Indians at Prophetstown and the European Americans at Vincennes. Neither town enjoyed the cohesiveness necessary to function as a corporate entity.

The conclusion of this dissertation briefly traces the two communities in the period up to the election of William Henry Harrison as president. The Prophet and Harrison, although no longer residents of Indiana Territory, continued to construct their idealized communities, although in very different places. Tenskwatawa helped remove Indians west of the Mississippi and finally settled in yet another Prophetstown, near

present-day Kansas City. Harrison used his experiences as governor to fuel a national political career, fashioning himself as the hero of Tippecanoe in order to win the presidency. The Prophet and Harrison moved in opposite directions literally, but not figuratively. Tenskwatawa ventured west in an effort to establish his imagined community while Harrison moved east to the White House in an effort to do the same.

Chapter One: Factionalism in the Wabash-Maumee Valley

When responding to foreign influence from the French, British, Americans and Indians in the region, Indian communities in the Wabash-Maumee Valley throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries acted on local rather than national or racial interests. The factional and increasingly competitive nature of Wabash-Maumee Indian society throughout this period culminated in violence due to the establishment of the nativist Prophetstown and an American-dominated Vincennes in the early 1800s. The communities at Vincennes and Prophetstown upset relationships in the Wabash-Maumee Valley by reorienting previously established trade and social relationships, which forced the traditional inhabitants of the region to find new ways to maintain stability. Even as the balance of power shifted towards the Americans by 1800, the various Indian communities continued to protect their local interests rather than unite against non-Indian intrusion. Each Indian group in the Wabash Valley filtered the nationalist dialogues created by Vincennes and Prophetstown through their own individual histories to achieve their own goals. One cannot evaluate the relationship between Vincennes and Prophetstown without balancing local histories with national dialogues. Historians characterize the relationship between the two settlements as racial in nature, a battle between Indian culture and American expansion exemplified by the violence at Tippecanoe in November of 1811. This ignores the many peoples who were not thinking or acting nationally, and who used the national and racial atmosphere to further their own ends.

This chapter places the various Indian communities of the Wabash-Maumee Valley in proper historical context by evaluating their local, rather than national, interests

throughout the eighteenth century. A factional but peaceful society developed in the region due to trading opportunities with the British and French that collapsed after the arrival of the Americans. This chapter situates the Miami-speaking Indians as the traditional inhabitants and power-brokers of the valley, but will also evaluate the reasons Kickapoos, Potawatomes, Delaware, and Shawnee Indians migrated into the area after 1770. Miami-speaking Indians, including the Miamis, Weas, and Piankashaws, inhabited the region from Kekionga down to Vincennes and it was through them that other Indian communities like the Potawatomes, Kickapoos, and Shawnees found protection and access to trade in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Contextualizing the actions of outside Indian groups in relation to the Miamis is essential for understanding post-1795 relationships in the valley when competition for resources became more heated. Lastly, this chapter assesses the initial ways in which post-1795 Wabash-Maumee Indians dealt with the nationalistic dialogues instigated by American and Indian outsiders. Local Indians confronted a growing population of Americans who demanded that Indians assimilate into the political, economic, and social system embodied by the ideals of the American Revolution. The Prophet insisted that local Indians adopt his larger ideological vision embodied by his nativist rhetoric. Indians searched for ways to operate within these larger ideological systems while maintaining their traditional modes of living. Although the Americans and nativist Indians created massive disruption in the area after 1795, most pre-existing Indian communities found new ways to protect their interests by using Vincennes and Prophetstown to their advantage.

Placing the national dialogues instigated by Prophetstown and Vincennes within the historical context of the Wabash-Maumee Valley allows us to see how local Indian

communities used the two towns to protect their interests. Indian groups in the valley traditionally constructed socio-economic relationships through trade with European and Indian partners at Vincennes, Ouiatenon, and Kekionga. But once the Americans seized control of trade by destroying Kekionga and displacing the French at Vincennes, Wabash-Maumee Indian communities began to use land cessions to access annuity payments. These cessions enabled some Indian communities to maintain a semi-independent lifestyle, a strategy that became more difficult when Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh sought to punish and undermine Indian communities that negotiated with the Americans. For other Indian groups like the Kickapoos and Potawatomes who entered the region as refugees, or the Shawnees and Delaware who fled to the area because of American encroachment in the east, Vincennes and Prophetstown provided diplomatic opportunities for the Indians to legitimize their newly-arrived presence in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. By supporting American policies at Vincennes or Indian nativism at Prophetstown, Indians made their presence in the area valuable to others. It is essential that we discuss the histories of the Miamis, Piankashaw, Potawatomes, Kickapoo, Delaware, and Shawnee communities in order to understand their motives for associating with either the nativists or the Americans. Rather than examine the ways in which Vincennes and Prophetstown changed Indian behavior, we must identify the ways in which local Indians utilized the two towns to their advantage.

The factional dynamics within the valley, including those Indian communities associated with the Miamis as well as those who were relative outsiders, played an important role in the formation of a pan-Indian identity at Prophetstown. Kickapoos, Shawnees, and Potawatomi Indians comprised the majority of the Indians residing at

Prophetstown and settled there in order to protect their interests and not simply as a response to the continued encroachment of European Americans on Indian lands. The pan-Indianism was as much anti-Miami as it was anti-American, and this was more a reflection of varying historical experiences rather than simply nativist ideals. The key is to center Indian behavior in the Wabash Valley on the original inhabitants rather than simply to frame Indian behavior around the Shawnee nativists at Prophetstown. Such an approach allows us to interpret the behavior of Indians in culturally relative terms rather than within an accommodationist/nativist framework. It is quite possible that both groups (nativists and Miamis) thought they were protecting Indianness, but differed in practice because of their different histories.

The Wabash-Maumee Valley

One of the oldest and most powerful Indian nations in the valley was that of the Miamis, a small group of Indians that inhabited the lands just south of Lake Michigan.¹ They thrived in the area once dominated by the Illinois confederacy which deteriorated drastically during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.² The Illinois experienced a steady decline and numbered less than 1,000 by 1770.³ Raids by the Iroquois, Pawnees, Fox and Kickapoos, as well as diseases contracted from the French, devastated the Illinois.⁴ Although the Miamis experienced a smallpox epidemic during in the early 1700s, they did not suffer from the disastrous raids initiated by the Iroquois and others. French records state that the Miamis confronted a measles epidemic in 1715,

¹ Harvey Lewis Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 11.

² Emily J. Blasingham, "The Depopulation of the Illinois Indians," *Ethnohistory* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Autumn, 1956): 363. Estimates from Father Jacques Marquette, Louis Jolliet, and James Mooney placed the number of Illinois Indians between 9,000 – 10,000 during this period.

³ *Ibid.*, 372.

⁴ Blasingham, "The Depopulation of the Illinois Indians," 373.

although their population remained stable.⁵ The Miamis were able to fill the void left by the Illinois, eventually moving south and settling along the Wabash and Maumee Rivers where they slowly constructed a lucrative trade network. Even though the Miami polity would never be as large as the Illinois, they did exert great power in the Wabash-Maumee Valley.

Various Indian peoples settled in the region because of the valuable trading centers. These communities prospered along the Miami, Maumee, and Wabash River and were inhabited by a mix of Indians and non-Indians. These three essential waterways fed a diverse array of peoples. The Wabash was quite large and ran southwesterly nearly 500 miles from present-day Fort Wayne, Indiana past Vincennes to where it emptied into the Ohio River.⁶ Trade could easily travel southwest down the Ohio River to Vincennes, then north along the Wabash River to Kekionga, the major trading center of the Wabash-Maumee Valley. There, one could take an eight-mile portage east to reach the Maumee River which flowed into Lake Erie. This network enabled Europeans to exchange cloth, guns, liquor, and pelts from Canada to Illinois. Particularly at Kekionga, the trade network supported the development of a peaceful and diverse settlement. Their control of the portage gave the Miami greater power in the region and made up for their smaller population in comparison to other Indian groups. Miamis protected their economic success with deft diplomacy, but as trade and territory became more contested during the early nineteenth century, so too did Miami hegemony.

⁵ Blasingham, "The Depopulation of the Illinois Indians," 14.

⁶ "A Topographical description of the state of Ohio, Indiana territory, and Louisiana," Boston: Published by Charles Williams. J. Belcher, Printer. 1812.

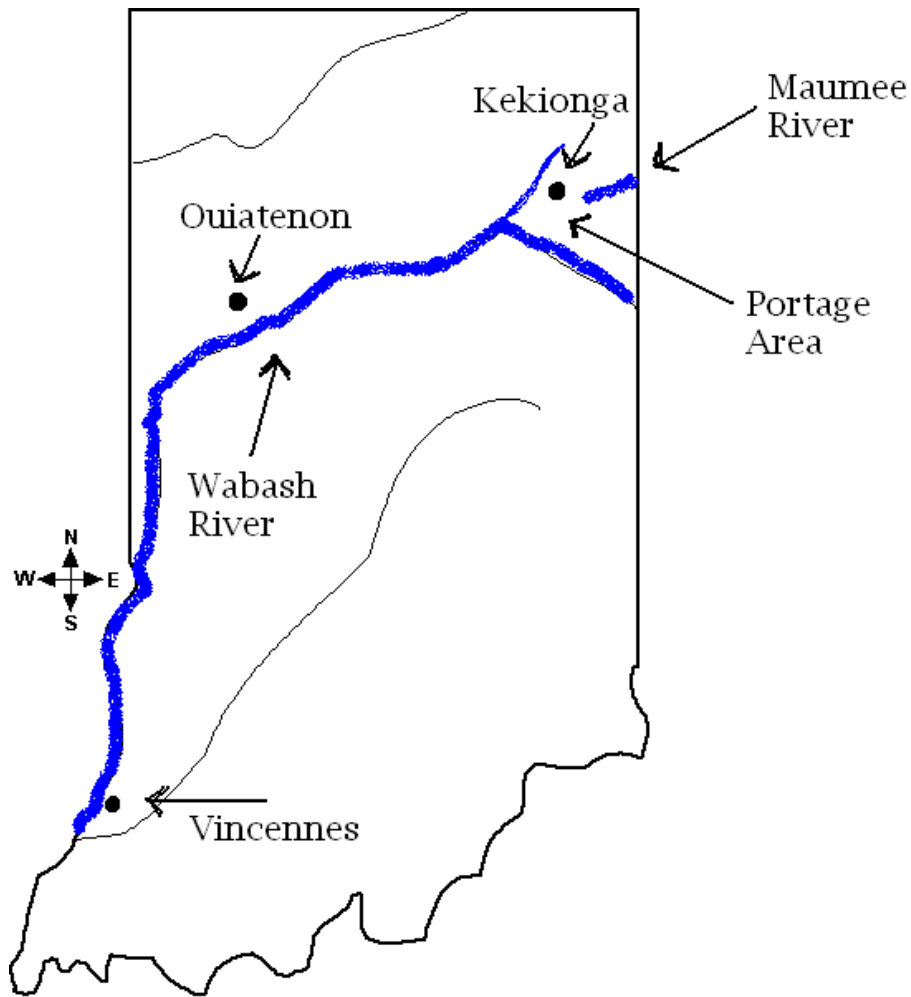


Figure 1.1, Geographic Layout of Towns along the Wabash River
Map created by Patrick Bottiger.

Trade was an essential component to Indian society in the Wabash-Maumee Valley but also largely responsible for maintaining factionalism. From their initial contact with the French to their relationships with the Americans, Wabash Indians valued trade above military alliances.⁷ These trading relationships were often very local in nature because Indian communities did not identify as tribes, and thus did not function like political entities where one decision applied to all involved. It was common for Indian villages to shift allegiances and to move in order to access trade, even if their

⁷ I use the term Wabash Indians to designate the tribes who settled in the Wabash-Maumee Valley – this was a contemporary term used by several settlers. It also helps prevent repetition.

fellow Indians did otherwise. Outsiders often interpreted this behavior in larger terms, concluding that if one Miami polity favored the British then they all might soon do so. This sort of rationale continually upset regional stability because the Europeans often demanded and expected uniform allegiance, which led to punitive expeditions by the French or British against innocent Indian communities.

For the most part, however, factionalism within the Miami polity was relatively peaceful. Local Indians constructed relationships with outsiders like the British and French and traded regularly for goods, but never entered into an entirely dependent relationship or sacrificed their autonomy. Miamis would first identify through their local kinship network and trade connections, and secondly with their shared ethnic history to other Miami-speaking Indians. The permanence of Miamis in the Wabash-Maumee Valley was as much a product of their localized identities, which did not necessitate collective action, as was their ability to compromise with outsiders. Relatively autonomous communities allowed the Miamis to incorporate and satisfy French and English demands without undermining their kinship networks, traditions, and rituals. A person was not Miami because he traded with Indians and non-Indians alike. One was Miami because he used trade to protect their local interests. The Miamis did not act unilaterally, which allowed them to prosper rather than collapse due to internal divisions and violence. As Stewart Raffert argues, the various Miami communities adapted to local conditions and realities rather than conform to one leader or community's demands.⁸

⁸ Stewart Raffert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 34.

Because of Kekionga's location between the Maumee and Wabash it eventually became the political center for the Miami, administering trade between Detroit and French settlements in Illinois country like Vincennes. The Miami at Kekionga lived in relative peace compared to settlements near Vincennes, Detroit, and in the Illinois country.⁹ To this end, the Miami raided more distant rivals like the Sioux, Pawnee, Chickasaw, and others for goods rather than attempt to assert their authority.¹⁰ This geographical diplomacy created buffer zones around the Miami and let them live without fearing an attack from their neighbors. This is not to say that their diplomatic methods prevented all kinds of danger.

Even though the Miami enjoyed stability in northwestern Indiana, a few Miami-speaking communities broke off and migrated southwest along the Wabash. These groups, the Wea and Piankashaws, left the Miami settlement at St. Joseph's River. Although connected to the Miami cultural center at Kekionga, they would experience less stability because they settled in more contested areas. Oral tradition states that the Miami peoples at St. Joseph were so numerous (close to 3,000 people) that "migration of a part of the tribe [was] necessary."¹¹ One Miami man, Wuyoakeetonwau, settled 20 miles south of the Tippecanoe River, establishing the Wea village Ouiatenon near what is today Lafayette.¹² When those Indians "increased considerably, one of them separated himself from them and went to the mouth of the Vermillion River, where he settled down & made a village. This man had no holes or slits in his ears, as was customary at that day, and he

⁹ Raffert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana*, 27-30.

¹⁰ Harvey Lewis Carter, *Little Turtle*, 14.

¹¹ Vernon Kinietz, ed., "*Meearmeear Traditions*" by C.C. Trowbridge (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938), 4.

¹² Dorothy Libby, *An Anthropological Report on the history of the Miami, Weas, and Eel River Indians - Summary of Piankashaw locations* (New York: Garland Pub. Inc., 1974), 58.

was on that account called Piankeshaw.”¹³ This settlement may have supported 600 Indians. The Sieur de Vincennes, who had forged relationships with the Piankashaw during his exploration of the Wabash Valley, founded a post at what is today Vincennes, Indiana, in 1732. He convinced several Piankashaw Indians to live there with him, but most remained at their village at the mouth of the Vermilion River. By 1736, three major Piankashaw villages existed along Wabash River - at Ouiatenon, Vermilion River, and Vincennes, supporting about 800-1000 Indians.¹⁴ The Miamis at Kekionga, the Wea at Ouiatenon, and the Piankashaws at Vincennes developed a vast trading network along the Wabash and Maumee rivers. The British and French hoped to access the extensive and profitable trading system.

These European-Indian trade alliances, although lucrative, fueled competition between European powers and factionalism among the Indian communities. The British attempted to trade with various groups “by offering cheaper British goods at [a] secret rendezvous in the Illinois country,” which benefited both peoples greatly for the French had, at times, manipulated and abused the Indian trade. There were instances where ““a cask of brandy worth forty dollars fetched \$3,000 worth of furs’.”¹⁵ French and British traders desperately wanted access to the Indian villages in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. However, the competition between France and Britain for alliances among the Miami-speaking Indians fueled factional rivalries. The French constructed a small fort they named Fort Ouiatenon, located on the western side of the Wabash River near present-day

¹³ Vernon Kinietz, ed., *“Meearmeeear Traditions” by C.C. Trowbridge* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938), 4.

¹⁴ Dorothy Libby, *An Anthropological Report*, 59-61.

¹⁵ Arrell Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 21.

Lafayette, Indiana where a dozen traders and their families lived.¹⁶ The British settled at Pickawillany on the Great Miami River where they hoped to trade with the Piankashaw. Many of the Indians in the Wabash Valley had familial and diplomatic relations with the French. However, these relationships became tenuous by 1750 because of the availability of cheaper British trade goods.¹⁷ In fact, because of these rapidly shifting alliances, the Miami leader at Vincennes, known as La Demoiselle, abandoned the pro-French Miami faction in the 1740s and attacked the head Miami town of Kekionga in 1747.¹⁸ He then established a pro-British Miami settlement at Pickawillany that numbered close to 2000 people, challenging the pro-French Miami leader Piedfroid at Kekionga. Trade with Europeans maintained factionalism among the Miami-speaking Indians.

Like La Demoiselle's Miamis, many Piankashaws had also forged ties with the British, settling near Pickawillany in early 1752. Traditionally, they had migrated back and forth between Vincennes, the Vermilion River village, and Fort Ouiatenon. However, in 1752 many Piankashaw settled on the White River along with various Weas and Miamis in an effort to trade with the English. The French attacked this settlement in June of 1752, killing several Miamis as punishment for associating with the British. The French hoped to maintain their socio-economic relationship with the Miamis and the Piankashaws, who had signed a treaty of friendship with the British in 1750. George Croghan, a British Indian agent, said that he "had been well acquainted with them several years before [1765]," when he had visited Vincennes and forged diplomatic relations

¹⁶ Thomas Hutchins, *A Topographical Description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina, Comprehending the Rivers Ohio, Kenhawa, Soto, Cherokee, Wabash, Illinois, Mississippi* (London: Burlington House, 1778), cited in Banta's manuscript, "The Wea Country."

¹⁷ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 216.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 216. La Demoiselle was actually Piankashaw.

with the Piankashaws, no doubt a reason they eventually settled near his fort at Pickawillany.¹⁹ The destruction of Pickawillany forced the formerly pro-British Piankashaws to quickly re-establish ties with the French by removing to Ouiatenon, while the displaced Miamis returned to Kekionga.²⁰ The Piankashaws had little choice but to re-establish relations with the French after the pro-French Ottawas and Ojibwas ate their leader La Demoiselle in a ritual following his capture.²¹ The Piankashaw demonstrated their support for the French by sending two English scalps “to the governor of Canada as a token of their repentance.”²² Many Miami warriors then aided the French cause during the Seven Years War, participating in the victory over Edward Braddock at Fort Duquesne in 1755. While the Miamis did aid the French during the Seven Years War, they did not play a substantive role against the British during Pontiac’s Rebellion. The Miamis remained neutral during the majority of the rebellion except for an attack on Kekionga in which they captured the British forces and their trading center.²³ Regaining control over Kekionga was one part of a larger plan by the Miamis to reassert their power in the area. They understood the necessity of controlling the regional trade route in order to prevent Britain from dictating terms. Their attack on Fort Miami (Kekionga) was not necessarily a reflection of anti-British sentiment, but rather an attempt to maintain control of some important waterways and portage areas.²⁴ The Miamis wanted the British around in order to facilitate, but not dictate, trade.

¹⁹ Written by Reverend Simon Brute de Remur in six installments in *The Western Sun* during 1839.

²⁰ Libby, *An Anthropological Report*, 60.

²¹ Raffert, *The Miami Indians*, 32.

²² Carter, *Life and Times of Little Turtle*, 35.

²³ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁴ Carter, *Life and Times of Little Turtle*, 68.

Although Kekionga's economy was fundamentally oriented towards Detroit and the Great Lakes, Vincennes's economy was in many ways directed toward Spanish Louisiana. By the late 1760s, Vincennes was a heterogeneous village of close to 250 French settlers, African and Indian slaves, several British traders, and Indians, mostly Piankashaws. Although the fur trade dominated the local economy, French agricultural production boomed as well, contrary to British and American claims that the French were lazy and unproductive. The French purposely produced an agricultural surplus - over 10,000 bushels of corn and 36,000 pounds of tobacco in 1767 so that they could purchase rum, wine, and manufactured goods from New Orleans, which they in turn exchanged for furs from local and more distant Indian communities.²⁵ Even though the economy was for all intents and purposes part of the Mississippi Valley and Louisiana hinterland, the Indians' diplomatic and cultural connections were at places to the north like Ouiatenon, Kekionga, and even Detroit. Once the French left North America as an imperial power after the Seven Years' War, the British began a concerted effort to access the trading opportunities in the Great Lakes and further west. British trade was fundamentally oriented towards Detroit and they succeeded in profiting from trade along the Wabash in part because of the connections among the Piankashaws at Vincennes, the Weas at Ouiatenon, and the Miamis at Kekionga.

George Croghan, deputy chief for Indian affairs in the west, led Britain's attempts to secure trade in the region during the 1750s and 1760s. His efforts culminated in an expedition into the region in 1765 and 1766. He recognized the interests among the Wabash Indian communities, and hoped to establish trading connections with these

²⁵ Andrew Cayton, *Frontier Indiana. A history of the trans-Appalachian frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 56-59.

Indian groups and thus secure trade routes from Detroit down to Vincennes. Some, like the Kickapoos, had experienced the destructive result of European competition for trade and wished to stop Croghan's expedition into the region. Kickapoo scouts located Croghan's expedition in early June of 1765.²⁶ They quickly notified their followers at Ouiatenon, who assembled and ambushed the British envoy the next morning, killing and wounding several British men and kidnapping Croghan. The Piankashaws, who had refused to partake in the abduction of Croghan, feared retribution from pro-British Indians like the Shawnees and Delaware, who might defend their British allies. As a result, the Piankashaws eventually allied themselves with the British to prevent attacks from the pro-British Shawnees.²⁷ The Kickapoos, having captured Croghan, understood that the British were an important trading power in the region and thus used Croghan as leverage to develop more peaceful relations with them. Croghan's supporters called on Pontiac to facilitate a council between the two groups, which resulted in Croghan's release after thirty-five days in captivity. Croghan then led councils at Fort Chartres and Detroit in August where the Kickapoos joined in an alliance with the British that remained tenuous at best.²⁸

The Miami settlements at Kekionga, led by Pacanne and Le Gris, remained relatively undisturbed during this period because they had developed a unique relationship with both the French and British. They enjoyed easy access to British trade

²⁶ Arrell Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border*, 314.

²⁷ These groups joined Croghan after an attack on his group near Kekionga because they feared that the Shawnees, Iroquois, and other British-allied Indians would attack them. It was, in essence, a defensive move. Dorothy Libby, *An Anthropological Report*, 61. These villages held 700 Indians collectively. The Shawnee had signed a treaty with William Johnson in 1765 and then escorted Croghan into the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Colin Calloway, *The Shawnee and the War for America* (Viking Adult, 2007), 40.

²⁸ Calloway, *The Shawnee and the War for America*, 29-30.

goods while also maintaining positive relationships with the French who lived nearby.²⁹ Kekionga, unlike Vincennes and Ouiatenon, was a settlement where trading relations did not create conflict because the Miamis dictated the terms of trade to which the European powers consented. The Miamis did not need to make themselves subservient to the Europeans in order to prosper. This cultural independence played an especially important role for Miami diplomatic decisions when refugee Indian communities entered the region during the late 18th century.

Many refugees immigrated to the area as victims of Iroquoian efforts to consolidate power further east, which greatly changed the dynamics of Indian society in the valley. The Potawatomes, Kickapoos, Shawnees, and Delawares lacked legitimate claims to the lands and sought other ways to defend their presence. At first they were able to trade with the various European communities that resided in the region, but these options vanished once the Americans established themselves. Thereafter, refugee Indian groups survived by forging relationships with the Miami-speaking Indians, trading what goods they still possessed, attaining annuity payments through treaty negotiations, or by fighting their traditional enemies and the Americans.

Each group responded to their situation differently. Having fled the Iroquois during the beaver wars in the mid-1600s, the Potawatomes settled in Detroit and Green Bay, eventually migrating south into the Wabash-Maumee Valley in the late 1770s. Here they were able to maintain some autonomy, but without legitimate claim to the land. Although they had fought against the British during Pontiac's Rebellion, they, like the Piankashaws, forged an alliance with the British in the mid-1760s. The Potawatomes abandoned that alliance when they moved into the Illinois country and Indiana territory to

²⁹ Stewart Raffert, *Miami Indians*, 37.

access French and Spanish goods. They were able to re-establish ties with French and Spanish traders who endeavored to exclude the British, and although this strategy worked, it left various Potawatomi bands spread out over a vast territory, factionalized over their loyalties to the Spanish, French, and British.

The Kickapoos entered the Wabash-Maumee Valley for many of the same reasons as the Potawatomes. Pushed into Green Bay by the Iroquois and French during the late 1600s, the Kickapoos suffered from attacks through much of the eighteenth century, although a few Kickapoos had migrated south to Ouiatenon and Vincennes. For a time, the Kickapoos ventured south only to attack French trade routes. Animosity between the two groups stemmed from French attempts to stop the Kickapoos from allying with the Iroquois in 1715 and 1716, as such a relationship would have aided British traders while undercutting the French.³⁰ The Kickapoos moved south in larger numbers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in order to avoid the Sioux and Iroquois but also to attack the Peorias, a remnant of the once great Illinois confederacy. The Kickapoos settled in two main communities, one in present-day Illinois north of the Sangamon River north to Peoria, and the other near the Piankashaws on the Wabash and Vermillion rivers.³¹ From here they continued to war against the remaining Peorias who, according to the Kickapoos, had participated in the assassination of Pontiac at Cahokia in 1769.

The Shawnees and Delaware entered the Wabash-Maumee Valley as refugees, but far later than the Kickapoos and Potawatomes. Although William Johnson, British Indian agent for the northern colonies, hoped to secure peace with these Indian nations in

³⁰ Arrell Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border*, 13.

³¹ Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border*, 14.

1768, his strategy effectively did the opposite. The Treaty of Fort Stanwix marginalized the Delaware and Shawnees in two ways: by not including them in the final boundary negotiations, and by ceding their lands in Pennsylvania to the British. This aided the Iroquois, who were able to protect their territory, as well as the British, who had curtailed the power of the Shawnee league; however, it placed the Delaware and Ohio Shawnees in a difficult position. They would be forced to fight for their lands or remove west. Both options would weaken them. Ultimately, most of the Shawnees and Delaware migrated west, settling in the Wabash-Maumee Valley.

The outside Indian groups recognized that they could continue to live in their traditional manner in the region even as guests of the Miamis. It was not as though the Miamis did not welcome them. The Miamis increased their regional influence by incorporating groups like the Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Delaware into their socio-economic networks. The outside Indian groups were initially very small and posed little threat to the established Miamis. Furthermore, the Miamis did not function as a tribe or a unified nation and could not expel the invaders without weakening themselves. Had the Miami at Kekionga mobilized to expel the Delaware and Shawnee, the Piankashaw at Vincennes may have welcomed the Delawares and Shawnee into their villages as a way to usurp the influence of their northern brethren.

Factionalism Persists

Despite such major changes in the Wabash-Maumee Valley, Indian communities continued to operate on local rather than national or racial terms. Factionalism persisted in part because the recent Indian immigrants brought greater competition for the region's resources, but also because there simply was no immediate reason for the Indians to unite.

By 1770, the Miami remained in control of Kekionga and the regional trading network. The British, although desirous to control the region for economic and military purposes, were unwilling to expend the economic capital necessary to supplant the Indians in the valley and could only hope to benefit as participants, rather than regulators, of the trading network. Violence did erupt periodically, but the French residents and traders were often available to police and temper frontier animosities, which prevented large-scale violence from developing. Although there was greater stress on the resources in the region, most Indians maintained some control of their affairs.

Ironically, in their effort to avoid violence, refugee Indians often prolonged it by creating factional strife within the communities into which they settled. The quest for land and trade forced the Miamis, Delaware, Shawnees, Potawatomies, Kickapoos, and others to compete for resources at a time when access to resources was increasingly restricted due to the settlement of non-Indians. European and American traders also amplified factionalism present within Indian communities into greater conflicts when they sought greater access to Indian trade goods. Maintaining stability became more tenuous in the period during the American Revolution when war erupted between the Indians and Americans, forcing the Indians at Kekionga to use violence, rather than diplomacy, to defend their economic interests.

The Americans first officially arrived in the area during the Revolutionary War when George Rogers Clark captured the trading posts at Cahokia, Kaskaskia, and Vincennes. His forces consisted of frontiersmen rather than Regulars (representatives of a national government), something the various Indian communities failed to recognize. Most Indians at Vincennes remembered the violent and ruthless behavior of Clark's

Virginia and Kentucky militiamen for decades thereafter, hindering relationships between Indians and Americans who arrived in subsequent migrations. Most historians have mythologized Clark, his men, and his victory at Vincennes (Fort Sackville). However, it was, as Patrick Griffin argues, nothing more than a “costless victory.”³² Clark accomplished little besides replacing the British forces at Vincennes with soldiers who were there to claim the territory for Virginia. The victory did nothing to strangle the British fort at Detroit as Clark argued it would. Moreover, the victory did not displace or undermine French and Indian hegemony in the region. The support given to Clark on behalf of the Indians was simply a diplomatic move to prevent violence, not recognition that Americans controlled the area or the trade. The Indians outnumbered the British and the Americans collectively and could have destroyed Fort Sackville had they wanted. They refrained, for they prized long-term economic relationships over a short-sighted victory in battle.

The Revolutionary War in the Wabash-Maumee Valley was relatively uneventful militarily; however, most Indian communities were well aware that Britain and the American colonies were at war, and many capitalized on the resulting opportunities. The Wabash Indians wanted to maintain security in a vastly changing world. Their alliances with the British and the Americans were largely out of convenience because they recognized how destructive permanent treaties could be. Thus, the pact Young Tobacco (a Piankashaw) fashioned with Clark makes sense after Clark’s victory at Vincennes. The British, although influential in the area, were no longer in control, which convinced Young Tobacco never to fight for the British again. He told “all the Red people on the

³² Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 143.

Wabash to bloody the land no more for the English.”³³ This was quite possibly a diplomatic move designed to protect Piankashaw settlements at Vincennes as well as to foster new trade relationships, a common strategy for many regional Indian communities.

The Kickapoos behaved much like the Piankashaws. They declared their support for the British at Detroit in June and July of 1778 after they met Henry Hamilton in conference. A Kickapoo leader, Manihamba, promised the British that the Kickapoos had “no will but that of their British Father.”³⁴ This was not entirely true, for the Kickapoos had also professed allegiance to the Americans when they marched with Clark to Kaskaskia that summer. When Clark attacked Vincennes in February of 1779, the Kickapoos failed to aid the British even though they had “reconnoitered Fort Vincennes for Hamilton and formed a defensive cordon of one hundred warriors about the post.”³⁵ The Kickapoos and Piankashaw used a war between the British and American colonials to their benefit by playing the powers off of each other in order to profit from trade.

Like the Kickapoos, Little Turtle, a Miami leader hoping to legitimize himself, benefited from the unstable atmosphere caused by the American Revolution. In 1780, a French officer, Augustin Mottin de La Balme, gathered nearly eighty Indians and Frenchmen at Kaskaskia and Vincennes in order to destroy the British-Miami settlement at Kekionga and the British at Detroit. Although his motives remain a mystery, La Balme likely felt that the instability provided an opportunity to punish his British enemies. La Balme, like Clark, believed that Detroit was the “Achilles heel in British

³³ William M. Cockrum, *Pioneer History of Indiana: Stories, Incidents and Customs of the Early Settlers* (Oakland City, Indiana: Press of Oakland City Journal, 1907), 34.

³⁴ "Hamilton's Councils, June and July, 1778," *Illinois Historical Society Collections*, I, 319.

³⁵ Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border*, 36.

Canadian defenses.”³⁶ La Balme’s rhetoric found many supporters along the Wabash and in Illinois country who hated the British for disrupting trade.³⁷ Upon his arrival, La Balme discovered Kekionga abandoned. He then looted the Miami trading center, but was unaware that Little Turtle was organizing a counter-attack, which he launched on November 5, 1780. Little Turtle assaulted La Balme’s force and killed him and thirty of his men which ended the French and Indian threat.³⁸ Not technically a Miami Indian, Little Turtle used this victory to legitimize his influence within the Miami nation. Not all Indians considered Little Turtle a Miami Indian because he was the son of a Mohican father and Iowan mother.³⁹ He solidified his position as a Miami leader by welcoming the Shawnees and Delaware when they arrived in Miami country during the 1780s after fleeing vengeful American frontiersmen. Although Little Turtle disliked the disturbances within the Wabash-Maumee Valley, he benefited from them nonetheless by establishing himself as a Miami leader at Kekionga.

The Revolutionary War showed both the Americans and the British the importance of Kekionga. It played an essential role in facilitating trade and diplomacy in the region by distributing trade goods from Detroit to Indian allies. Henry Hamilton

³⁶ Bradley J Birzer, “French Imperial remnants on the middle ground: the strange case of August de la Balme and Charles Beaubien,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, (Summer 2000), 1.

³⁷ Birzer, “French Imperial remnants on the middle ground,” 3. Karen Marrero, “‘She is Capable of Doing a Good Deal of Mischief’: A Miami Woman’s Threat to Empire in the Eighteenth-Century Ohio Valley,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 6:3 (2005), 5.

³⁸ Raffert, *Miami Indians*, 44.

³⁹ Vernon Kinietz, ed., “*Meearmeeear Traditions*” by C.C. Trowbridge, 87. The Little Turtle is not considered a Miami. A Frenchman, who traded from the Mississippi to the Lakes, purchased in the west an Iowau [sic] girl and adopted her as his daughter. In one of his subsequent visits from Montreal he employed a Mohiccan Indian, partly civilized to accompany him in capacity of a servant. In the Kickapoo country the master & man became engaged in battle and the former was wounded in the thigh. The Mohiccan carried him, with incredible labour & fatigue to the Miami village and when he had reached there the grateful Frenchman poured out his lamentations because he had lost all his goods and had no means to reward him. The Mohiccan offered to accept of the Iioawau [sic] girl & the other consented. They were married, settled among the Miamis & had a great many children, of whom the eldest was Little Turtle

hoped to complement British troops with Indian allies and attack American frontier settlements and realized that he could do so by accessing the Wabash-Maumee trade network. The British could ship goods to Detroit and trade with Indians at Kekionga, increasing British chances at winning Indian allies. The Americans, although more focused on the eastern theater of war, were furious at the British actions outside Detroit. Unable to access Kekionga during the war, the Americans knew that controlling it would be essential for their western territories. Despite recognizing the importance of Kekionga and the diverse trading network that it facilitated, the war was uneventful militarily for the Wabash Indians as the region had little strategic importance for the rebels or loyalists.

Indians like the Shawnees and Delaware also recognized the importance of Kekionga. The Shawnees and Delaware fled to Miami country in part because they had lost claim to their homelands in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, but mostly because the frontier violence during and after the Revolutionary War had pushed them there.⁴⁰ Lord Dunmore's war in 1774 proved disastrous for the Shawnees. Not only did some angry colonial militiamen murder Shawnee leader Cornstalk, but a flood of settlers and land speculators streamed into Kentucky and the Ohio Valley in order to seize Shawnee lands. The Delaware advocated neutrality yet suffered nonetheless. In 1782, the Kentucky militia stormed their village at Gnadenhütten in 1782 and murdered 100 people. The violence forced the Delawares and Shawnees to move west and seek protection from more established Indian communities. The Delawares constructed a town on the east bank of the St. Joseph River in 1785 and added two more on the St. Mary's River two years later. The Shawnees settled further south along the Maumee River. The Miamis typically would have objected to this, yet they used the displaced Indians to their benefit.

⁴⁰ Vernon Kinietz, ed., *Meearmear Traditions* by C.C. Trowbridge, 38.

It was quite obvious that they would need to unite against the violent and expansionistic Americans in order to protect their lands. The Delaware and Shawnees proved to be convenient allies. This level of cooperation, however, lasted only as long as the Miamis were able to control their traditional lands and perceived an American threat. Still, common defense had surpassed trade as the defining characteristic at Kekionga.

Indians near Vincennes did not unite collectively because such an alliance would have undermined the trade network. The Piankashaw did not control trade at Vincennes like their brethren at Kekionga, nor did they necessarily need to do so. Although Vincennes experienced a similar influx of Indians into the area during the 1780s similar to what happened at Kekionga and Ouiatenon, these migrations were more the result of economic pan-Indianism than a reaction to either large-scale frontier disruptions or the American military forces. Many Indians actually came to trade with each other at Vincennes and with the French settlers. French diplomatic policing had protected the stability of Vincennes because of neutral “exchange zones.”⁴¹ The neutral exchange existed because the French and Indians had developed and solidified socio-economic relationships over the previous sixty years. Denise Wilson states that the symbiotic relationship between the European Americans and Indians at Vincennes was born of out of familiarity and economic interdependence.⁴² Various Indian groups like the Weas, Kickapoos, Delawares, Miamis as well as the French and the British, maintained friendly relationships because their economic and social relationships depended upon it.

⁴¹ Jay Gitlin, “On the Boundaries of Empire: Connecting the West to Its Imperial Past,” in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past*, ed. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, 82 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992).

⁴² Denise Wilson, “Vincennes: From French Colonial Village to American Frontier Town, 1750-1820,” (PhD Dissertation, West Virginia University, 1997), 230.

The delicate balance between Europeans and Indians present at Vincennes quickly disappeared after the Americans settled there. American attempts to take control and monopolize the trade produced violence. Most American immigrants to the valley during the Revolutionary War felt that the Indians were duplicitous and deceitful when the Indians were in fact only trying to maintain pre-existing trade relationships, which were far more important to them than military alliances. Yet, as the Americans took control of all facets of trade they also began to displace the French, a move that proved costly. Without consulting the French, the Americans often misinterpreted Indian actions which precipitated hostility, creating an increasingly unfriendly region around Vincennes. Not only did the Indians use trade negotiations to assert their power, but balanced trade allowed communities to maintain a degree of autonomy. This balance resulted from the Indians' ability to play the French and British off each other. Trade declined as the Americans gained influence and control of the valley, forcing various Indian communities to assert themselves in new ways.

The events in Vincennes mirrored the experiences of Indians throughout the Ohio Valley. While Indian communities experienced only minor disruptions during the war, they were increasingly aware that the Virginians and Pennsylvanians were making a concerted effort to stake their claims to the region. Violence between Indians and the Revolutionaries at Blue Licks in Kentucky and Gnadenhutten in Pennsylvania reminded most of the Ohio Valley Indians that the ending of hostilities between the British and Revolutionaries did not translate to tranquility in the Ohio Valley. The peaceful balance many of the Indians enjoyed throughout the western Ohio Valley disappeared within a few years after the British and Revolutionaries signed the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

American Intervention

American Indians refused to recognize Britain's cession of the Ohio Valley to the United States in the Treaty of Paris. Nonetheless, the Americans marked the lands west of Pennsylvania and north of the Ohio for settlement, but watched in horror as Indians raided American settlements and murder hundreds of squatters and land speculators who had flooded the region.⁴³ By 1790, the United States still had not established its sovereignty over the Ohio Valley. Although the Indians benefitted from the continued presence of the British in the southern Great Lakes and the Spanish in the trans-Mississippi West, the Indians' ability to stall the Americans was largely due to disparate Indian nations cooperating for a common defense.⁴⁴ The United States government interpreted the growing resistance among the Ohio Valley Indians as the product of a growing Indian confederacy devoted to the destruction of the western American settlements. However, few Ohio Valley Indian groups wanted to risk wide-spread warfare and hoped instead to use small frontier raids to stop the Americans from settling north of the Ohio River. Nonetheless, the federal government mobilized its army and confronted the Indians, the results of which only exacerbated the factionalism already present in the region.

The failure on the part of the Americans to interpret Indian behavior was nowhere more apparent than in Vincennes in the mid-1780s, when some local farmers construed the actions of a few Indians as part of a larger conspiracy. The Americans believed that the Indians at Kekionga planned to kill the Americans at Vincennes, and they interpreted

⁴³ Laws stipulated under Land Ordinance of 1785 and eventually the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 would regulate the settlement of the Territory.

⁴⁴ Nancy L. Rhoden, "Great Britain and American at 1800: Perspectives on the Frontier," in Darrel E. Bigham, ed., *Indiana Territory: A Bicentennial Perspective* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2001), 125-145.

a June 20, 1786 Indian attack on two nearby farmers as signs of a larger strike. Daniel Sullivan, a local firebrand, reacted with rage. He killed the nearest Indian he could find and used his horse to drag the man around town.⁴⁵ The French, the one community capable of stabilizing relationships between various groups, feared an all-out war and quickly met the Indian forces gathering at Petit Rocher (located three miles from Vincennes) where they diffused the situation. The French vented their frustration at the Americans who failed to distinguish between peaceful and militant Indian groups. Sullivan's crime, coupled with other random outbursts of violence, had forced various Indian groups to set aside their differences in order to protect themselves. To a certain extent, Indians stopped discriminating between the French, English, and Americans when they retaliated out of fear for their own lives. Both the Americans and Indians began to distinguish each other more through singular identities like Indian and non-Indian in order to survive, but such behavior was fleeting. In fact, the increased unity among the Indians was more apparent among the Miamis rather than the Indians overall. The Miamis recognized the actions of the Americans and some of the outside Indian communities had led to increased attacks on trade routes, creating even greater violence in town. While the Miami-speaking Indians united to a greater extent during this period, it was largely due to their cultural and historical connections and not race.⁴⁶

In an effort to maintain peace, General Clark decided to increase his forces at Vincennes in November of 1786 while at the same time requesting that the Wabash Indians and Americans convene a council at Clarksville. Clark's desire to forge a treaty with the Indians showed the extent to which his Virginians understood their tenuous

⁴⁵ Richard White, *The Middle Ground*, 425.

⁴⁶ Wilson, *Vincennes*, 244.

position in the area. The Miamis saw this as well. They turned down Clark's request to meet at Clarksville and suggested that they meet at Vincennes instead, knowing full well that they were in a position to direct diplomacy. An Indian leader reminded Clark that he "ought to know the place we have been accustomed to speak at. It is Post Vincennes. There our chiefs are laid; there our ancestors [sic] bed is and that of our father, the French and not at Clarksville . . . We don't know such a place."⁴⁷ There was a subtle but important message in that statement. The Indians reminded Clark that the French remained influential and powerful in Vincennes - diplomacy would take place on Indian terms. Their explicit demands reflected their understanding of frontier negotiations, as well as their ability to shape them.

Most Americans interpreted Indian resistance as militancy and hoped to stop it before war broke out. In 1789, Arthur St. Clair had instructed the federal commander at Vincennes, Major John F. Hamtramck, to determine the status of the Wabash Indians. Antoine Gamelin, a French trader who had married the daughter of the Indian leader at Ouiatenon and who could communicate with the various Indians of the Wabash Valley, took on this challenge. His correspondence with the various Indian communities revealed their reluctance to commit to peace without having first communicated with the Miamis at Kekionga. It was obvious that the various Indian communities were concerned about the American settlement of Ohio. Indians questioned the Americans' professions of peace. In fact, the Indians were troubled by the Americans' ambiguous motives, particularly because of the increased tenor of violence in the area. Both Indians and French inquired about the reasons for yet another American force in the area.

⁴⁷ Cockrum, *Pioneer History of Indiana: Including Stories, Incidents, and Customs of the Early Settlers*, (Oakland City, IN: Press of Oakland City Journal, 1907), 64.

Neither the U.S. army nor the French could control the increasingly hostile environment in the valley. Although Major Hamtramck stationed American troops at Vincennes in 1787 as part of Josiah Harmar's effort to conciliate the French and to "cultivate friendly relations with the Piankashaw, Wea, Kickapoo, and others," violence continued to grow.⁴⁸ Hamtramck hoped to promote peace but many American settlers continued to misinterpret the actions of the Indians. Miami leader Pacanne and some followers moved close to Vincennes in 1785 because of the growing anti-American sentiment near Kekionga. Pacanne physically separated himself and his followers from the more militant Miami at Kekionga. In an attempt to protect Miami interests, he assisted Harmar and the Americans as an intermediary, yet found himself their victim instead. The French and Indians like Pacanne sought to stabilize the region around Vincennes, but were continually frustrated by Americans who thought the Indians were part of a larger conspiracy based at Kekionga. Patrick Brown, a Kentuckian, attacked Pacanne's settlements near Vincennes during the summer of 1789 in an effort to avenge recent Indian attacks.⁴⁹ Rather than see Pacanne's actions within the factional nature of the valley, Brown interpreted the Miami and the Indians as a unified entity preparing for war. Brown grew more convinced of this when a large contingent of Kickapoos then attacked an American force near the mouth of the Wabash, forcing the French into a desperate policing action.

Hamtramck believed that he needed to take a decisive step in order to stop the growing violence around Vincennes. He hoped to undercut what he perceived as an increase in Indian militancy by marching against and destroying the Miami-Wea towns

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Vincennes*, 244; White, *The Middle Ground*, 429.

⁴⁹White, *The Middle Ground*, 430.

near present-day Lafayette in late 1790. Surprisingly, he found them abandoned. The Frenchmen in Hamtramck's forces had actually warned the Indians ahead of time in order to protect their friends and family.⁵⁰ Frustrated by the French, he marched his men back to Vincennes without incident. Although the Indians wanted to attack Hamtramck's men, they likely refrained out of fear that they might hurt the French contingent within it.⁵¹ Peace, however, remained elusive, and many of the Piankashaws moved west while several French families migrated south in an attempt to avoid the increasing violence. Fewer French residents along with the rise in Kickapoo militancy greatly disrupted trade at Vincennes and surrounding hinterland. The Americans again interpreted the corresponding rise in violence as part of a larger Indian conspiracy at Kekionga.

Policymakers had identified the conglomeration of Indians at Kekionga as part of the Miami Confederacy and expected that the American army would put an end to their militancy. Diplomats hoped that military action would officially announce the arrival of the United States into the Ohio Valley and dissuade "all peoples of any notions they might have about resisting or ignoring the grand plans outlined in the legislation of the 1780s."⁵² Harmar represented more than new settlers or trading opportunities for Indians. Rather, as Andrew Cayton argues, he was there to prime the region for the arrival of the Americans who hoped to alter the region's social and political institutions entirely.⁵³ The national nature of Harmar and Hamtramck's endeavors meant that the stability at Vincennes, and with that the Wabash Valley, might change drastically.

⁵⁰ Wilson, *Vincennes*, 260.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁵² Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787 quoted in Andrew Cayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 109.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

American military intervention had also transformed the Wabash-Maumee portage. The portage area had become even more cosmopolitan during the 1780s as both English and French traders established themselves among a more diverse Indian population. The hinterland of Kekionga supported various Indian villages – Delaware, Shawnees, Miamis, and Potawatomes. Kekionga lacked the segregation apparent at Vincennes for the “French, English, and Miami lived together,” subordinating themselves to the will of the Miami leaders.⁵⁴ It was not uncommon for influential Miami leaders such as Little Turtle or Le Gris to dine with various Europeans on a daily basis. This is not to say that the portage Indians refused to deal with the Americans.⁵⁵ Negotiations with the Americans had failed even when Henry Hay, a close friend of Le Gris’s daughter, visited the region in an attempt to forge stronger diplomatic ties between the two nations. His failed mission, however, convinced the Americans that only force would give them power over the trading region long managed by the Miamis. The Indians though had no plans to cede control of the Wabash-Maumee region.

Displacing the Indians from Kekionga involved destroying a league of Indian nations the Americans believed to be based there. What the Americans perceived to be a confederacy of Indians was in fact various Indian groups working together in a cooperative fashion to protect their villages. George Washington and Henry Knox both hoped to destroy Kekionga, yet watched instead as the American army collapsed in defeat. The Indian league nearly annihilated two American military expeditions into the territory during the early 1790s. The first expedition, led by Josiah Harmar, succeeded in his initial attempt to destroy the villages at Kekionga in September and October of 1790,

⁵⁴ White, *The Middle Ground*, 450.

⁵⁵ The term “portage Indians” refers to the Indians at Kekionga because they controlled the important portage between the Wabash River and the Maumee River.

but suffered a humiliating loss at the hands of Little Turtle when Harmar's forces returned later that fall. Arthur St. Clair attempted to finish Harmar's job the following November, but suffered a similar rout. The defeats of both Harmar and St. Clair left the American army in shambles and the American government unable to enforce its policies upon the Indian communities in the Ohio and Wabash valleys. Harmar's and St. Clair's defeats placed the Indians of the Northwest in a unique position to influence (if not dictate) policy to the Americans in the late 1780s and early 1790s. However, by 1795 they had lost power thanks in large part to Anthony Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794. Harmar and St. Clair had both suffered major setbacks because of a united front - labeled the "Miami Confederacy" by many Americans - of Indians based largely in western Ohio and the Wabash Valley.

The league as a unified political entity with Little Turtle at its head did not really exist and was more the product of American perceptions than reality. Although Little Turtle and Shawnee leader Blue Jacket directed the actions of the league during battle, the two leaders did not function as the political head of a unified Indian confederacy. The interests of the Indians were simply too diverse to remain united for an extended period. Shawnee, Miami, Lenape, Haudenosaunee, Kickapoo, Wyandot, and a host of other Indians participated in the defeats of Harmar and St. Clair but they did so in order to protect their homelands and villages. Their larger goal was local, rather than racial. Any allegiance to the league and to its leaders was temporary, which explains, in part, Little Turtle's efforts to leave the league in 1793 and 1794.

The Indian alliance had, in essence, thwarted federal Indian policy, yet this did not mean the league had not suffered. In 1791, General Charles Scott destroyed acres of

cultivated Miami lands near Ouiatenon, which greatly undermined several Indian communities' ability to subsist. Under orders from Knox, Scott attacked the Wea towns west of Kekionga, destroying Ouiatenon and various Kickapoo villages as well. His subordinate, Colonel James Wilkinson also destroyed Kethtipecanunk [Tippecanoe], an important settlement north of Ouiatenon, but found it "completely rebuilt" by the Kickapoos upon his return two months later.⁵⁶ Harmar's expedition, although a failure, had devastated Miami agriculture, forcing the various Indian communities into a greater dependency upon British and American goods. It also necessitated that some groups make practical alliances that transcended traditional identities.

Such behavior cemented factionalism within the region. Two Potawatomi settlements, one in the Illinois country and one north of Kekionga, differed mainly in geographical placement before the 1790s. Their physical differences shaped their experiences with the Americans, which precipitated a more decisive break between the two communities. The western faction of the Potawatomes on the Illinois River near Lake Peoria had enjoyed relative autonomy, much like the Miamis, before 1770. Their leader, La Gesse, supported peace with the Americans and met them in council at Vincennes in the fall of 1792. The Potawatomes under La Gesse, Gomo, and Waweachsetoh signed the Treaty of Vincennes, which the U.S. Senate failed to confirm. The Senate's failure to confirm the treaty effectively turned it into a pact of friendship, which drew the ire of the eastern Potawatomes who settled along the St. Joseph River, fifty miles northwest of Kekionga. The St. Joseph Potawatomes witnessed the American military's attempts to destroy the Indians settlements in the Maumee Valley, including

⁵⁶ Timothy Willig, "Prophetstown on the Wabash: The Native Spiritual Defense of the Old Northwest," *Michigan Historical Review* 23:2 (Fall, 1997), 120.

their own. Having watched their autonomy diminish during the late 1780s and early 1790s, some Indian communities, like the St. Joseph Potawatomi, turned their support to the anti-American Indian Indian league.⁵⁷ Their alliance with Little Turtle was essential for protecting their settlement along the St. Joseph River even though their fellow Potawatomes further west supported the Americans.

The necessity to unite in common defense against the American army eclipsed, for a short time, the factionalism that was rife within the allied Indian communities. The Indian league defeated two American armies, which forced the Americans to reconsider their strategy for the Wabash-Maumee Valley. It took the Americans three years after St. Clair's defeat before they could assemble an army capable of competing with the Indians, but by 1794 the dynamics had changed. Little Turtle feared the new, efficient, and well-supplied American army under Anthony Wayne, and suggested that the Indians negotiate a truce, while at the same time Little Turtle's adopted son, William Wells, aided Wayne's men. Although the Miamis participated in the campaign against Wayne, they did so in a secondary position to Shawnee leader Blue Jacket who had taken command after Little Turtle resigned his post. Although Little Turtle led his contingent of Miamis into battle against Wayne's men, he did not direct the forces as he had done in the confederacy's victories over Harmar and St. Clair. Changing physical and diplomatic circumstances, as well as Little Turtle's reluctance to lead the Indians, contributed to Wayne's victory over the Indians at Fallen Timbers in 1794. Little Turtle was too concerned with his specific community of Miamis to support a long-term war against the Americans. He recognized that some Indians might suffer if they lost to Wayne's forces and he hoped that his

⁵⁷ R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 126-128, 156-158.

community of Miami would not be among them. A strong storm before the battle not only dispersed a large contingent of the Indians, but had also made warriors' movements virtually impossible because the wind blew down so many trees. To make matters worse, the Indians could not repel Wayne's force and attempted to retreat to Fort Miami near present-day Toledo, Ohio. They hoped the British would protect them, yet the British refused them aid, a result of improved diplomatic relationship between Britain and the United States. Without British aid, the Indians were forced to concede defeat eventually signed the Treaty of Greenville nearly a year later.

The Treaty of Greenville officially marked the end of what Americans called the "Miami confederacy." Only three Miami leaders signed the initial agreement at Greenville, reflecting the extent to which the Miamis were factionalized. They abandoned their villages at Kekionga for other settlements along the Wabash and Mississinewa rivers, splitting into several disparate communities that could subsist more easily. Thereafter, most Indian communities depended upon American goods at Fort Wayne; the forces under Harmar, St. Clair, and Wayne had destroyed large stores and vast fields of Miami corn. The post-war years forced the Miamis, both to consider their growing dependency on the Americans and to deal with growing internal factionalism. The post-treaty dynamics convinced many Indians to consider treaty negotiations, rather than trade relationships, as a means for survival. European Americans were gaining greater control over the regional trade by controlling places like Vincennes and Kekionga, which compelled Indians to trade their one remaining commodity, land, in exchange for annuity payments.

The Treaty of Greenville also promoted greater dependency (an important factor in maintaining factionalism) by displacing the Indians from their traditional settlements. The Indians signed away a large piece of land which constituted present-day Ohio and sixteen much smaller cessions of land that were as important. The Indians ceded the land where Kekionga and Ouiatenon existed, and reaffirmed the American's control of "the post of St. Vincennes" which collectively moved the Miamis and various other Indian communities away from their traditional towns and trading centers.⁵⁸ Although this sort of displacement was relatively new for the Miamis who had enjoyed relative stability, many Shawnees and Delaware communities saw it as yet another example of American aggression. The Miamis hoped to use subsequent negotiations to maintain their autonomy, but a large contingent of Shawnees and Delaware had already learned their lesson and rejected this rationale. Some Shawnees moved west to Missouri while others simply refused to sign the treaty. The Miamis had not experienced the degree of displacement that the Shawnees, Potawatomies, Kickapoos, or Delawares had and chose a more pragmatic approach to dealing with the Americans. They believed negotiation, rather than resistance, would bear fruit.

The degree to which Indian communities had been dislocated from their homelands played a central role in determining how they reacted to the Americans in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Anthony Wayne's destruction of the Miami cultural center of Kekionga, while important, did not result in the forced removal of the Miamis from the valley. Rather, they simply abandoned the town and the area around it and settled in other villages to the west, which had not been destroyed. Although Kekionga was

⁵⁸ Jeffrey D. Schultz, *Encyclopedia of Minorities in American Politics* (The American political landscape series. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 2000), 724.

important, it was only one town, and not the entire Wabash-Maumee Valley. The Shawnees, Kickapoos, Delaware, and Potawatomes had experienced whole-scale removal from their territories well before their arrival in the valley. Many of the Potawatomes had fled from Michigan, while the Kickapoos moved north into Wisconsin from Illinois. The Delaware and Shawnees moved west from places like New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky. Losing Kekionga for the Miamis paled in comparison to the experiences of the Indians like the Shawnees who had lost large parts of Kentucky and Ohio.

Kekionga as the seat of the Miami polity ceased to exist by the late 1790s. Wayne constructed a fort at Kekionga (Fort Wayne) and his forces constructed a road along the north edge of the Maumee River to its source at Kekionga so that the Americans could easily supply the fort and defend any Indian counter attack.⁵⁹ Fort Wayne displaced the various Indian communities that had settled the area, forcing them to abandon over five hundred acres of cleared cropland.⁶⁰ The loss of Kekionga at the hands of the Americans did not unify the Miamis. Le Gris, Jean Baptiste Richardville, White Loon, and Little Turtle were the four Miami leaders who signed the Treaty of Greenville. Metocina, Owl, and Pacanne did not. The divisions apparent among the Miamis were also present among other Indian groups. The Treaty of Greenville had spurred great disagreement within many Indian communities. In an ironic twist, the St. Joseph Potawatomes, who had objected so strenuously to their western brethren's alliance with the Americans, signed the Treaty of Greenville, benefiting from the annuity payments even though they did not have a rightful claim to the ceded territory. In fact,

⁵⁹ Stewart Raffert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana*, 53.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

over twenty-five percent of the treaty signers were Potawatomi, even though they lacked the historical legitimacy to sign a document ceding lands to which they had a nebulous claim.⁶¹ Indian groups used the Treaty of Greenville to protect their local interests, at the expense of their larger Indian community.

While some groups utilized the violence to their benefit, others removed west in hopes that they could maintain their autonomy by avoiding the Americans who, in turn, continually interpreted such behavior as inherently militant. The majority of the Kickapoos, unlike the Shawnees, Delaware, Miamis, and Potatomies who remained in the region, removed further west and south. A few lingered, joined by a larger contingent in the early 1800s, when some Kickapoos migrated back to the area to attack the remaining Illinois Indians and in response to Tenskwatawa's nativist rhetoric. Those Kickapoos who stayed in Missouri and further south fought alongside the Spanish against their traditional enemies, the Chickasaw and Osage, until the early 1800s.⁶² The Kickapoos who returned to the Wabash were technically under the jurisdiction of the Americans, not the Spanish. They did not realize the extent to which the Americans, and other Indians, would try to regulate their behavior, a major reason the Kickapoos grew resistant toward interference from outsiders. Their migrations to and from the area reflected traditional behavior rather than a movement towards militancy. Some Kickapoos associated with the Prophet and other Indian communities hesitated to ally with the Americans in order to protect their local interests.

Some Indian leaders accommodated the Americans after the Treaty of Greenville because they believed that the only means of survival was through negotiation. The

⁶¹ Raffert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana*, 60.

⁶² Arrell Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border*, 48-49.

Shawnees had a violent history with the Americans and understood better than most that resistance might prove disastrous. Black Hoof's Shawnees hoped to settle permanent agricultural villages near the Miami River by opening diplomatic relations with the Americans in Washington D.C.⁶³ These negotiations fueled a growing division between Black Hoof's Shawnees at Wapakoneta and those Shawnees in Missouri and the small group of Kispoktha, Thawegila, and Piqua Shawnees who had followed Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh to western Ohio.⁶⁴ Some like Cornstalk advocated accommodation and negotiation while others like Blue Jacket believed that militancy was the Shawnee's only option. These same ideological camps remained within the Shawnee polity well into the nineteenth century.

Black Beard, in support of Black Hoof, hoped that the Shawnees would unite as one nation and devote themselves to an American way of life centered on intensive farming and animal husbandry. Tenskwatawa's group also hoped for unity but in an effort to resist the Americanization of their culture. The division between the two factions grew even more defined in the early 1800s when Tenskwatawa began persecuting those Indians involved with the Americans, especially those who "remained firmly opposed to his movement."⁶⁵ Main Poc, a Potawatomi leader from the Illinois country who Little Turtle considered "the greatest warrior in the west," invited Tenskwatawa to settle near him by Ouiatenon. Thus, Tenskwatawa moved his settlement from Ohio into Indiana territory in 1808.⁶⁶ The two Shawnee factions moved in opposite

⁶³ Edmunds, *The Potawatomis, Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 16-17.

⁶⁴ Stephen Warren, *The Shawnee and their Neighbors: 1795-1870* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 25-26.

⁶⁵ Warren, *The Shawnee and their Neighbors*, 28.

⁶⁶ Wells to Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War, 20 April 1808, in *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, vol. 7, ed Clarence E. Carter (Washington, DC: GPO, 1934-1961), 556.

directions ideologically and, for the Prophet, literally. There simply was not a practical reason for the two groups to unite because their ideological differences trumped the need for a common defense.

Greater competition for resources and American expansion after 1795 only exacerbated the ideological divisions between groups. Indian groups could no longer play European powers off each other, nor could they influence trade as they once had. Moreover, treaty negotiations filled the void of trade, providing Indians with new opportunities to access goods. Since many had been displaced from their traditional homelands, they had little to lose. The Miamis watched in disgust as the Potawatomies, Kickapoos, and others illegitimately signed away Miami lands. By 1800, treaty negotiations were the means through which many Indian communities found security.

These negotiations usually occurred between William Henry Harrison, the governor of Indiana Territory, and various Indian communities within the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Harrison utilized the factional nature of Indian society to his benefit. Several different Indian communities resided in the territory and like the Potawatomies, numerous communities hoped to access trade goods and annuities from the Americans, but often did so by signing land cession treaties outside of their authority. Harrison capitalized on this willingness and gained land transfer after land transfer. Several Indian groups agreed to sell land, which legitimized a process the governor would use repeatedly. Harrison allowed Indian communities to sign treaties even when he knew they had no claims to the area. Their desire to gain annuity payments provided the governor with a convenient tool to force resistant Indians to the negotiating table.

Few Indians were as complicit in this process as the Potawatomes. They had established power in the Wabash-Maumee Valley by manipulating treaty negotiations in their favor. They succeeded first during the Vincennes-tract conference in September 1802, which they used to protect their northern settlements. Henry Dearborn, the U.S. Secretary of War, had cautioned Harrison a year earlier to “sound the Piankiashaws [sic] and Kickapoos on the subject of their sale [of the Vincennes land] to the company [Illinois and Wabash Company] in the year 1795” in order to determine the validity of the sale.⁶⁷ He did not direct Harrison to negotiate with the Potawatomes because their “claims to any of that region were nebulous.”⁶⁸ The Potawatomes and Harrison disregarded Dearborn’s instructions. Five Medals, aided by fellow pro-American leaders like Topinbee and Keesass, ceded “a tract of land stretching along both sides of the Wabash from Point Coupee, eighteen miles north of Vincennes, to the mouth of the White River,” about 1,600,000 acres.⁶⁹ This treaty at Fort Wayne in June of 1803 upset other groups like the Miamis who felt that the Potawatomes lacked the right to participate in Wabash-Maumee politics. The Potawatomes had filled the void left by the Piankashaw Indians who had departed from Vincennes in the mid-1780s to escape the violence that had become endemic to the town.⁷⁰ The Potawatomes also played into Harrison’s hands when their threatening presence forced the Kaskaskians to sign a treaty ceding almost 8 million acres in present-day Illinois in order to gain the protection of the American government.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Henry Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, WHH Papers, June 17, 1802.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Henry Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, WHH Papers, June 17, 1802.

⁷⁰ White, *The Middle Ground*, 430-431.

⁷¹ Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle*, 170-171.

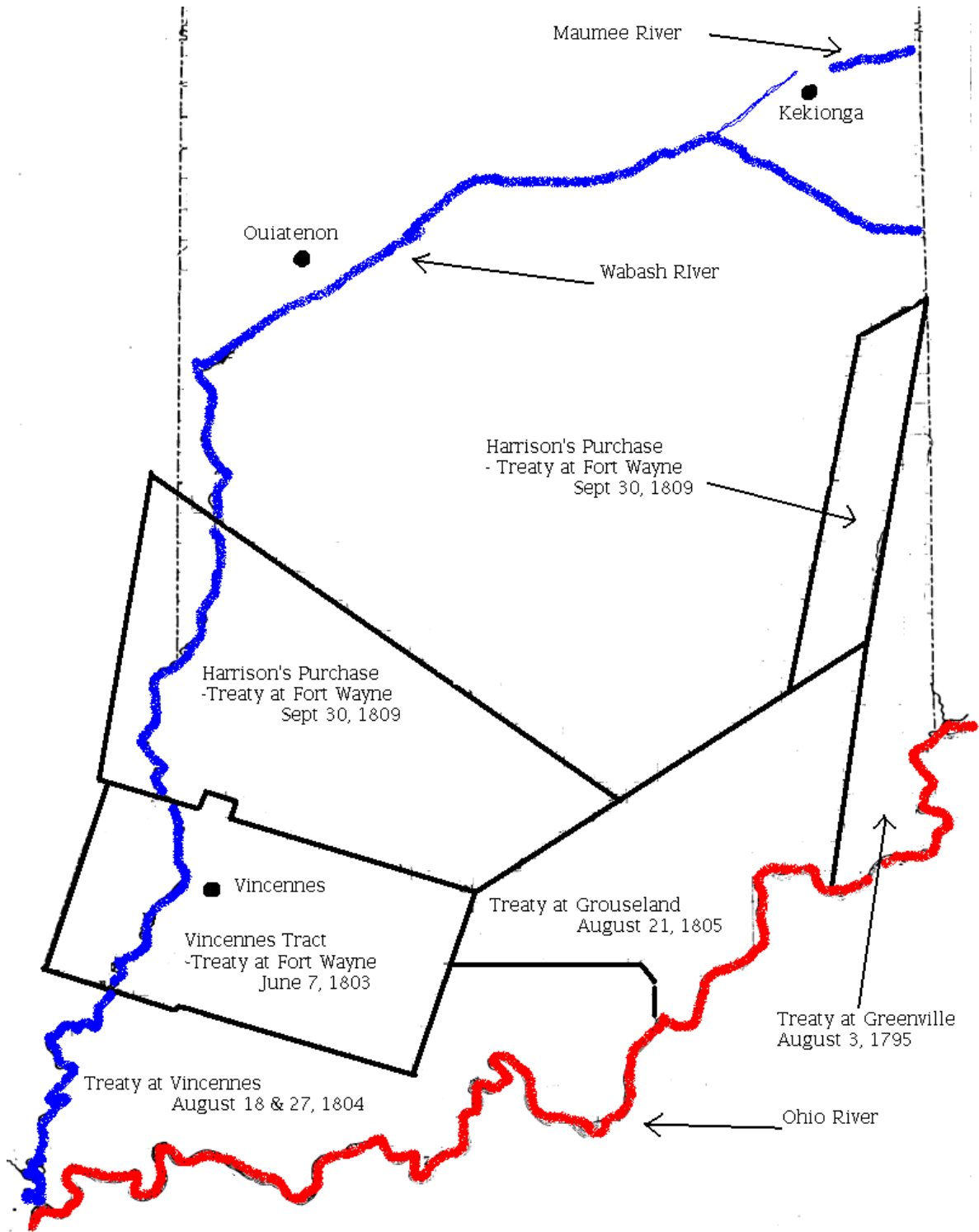


Figure 1.2, Treaty Boundaries for Indiana Territory
Map Created by Patrick Bottiger

Rather than negotiate with the Americans, some Kickapoos simply removed west. They utilized Spanish assistance to fight against their traditional enemies the Osage and the few remaining Illinois Indians. After the Spanish treated with the Osage, many eastern Kickapoos returned to the Wabash Valley in the early 1800s, where they hoped to destroy the remaining Kaskaskian and Peoria Indians because they blamed these groups for the assassination of Pontiac at Cahokia in 1769. This move angered Governor Harrison who was forced to protect the remaining Kaskaskians and Peorias as he did his “own citizens,” for the Kickapoo had almost exterminated the Illinois.⁷² Harrison hoped that the Kickapoos might emulate the Cherokee by adopting agricultural subsistence strategies and settling quietly while “employed in the cultivation of the earth.”⁷³ But Pawatmo and Oulawau’s Kickapoos, like Main Poc’s Potawatomies, remained steadfast in their refusal to make peace with their traditional enemies. Harrison grew frustrated, questioning why he always addressed the Kickapoos “in the language of complaint.”⁷⁴ A noted historian suggests that the Kickapoos were simply unwilling to give up their “intense personal and group pride,” which often necessitated revenge.⁷⁵ Harrison summed up what many people thought about the Kickapoos. They “had received so many injuries from the Americans that they were determined to perish to a man rather than not revenge them.”⁷⁶ The Kickapoos refused to act in line with Harrison’s diplomatic policies because it appeared that Harrison could do little to enforce his policies.

⁷² Harrison to the Secretary of War, *WHH Papers*, Vincennes, July 11, 1807.

⁷³ Harrison’s Speech, *WHH Papers*, Vincennes, September 2, 1802.

⁷⁴ Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border*, 55; Harrison to the Kickapoo, *WHH Papers*, Vincennes, May 19, 1807.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁶ Harrison to Jefferson, *WHH Papers*, July 5, 1806.

To a certain extent, the Kickapoo helped Harrison. Harrison defended the Illinois who, although weakened, still possessed occupancy rights to vast stretches of land that Harrison wanted. They used these lands as collateral, ceding them to the Americans for annuities and promises of defense. The willingness of the Kaskaskians to transfer lands to the Americans amplified and redirected Kickapoo fury towards Harrison. Thus, some Kickapoos eventually settled at Prophetstown in reaction to Harrison's policies. The governor's motives for protecting marginalized Indians had indirectly added to the assemblage of Indians at Prophetstown.

The Miamis also opposed many of the American policies but their opposition to the Americans did not push them into an alliance with the Prophet. The Miamis were in a unique position as traditional inhabitants of the area. Most Indians who settled at Prophetstown did so because they had experienced such a high degree of change and displacement from their traditional lands. This had not been the case for the Miamis, who had experienced great change since 1785, but not large-scale displacement. Many Miamis looked at Prophetstown much like Vincennes. Both towns represented a foreign threat to Miami hegemony. The rise of a militant nativist settlement in Miami territory only gave the Americans a more legitimate reason to attack the Indians, including the Miamis. The Miamis wanted to protect their lands and to find security, which forced them to operate between American and nativist demands.

The portrayal of the Miamis as collaborators is largely the result of historians who misunderstood local factors and who focused only on the relationship between Little Turtle, William Wells, and Harrison. Archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence concerning the different Miami bands forged during this period suggests that major

historical actors like Harrison “effectively excluded significant portions of each of those groups [the Miamis, Delawares, Weas, and Potawatomies of the Wabash] from contemporary and, subsequently, historical consideration.”⁷⁷ One reason the Miamis remained divided over their loyalties to the Americans was because many of the goods available to the Indians during this time were British, not American, in origin. Although the United States had reduced and then restricted its trade with Great Britain, the Indian communities continued to trade with and benefit from British traders in the area. The “conservative Miami” were attempting to reestablish “constructive kin relations with the British” in order to “reproduce their cultural identity.”⁷⁸ Harrison’s belief that he could buy off the leaders, and thus conciliate the Miamis, displayed his ignorance of the issues underlying Miami politics. John Johnston’s remarks from councils at Fort Wayne exemplify this trend. At times he interpreted Miami “interests and destiny” as “inseparable from ours [the Americans],” but at other moments he stated that they were in league with the Prophet.⁷⁹ Johnston and Harrison’s comments reflect their inability to see how the Miamis remained focused locally rather than nationally. Americans interpreted Miami factionalism as a divide between Miamis who hoped to stop American settlement and those who did not. Americans were unable to see Miami behavior as a reflection of the varied Miami experiences throughout the previous century. The Miamis’s efforts to trade with the Americans or the British was not part of a larger conspiracy to play the powers against each other. Rather, it was a reflection of how Miami villages continued to protect their local, rather than Indian, interests.

⁷⁷ Rob Mann, “The Silenced Miami: Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Evidence for Miami-British, 1795-1812,” *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 3 (1999):, 420, 421.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 421.

⁷⁹ Gayle Thornbrough, ed., *Letterbook of the Indian Agency at Fort Wayne, 1809-1815* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society), 76n-77n.

Factionalism among the Miami polity was evident especially after some of their leaders signed the Treaty of Greenville. An Indian, likely a Miami, killed Little Turtle's cow shortly after the treaty as "a symbolic act of resistance and opposition" to the leader's relationship with the Americans. The cow possibly "possessed potentially dangerous spiritual power" to Miami society, for they rejected the domestication of animals and the cow was thus not only a representation of accommodation but also a threat to Miami culture.⁸⁰ The cow was only a small part of a much larger problem within Miami society centered around the Treaty of Greenville. When Little Turtle signed the treaty, he knowingly abandoned Kekionga, a sacred place marked by the Maumee-Wabash portage. American forts, like American livestock, had polluted native culture. It is no surprise that Miami leaders like Pacanne turned against their accommodationist brethren, forging new relationships with Indians outside their polity, and at times, treating with the British or supporting the Prophet. The dynamic shifts in Wabash-Maumee associations reflect the extent to which the society had changed in relation to American settlement. Many communities had grown frustrated as the Americans forced their way into the valley by taking control of Kekionga and Vincennes and destroying croplands. With the decline in game and an inability to dictate the terms of trade, many Indians were compelled to sign treaties in order to protect their remaining settlements and to access goods necessary for survival.

During the period 1779 to 1808, most of the Indian nations within the Wabash-Maumee Valley continued to construct their societies around local relationships and regional histories. There were two major dynamics in the Wabash-Maumee Valley by 1808: various local Indian communities that tried to protect the particular relationships

⁸⁰ Mann, "The Silenced Miami," 405.

they had fostered throughout the 18th century, and two new communities (Vincennes and Prophetstown) centered around nationalistic goals and identities. The Prophet's town and Harrison's community represented national goals that were in effect a foreign threat to the traditional inhabitants of the valley. The Shawnee leaders Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh founded Prophetstown in reaction to decades of displacement and warfare, advocating a pan-Indian identity in an attempt to ward off further displacement. Vincennes was a physical representation of national expansion: the capital of Indiana Territory, which was to facilitate the western advancement of American society. The American government had chosen Vincennes (an old French and British settlement) as the capitol of Indiana territory in 1800, and Tenskwatawa had established Prophetstown near Ouiatenon (an old Oui trading center) in 1808. Both communities were thus relatively new to the territory but they represented echoes of much older settlements, a point which both the Americans and nativist Indians failed to grasp. The leaders of both towns did not understand the local dynamics and histories into which they settled which prevented them from unifying their communities. Rather than unite racially, the two communities divided over conflicting interests tied to local disputes. The two towns were unable to transcend the local dynamics that maintained factionalism throughout the region.

Chapter Two: Evolving Relationships Between Vincennes and Prophetstown

The early nineteenth century was a time of great flux for the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Various Indian and non-Indian settlements tried to protect the local relationships they had fostered throughout the eighteenth century while two new towns (Vincennes and Prophetstown) vied for cultural hegemony in the region. As Indian polities attempted to protect what Kathleen DuVal calls “their own sovereign identities,” Prophetstown and Vincennes ignored the diverse interests in the region. Groups like the Miami and French found themselves caught in the increasingly contentious relationship between Vincennes and Prophetstown. Although the hostility between the two communities appeared to be racial, it was in fact far more complicated.¹ The dispute between Prophetstown and Vincennes amplified pre-existing factionalism within Indian and non-Indian communities while also providing convenient opportunities for several communities to protect their cultural, rather than racial, interests.

Prophetstown was a pluralistic and factionalized town. It was a contested space. Historians have often described it as a Shawnee town because Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh used it as a base for their continued resistance to European American settlements. While the Shawnee sentiment was strong in Prophetstown, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, and Miami Indians also settled there, each group bringing its own histories and interests. The disagreements within Prophetstown were partially the creation of conflicting ideas of space that resulted from groups like the highly migratory Shawnees

¹ Race for the Prophet and Harrison were two different but mutually enforcing ideas. The Prophet’s racial rhetoric focused on polygenesis and the separate creation of Indians from the Americans. Harrison’s racial ideology centered on innate differences between the Americans and American Indians. Both emphasized inherent differences.

challenging the relatively sedentary Miami, but they were also a product of their disputes over their relationships with the non-Indian communities at Vincennes.

Like Prophetstown, Vincennes was a contested place. European American ideas of place were as dynamic as those in Indian country, but constructing them came at the expense of dispossessing the nearby Indians. When Harrison negotiated with the various Wabash Indians for land cessions, he also demarcated the western boundary of the United States of America and the confines of Vincennes. He fueled a passionate dispute over the cultural identity of the town as to whether it would be American, French, or Indian. Throughout the eighteenth century, the French constructed what many American settlers identified as a distinctly European community. Many British and Americans understood Vincennes to be French, but the French community in Vincennes was actually more a hybrid of ethnicities. The French survived by trading regularly with the Wabash Indians while also farming communal lands. They resisted adopting American values requiring the farming of private property and large-scale participation in the market economy because it would have placed undue pressure on themselves and their Indian neighbors. Most of the French chose to defend their autonomy and way of life in the face of greater political and economic marginalization by the Americans. However, American efforts to displace the French did not necessarily mean that the Americans were united. While they hoped to refashion Vincennes into an American town, the Americans divided over the identity that community should take - specifically the benefit slavery would bring to it. Much like Prophetstown, the inhabitants at Vincennes shared common space but fought to protect their cultural identities.

Both communities confronted the Miami Indians as they vied for control of the Wabash-Maumee Valley. The Miami played an important part in the relationship between the two communities even though they did not have a substantial presence in either settlement. Despite characterizations that they accommodated the Americans while opposing Prophetstown, Miami Indians used both communities to protect their interests. Although the Miami allowed non-Miami Indians to live within their villages and partake in seasonal hunts, they restricted certain rights (such as farming) and excluded certain peoples from living or hunting in their homelands altogether. The Miami's hegemony in the region depended upon their ability to share certain resources while restricting others, which in turn created conflict between the Miami, other Indian groups, and European Americans. For example, supporters of the Shawnee Prophet settled in the heart of Miami territory at Tippecanoe where they farmed and hunted as guests of the Potawatomi leader Main Poc, even though, from a Miami perspective, he lacked legitimacy to offer such an invitation. The settlement at Tippecanoe angered the Miami, who saw it as a physical threat to their regional control because the nativists ignored Miami trading rights in the region.²

European Americans also failed to recognize the delicate ways in which the Miami maintained regional hegemony. Americans traditionally established dominion by forcing all foreign cultures out of the area in order to solidify their claims to the region, a philosophy in direct contradiction to that of the Miami. While Americans excluded foreign cultures to consolidate power, the Miami preferred to keep close tabs on outside Indian groups and allow them limited rights in Miami lands. Rarely did European

² One of the Prophet's stipulations required that Indians cease trading with European Americans. The Miamis relied on the Wabash-Maumee trade network to maintain kinship relations but to also assert their hegemony in the region. The Prophet's rhetoric served as a direct threat to Miami interests.

Americans recognize the intricate ways in which Indians protected their sovereignty by sharing their hunting or residential grounds. In overlooking these efforts to protect their sovereignty, some historians have labeled the Shawnee as nativists and the Miami as accomodationists. These interpretive constructs do not recognize the varying histories of the Wabash-Maumee Indian communities in relation to concepts of place. Place mattered less to Shawnee identity, while it was fundamental to the Miami who had only recently experienced displacement.³ Some Miami willingly negotiated with the Americans because they had a history of accommodating outsiders in order to maintain their interests; their behavior during the first decade of the nineteenth century reflected that history. The Shawnees at Prophetstown refused to bargain with the Americans due to their history of violence and continual displacement brought on by European Americans squatting on their lands.

As the inhabitants of the Wabash-Maumee Valley constructed their communities, they became increasingly dependent upon outside groups to legitimize their place in the region. Both the Indians at Prophetstown and the European Americans at Vincennes used each other as a way to establish and protect their interests in the valley. Inhabitants at Prophetstown confronted the Americans at Vincennes for three reasons: to communicate their desire to resist European American cultural influences, to defend their physical space to do so, and to stop individual Indian communities from ceding land without the consent of all the Indian communities. The Prophet found himself and his town

³ Stephen Warren challenges the accepted belief that all American Indian cultural identities emanate from the land itself, stating that “the long Shawnee diaspora meant that infusing new landscapes with sacred meaning became a perilous luxury. Movement became a colonial survival strategy” because the Shawnee did not have a homeland. They had developed an itinerant identity. Stephen Warren and Randolph Noe, “‘The Greatest Travelers in America’: Shawnee Survival in the Shatter Zone” in Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck-Hall eds., *Mapping the Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, in press.), 326-330.

increasingly tied to the territorial government at Vincennes because it was there that Tenskwatawa could challenge Miami leader Little Turtle and his son-in-law William Wells. The residents of Vincennes found themselves increasingly connected to Prophetstown because it became a means for local factions to convey their ideological positions regarding territorial development and expansion. Maintaining territorial security in the region also demanded that policy makers in Vincennes determine if Prophetstown was a militant threat. The factionalism within both communities continued to grow throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century, but this did not prevent the eruption of full-scale violence. Divisions within each town prevented the inhabitants from unifying around the racial and often militant visions espoused by Harrison and the Prophet.⁴ Without the support of their followers, Harrison and the Prophet spent more time trying to unify the inhabitants of their towns rather than confronting their enemies. Rather, the rhetoric between the Prophet and Harrison polarized the communities to such an extent that it overshadowed the factionalism within the towns.

This chapter examines the diverse nature of Prophetstown and Vincennes, exploring the various groups that inhabited the towns and the region, while also evaluating their interdependencies. First, I analyze the factionalism between the French and American areas of Vincennes, but also describe the ways in which both groups used the other in order to protect their interests. I then examine the ways in which the Americans divided over the issues of slavery and involuntary servitude in the territory in order to contextualize how they handled Indian affairs. I contrast a brief description of

⁴ The racial rhetoric espoused by the Prophet was certainly present in the valley during the early 1800s. Not only was it present at Prophetstown, but Tenskwatawa sent runners throughout the region to gain converts to his cause. American Indians certainly encountered racial ideas, but unifying racially simply was not practical if indeed Indian groups fully understood its implications.

the African-American experiences in Vincennes with the rhetoric of the slavery debate in *The Western Sun* for two reasons: to show how the slavery debate had little to do with actual slave experiences in Vincennes and to identify a similar pattern also apparent in the debate over Prophetstown. The residents of Vincennes had a tendency to remove the topic of conversation (slavery and the Prophet) from its context. Furthermore, when discussing the Prophet and his town, the Americans rarely discussed the Indians involved and tended to refashion representations of Prophetstown into a tool to attack their enemies. The second part of the chapter frames the historical and cultural dynamics behind the establishment of Prophetstown, particularly the different ways in which the Miami and Shawnees constructed identity and place in the region. This section also describes Tenskwatawa's village at Greenville, Ohio and his subsequent town near the Tippecanoe River. Understanding the differences between these two settlements allows for a more nuanced critique of the varying Indian interests at Prophetstown. The internal factionalism of Indian and European American society redirected and undermined the American and Shawnees efforts to construct their ideal societies. Frustrations on both sides moved the two communities towards conflict with each other.

Vincennes

Elihu Stout was exhausted from lugging printing equipment 190 perilous miles from Louisville to Vincennes. He had traveled up swollen rivers raging with melted snow and through overgrown forests said to be hiding Indians hunting for European American scalps. Nevertheless, he made it to the territorial capital of Indiana territory in 1804, but his relief at arriving safely vanished quickly as he walked the streets of Vincennes. Stout discovered several intoxicated Indians lying in the mud next to a

number of their dead brethren and decomposing horse and pig carcasses.⁵ Stout looked wide-eyed at the hundreds of Indians who frequented Vincennes “almost naked, tanned by the sun and air, shining with grease and soot; head uncovered; hair coarse, black and straight; a face smeared with red, blue, and black paint, in patches of all forms and sizes.”⁶ Miami-speaking Indians visited Vincennes because they had a historical connection to the area and had family members in the French community, many of whom were traders. Although both Indians and non-Indians needed to trade to survive, economic relationships often ignited violence in the streets when disagreements broke out over the sale and abuse of alcohol. Violence was common and “it was rare for a day to pass without a deadly quarrel, by which ten men [lost] their lives yearly.”⁷ Though alcohol was a factor in the violence, it was not the underlying cause. Problems developed due to the diverse interests coming into regular contact with each other, which forced the factional nature of the Wabash-Maumee Valley to overflow into the streets of Vincennes. Here, various peoples (Indian and non-Indian alike) contested their interests and defended their presence in the region.

The French hoped to protect their community during this period of drastic change, but their efforts upset an American community that wanted to displace them. The Americans in Vincennes viewed the French with distaste and contempt. Although the arrival of the Americans in the late 1770s transformed relationships throughout the area, the French maintained their unique village identity that many saw as distinctly

⁵*The Western Sun* (Vincennes, Indiana), September 3, 1808.

⁶ Ibid. C.-F Volney and Charles Brockden Brown, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America: With Supplementary Remarks Upon Florida; on the French Colonies on the Mississippi and Ohio, and in Canada; and on the Aboriginal Tribes of America* (Philadelphia: Pub. by J. Conrad & Co, 1804), 22.

⁷ Ibid., 23.

European.⁸ Vincennes was at once an American and French town. Even the physical differences between French and American buildings reflected the dual identity of the town. Most structures were French made and lacked what the Americans termed as the more “civilized” construction visible in American homes. To the Americans, the French “did not . . . conceive the importance of timber” and covered their houses, stables, and barns like a European village “with bark, which destroys more timber than can well be calculated.”⁹ The French were simply not as progressive as the newly independent American nation. Most Americans referred to the French residents as “ignorant” because of their “uncouth combination of French and Indian manners.”¹⁰ The Americans thought that they, with their “greater understanding” and “more enlarged views,” worked industriously to develop the land while the French lived “in a great state of poverty, hauling their firewood from a distance of three or four miles, raising a little corn in the neighborhood,” having lost “their former opulence [through] the Indian trade by which they subsisted.”¹¹ John Badollet complained that the French desire for wood had ruined several available plots of land in the area, inhibiting their sale. One could stand in the commons of Vincennes, he said, and see “trees strewed over & covering the ground, just as if a west Indian hurricane had exerted its destructive fury on the land, & the whole appearing like a barren waste.”¹² The Americans felt uncomfortable in such an un-American town where the French language dominated and the only Christian presence was the Catholic Church. Americans in Vincennes disliked relying on French

⁸ Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America*, 23.

⁹ John Louis Badollet, Albert Gallatin, and Gayle Thornbrough, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1963), . Badollet to Gallatin, June 27, 1807.

¹⁰ Badollet to Gallatin, *Correspondence*, January 1, 1806.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Badollet to Gallatin, *Correspondence*, June 27, 1807.

interpreters and the fact that the only school in the area was run by the French priest Father Rivet. The French character of Vincennes was starkly visible to the new American settlers.

Physical descriptions of Vincennes reflected the distaste that Americans had for the French. Jonathan Jennings described it as “highly picturesque, situated on the East side of the Wabash almost surrounded by a beautiful Prairie” nearly three square miles in size. Bordering the prairie were three “curious mounds regularly formed” and “[were] from twenty to thirty feet about the level of the Prairie” where one could watch the last few buffalo in the area mingle with herds of cattle. Upon reaching the top of what Jennings called the “Sugar loaves,” one could see dozens of Frenchmen plowing their field, a custom he saw as “very ridiculous and grating to the feelings of an American” because the land was held in common rather than divided into individual plots.¹³

Lieutenant Larrabee was only moderately more kind in his comments toward the French. He enjoyed dancing with the “Fair Sect” at the French balls put on in town, but noted that the French had corrupted the character of Vincennes by trading with the Indians regularly. He had met “a small and agreeable” group of Virginians and Kentuckians, yet Larrabee also longed to be back in “the Yankee States.”¹⁴ Although the French offered great hospitality, their “idleness and ignorance” in domestic affairs and market-oriented production exceeded even the Indians, who many Americans saw as lazy and

¹³ Jennings to Mitchell in Dorothy Lois Riker, ed., *Unedited Letters of Jonathan Jennings: With Notes by Dorothy Riker* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Publications, 1932) , September 19, 1807.

¹⁴ Larrabee to Adam Larrabee, Fort Knox Indiana Territory, February 7, 1812. Charles Larrabee, "Lieutenant Charles Larrabee's Account of the Battle of Tippecanoe, 1811," Florence G. Watts, ed. *Indiana Magazine of History* 57, no. 3 (September 1961): 225-247. Charles Larrabee (1782-1862) was a member of the 4th Army Regiment who wrote five letters to his cousin Adam Larrabee (d. 1869), a Second Lt. Charles had been stationed in Pittsburgh when he was transferred to Indiana Territory and traveled to Prophetstown under Colonel Boyd.

unproductive.¹⁵ Jennings and Larrabee enjoyed the physical beauty of the town, its dances, and its history, but they did not identify Vincennes as an American town because of the obvious cultural presence of the French and Indians. They recognized a dual town, one that echoed the French history of the area and another that reflected the lost potential for industry and development.

Many Americans blamed the violent nature of Vincennes on the French, who had close relationships with the Wabash Indians. Much of this violence took place in the central part of Vincennes near the trading houses and taverns operated by the French. The chance to see French relatives and friends and trade for goods like alcohol attracted an assortment of Indians into the town. Even though this was customary for the French, the Americans cried out against such behavior because the resulting drunkenness and violence threatened their livelihoods. Harrison described the various Indian peoples who frequented the town, “intoxicated to the number of thirty or forty at once, when they commit the greatest disorders, drawing their knives, and stabbing every one they meet . . . breaking open the houses of citizens ; killing their cattle and hogs, and breaking down their fences.”¹⁶ The liquor trade was just one of the many reasons the Americans hoped to replace the French, who nevertheless remained entrenched in the central part of Vincennes. Harrison reacted decisively after 1803 by enacting new laws regulating trade with, and preventing the sale of liquor, to the Indians. As the violence declined, the Americans began to establish mercantile and hospitality businesses alongside their French counterparts.

¹⁵ Volney and Brown, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America*, 20-25.

¹⁶ James Hall, *A Memoir of the Public Services of William Henry Harrison of Ohio* (Philadelphia: Key & Biddle, 1836), 99.

William Henry Harrison's dislike for the French and Indian inhabitants of the town reflected a desire to curtail their remaining political influence in the immediate area. Although the American commanders deftly appointed several Frenchmen to political positions in the town after 1789 to keep the peace with the Indians, many Frenchmen had died or been replaced by American immigrants by 1802.¹⁷ Several officials arrived on Harrison's coattails in the five years after he began his term as Indiana's territorial governor, so that, by 1805, the only roles the French had in the territorial government were as traders or interpreters during treaty negotiations with the Indians.¹⁸ Only two Frenchmen served outside this capacity. Antoine Marechal and Pierra Gamelin were judges in Knox County - but Gamelin, who died in 1804, did not survive long.¹⁹ Local bias against French participation in the territorial government, however, did not prevent them from playing a crucial role in Indian affairs. Their presence as traders and interpreters made them an essential part of the economic and social culture in Vincennes after 1805. Not only did they serve an important role in developing trade throughout the valley, the French could also use their familial and historical connections to maintain peace in the region. Even though they did not hold influential posts in the territorial

¹⁷ Francis Samuel Philbrick, ed. *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809* (Springfield, IL.: Illinois State Historical Library, 1930), ccxix-ccxx.

¹⁸ There was some intermarriage among the upper class sections of Vincennes, but it was usually between American men and French women. The wealthier French families had diverse economic connections and lived better than their lower-class Frenchmen. It seemed that the Americans were more willing to deal with the upper-class French women because they shared common economic interests. The gender dynamics suggest that the Americans were willing to marry French women because it would not threaten American property, but French men marrying American women would have allowed the French men to control American economic interests.

¹⁹ "Journal of the Proceedings of the Executive Government of the Indiana territory," in William Woollen et al, eds., *Executive Journal of Indiana Territory, 1800-1816*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1900), 91; Barnhart and Riker, *Indiana*, 317-18, 318n. *Indiana Gazette*, October 16, 1804.

government, they did determine in large measure the safety of the region and, with that, the success of the American settlement.²⁰

By participating in various treaty negotiations, the French meant to protect Indian and American interests so that they could remain in the area, which in turn allowed them to protect their own economic interests. The French remembered the violence ushered in by Clark's victory in February of 1779 and the war-like status created by Sullivan's murderous rampage through the streets of Vincennes. Trade declined drastically during the early American period, causing great suffering among the French residents who depended upon it for their livelihood. The French also recalled when the Americans burned their trading houses at Kethtippecanunk (Tippecanoe) in 1791, when many American commanders believed that the French had protected the Indians and collaborated with the British. According to the Americans, they destroyed the area to disperse the Indians, though it was clear that they had purposely fired the French trading houses as well.²¹ The Americans would simply not deal with the French who did not support their national vision. For a community threatened from without by both disaffected Indians and ethnocentric Americans, the French had to use any means necessary to protect their interests. When Americans flooded the region, they simply bullied their way into the pre-existing economy and eventually displaced the French. The French continued to use their connections with the Indians to forge some semblance of normalcy in a rapidly changing environment. The French hoped to use the Americans

²⁰ Jay Gitlin, "Old Wine in New Bottles: French Merchants and the Emergency of the American Midwest, 1795-1835," *Proceedings of the 13th and 14th Meetings of the French Colonial Historical Society* 13/ 14 (1990), 42-43.

²¹ American State Papers, Indian Affairs 1832-1834:1:96, Report of the 2006 Archaeological Investigations at Kethtippecanunk Tippecanoe County, Indiana, IPFW Archaeological Survey, 233.

and Indians to protect their network of trade routes, mercantile houses, taverns, and cleared agricultural lands.

Negotiating land cessions for the territorial government allowed the French to maintain existing economic and social relationships with the Wabash Indians. Their influence among the various Wabash Indian nations, not to mention the Indians camped in the immediate vicinity, made the French useful to the Americans. By facilitating land cessions, the French controlled annuity payments and goods sent by the United States government to the Indians. It was common for the French traders to siphon off goods to trade at a later time, to charge the federal government for items they never delivered to the Indians, and to preserve traditional social relationships through the distribution of gifts.²² Since they were essential to the diplomatic process, the French interpreters and merchants maintained a certain degree of autonomy in the region because the Indians simply refused to negotiate without the French. The American officials did not understand the geographical layout of the lands nor did they recognize the important differences between the various Indian communities living along the Wabash. American ignorance of Indian affairs in the Wabash region meant that the French would remain important for territorial affairs. Harrison knew that he could not protect Vincennes without relying on the French.

Harrison sought the aid of French traders like Michelle Brouillet, Toussaint Dubois, and Joseph Barron from 1800 to 1803 in order to secure the lands surrounding Vincennes from the Indians. The governor was only continuing federal policies designed to secure the west for the young republic. The 1795 Treaty of Greenville ceded a tract of

²² Jay Gitlin, *Old Wine in New Bottles: French Merchants and the Emergence of the American Midwest, 1795-1835*, 47.

land including Vincennes to the Americans, so Henry Dearborn instructed Harrison to ascertain and define the exact boundaries with the Wabash Indians.²³ Dearborn worried that the Indians who appeared “uneasy” might react violently if the surveyors marked the wrong lands, but he also knew that the Treaty of Greenville had not forced the Indians to leave the ceded areas. Despite Harrison’s belief in the indisputable nature of the treaty’s provisions, the governor also realized that “none of the Piankashaw chiefs (by which tribe all the former sales in this country were made) attended the Treaty of Greenville, and the Wea chiefs, who are said to have represented them, are all dead.”²⁴ To a certain extent, Harrison recognized the fraudulent nature of the treaty. Rather than confront it, he suggested not “taking the whole” of the tract guaranteed in the treaty and instead sought to negotiate with the Indians for the remainder.²⁵ Harrison felt that continued diplomacy would result in the same land cessions stipulated in the treaty while also maintaining peace, but knew that this would not be possible without French support. By late summer of 1802, it became obvious that another council was necessary to solidify the Vincennes tract boundaries.

Harrison’s frustration in treaty councils that summer compelled him to seek extra legal means to delineating the boundaries of the recent land cession. According to Harrison, the Wabash Indians originally gave the tract to the French who sold it to an American land company in Philadelphia shortly before the Revolutionary War. Because of these transactions, Harrison argued that neither the French nor the Indians retained a legitimate claim to the area. Thus, it became the rightful property of the United States.

²³ Harrison, William Henry, Douglas E. Clanin, and Ruth Dorrel. *The Papers of William Henry Harrison, 1800-1815*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1994. Henry Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, *WHH Papers*, January 23, 1802, Reel 1, 247.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Harrison's actions disregarded a Congressional decision that had rejected speculative land sales before the Revolutionary War, and which therefore negated the French land sale to the Illinois and Wabash Company. In spite of Congress's decision, Harrison and Dearborn argued that the sale was indeed legitimate and sent surveyors out to define its exact boundaries.²⁶ The governor concluded that "all the Indians have understood that the claim to [the Vincennes tract] had been extinguished" but in council with the Wabash Indians he could "not obtain any satisfactory information as to the depth of the tract originally given to Monseieur [Francois-Marie Bissot, Sieur] De Vincennes."²⁷ A Wea Leader, Lapoussier, continued the objections by stating that his "forefathers lent the French, land. . . we gave them no land."²⁸ Securing Vincennes proved difficult for Harrison, but he eventually signed treaties in June and August of 1803 that guaranteed the area to the United States.²⁹ Without legitimate right to the area, Harrison could not hope to secure Vincennes from Indians who objected to the American presence. By using the French interpreters and traders, Harrison protected Americans interests through traditional diplomatic traditions.

However, as Harrison used the old French claims to define the boundaries of Vincennes, the Americans sought to alter drastically the physical nature of Vincennes. The French were well aware of townspeople like Jennings who snubbed their noses at their communal farming, but few could ignore men like Harrison, Stout, and Badollet who suggested selling off the communal lands in order to expand the local school,

²⁶ Henry Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, *WHH Papers*, June 17, 1801, Reel 1, 320

²⁷ Negotiations at an Indian Council, *WHH Papers*, September 12, 1802, Reel 1, 373.

²⁸ Notes of Speeches at an Indian Council, *WHH Papers*, September 15, 1802, Reel 1, 380

²⁹ Charles Joseph Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1904), 66, 74.

Jefferson Academy.³⁰ Distaste for French cultural traditions was one thing but such a major alteration to the French character of the town was intolerable. Many French residents felt that the territorial government wanted to eradicate any semblance of their society, and they grew increasingly resistant to the Americans.

Resisting the American policies was a challenge for the French once the Americans raised taxes. The increased tax burden forced several French families to move out of the area; others feared ruin if the Americans seized their lands when they defaulted on their tax payments. Unhappy with the burdensome taxes and the public officials who were unresponsive to their community in Vincennes, the French demanded that Elihu Stout print resolutions in his paper *The Western Sun*. They expressed their “deep regret and chagrin” toward the elected officials for whom they had voted and trusted, men who had failed “to realize the promises and assurances which [the French] too credulously relied upon.”³¹ If the taxes and unsympathetic representatives were not enough, the Americans began auctioning off French property when the Frenchmen failed to pay their taxes. Confusing tax laws were amplified by a language barrier that prevented most French residents from understanding the laws in the first place. Land seizures coupled with the cultural differences added to the increasingly bitter feelings most French residents had toward the Americans, guaranteeing that the pluralistic community of Vincennes remained segregated.³² To make matters worse, most Frenchmen blamed American intervention for the Indian violence. In fact, most French routinely socialized

³⁰ “French Resolutions,” *The Western Sun*, August 22, 1807. Initially a small one room schoolhouse where the local Catholic priest taught Latin, mathematics, and history, it eventually became Vincennes University (exists to this day) and was the only four-year institution in Indiana until the founding of Indiana University.

³¹ “French Resolutions,” *The Western Sun*, August 22, 1807.

³² Stout prints a list of the people who defaulted on their taxes in the January 27, 1808 issue of *The Western Sun*. The article also stated that all defaulted accounts would have their land sold that March.

with their Indian friends and family members, which the Americans abhorred. Few French could find a silver lining in the American policies that forced them to either abandon their homes or their traditions in order to survive in Indiana Territory. Their choices were much like those of the nearby Indians - adapt or move.

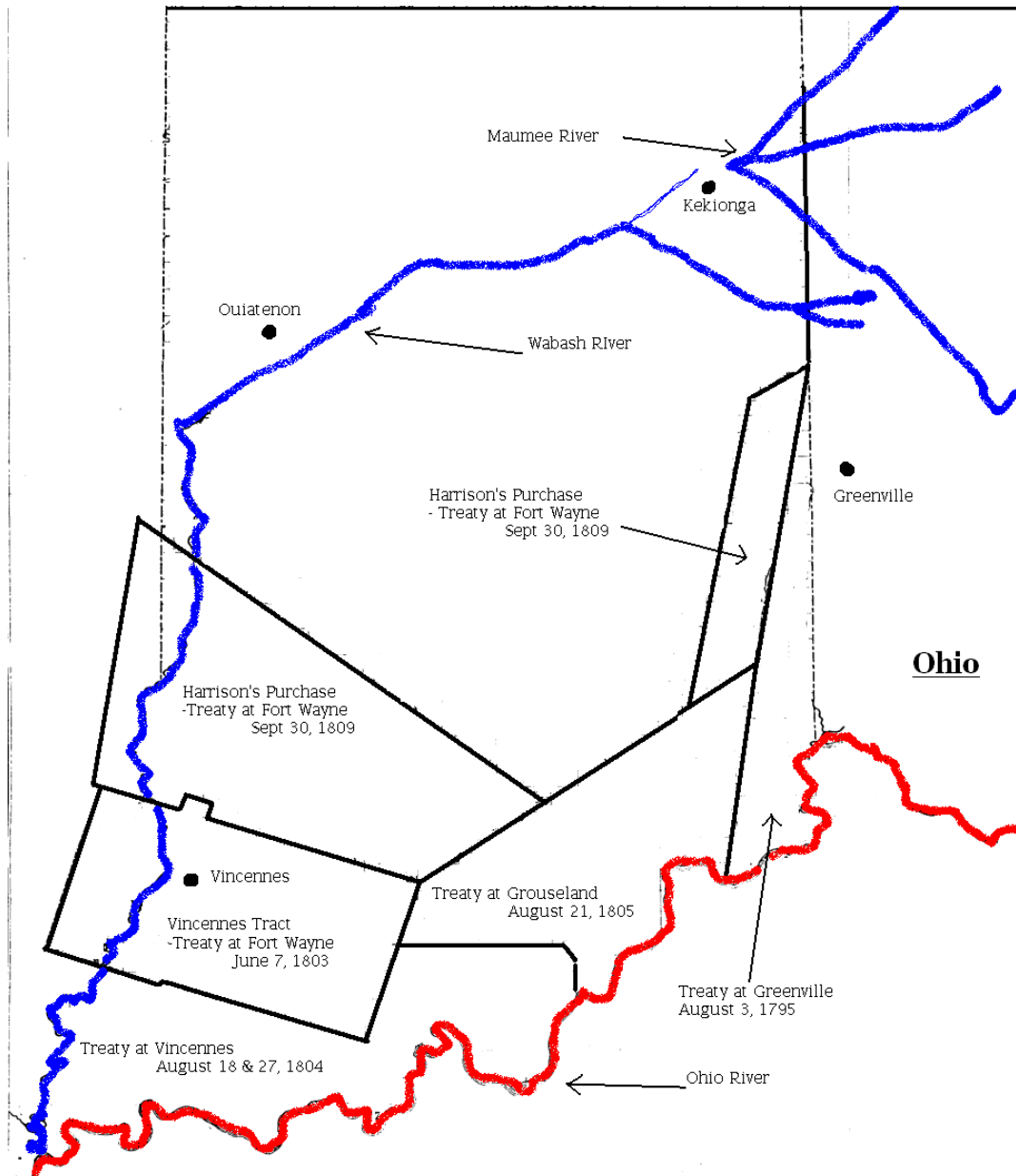


Figure 2.1, Treaty Boundaries for Indiana Territory
Map Created by Patrick Bottiger

By 1807, it was increasingly apparent that the French had not fully assimilated into American society. This bothered the governor, who privately questioned French loyalty to American interests. In 1807, when disputes over maritime rights increased hostilities between the Americans and the British, Harrison asked the French community to consider British abuse of American rights “and adopt some mode of expressing [French] sentiments.”³³ Vincennes, Harrison thought, might suffer from British or Indian depredations if war broke out and, therefore, it was necessary to determine French sentiment so that the Americans would know if they would help prevent the Indians from siding with any British incursions into the area. Although the French expressed their loyalty to the Americans, they also articulated their frustration that such a loyalty oath was necessary. Their resolutions, framed around Harrison’s allegations, reflected deep-seated anger over years of displacement.

Resolved unanimously that we perceive with great Surprise and indignation that there appears to exist in the mind of the Governor Suspensions of our patriotism and Fidelity to the United States. That under such circumstances a recurrence to the evidence of facts in the past conduct of the French inhabitants of Vincennes will furnish the strongest arguments and proofs in our power to adduce to remove such injurious suspicions if they really exist.³⁴

Rather than simply accede to Harrison’s demands, the French used the situation to question the governor’s suspicions and to state bluntly that their “conduct” in Vincennes had always been peaceful.

William McIntosh, an Irishman who had formed an affinity for the French, seized upon this opportunity and wrote a letter of complaint to President Thomas Jefferson in order to undermine the governor’s character. Harrison rejected McIntosh’s claims that he

³³ To Thomas Jefferson from the French Inhabitants of Vincennes, “Resolutions adopted at a meeting of the French Inhabitants of Vincennes,” *WHH Papers*, October 10, 1807; Reel 3, 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

doubted the French settlers' loyalty to the U.S., and told Jefferson that he wanted to use the French to gauge the intentions of the British and the Indians.³⁵ The French sided with and defended him, while Harrison accused the Irishman of being an "inveterate tory."³⁶ Jefferson wrote to the French community in Vincennes and assured them that the United States and its officers welcomed and appreciated their support and had never questioned their loyalty.³⁷ Harrison, McIntosh, and Jefferson unwittingly declared that the French were an important corporate entity within Vincennes even though the French felt increasingly marginalized and ignored. Without French aid, Harrison would have had fewer Indian traders serving as sources among the Indians and a more violent territory because the French would not have served as go-betweens for the two groups. Even though the French assisted the Americanization of the town by aiding in the legitimizing of American claims through diplomatic negotiations with the Wabash Indians, they remained dedicated to protecting French identity.

The French residents in Vincennes had a history of playing political forces against each other to their benefit. Hyacinthe Lasselle, one of the most respected French traders, was actually born at Kekionga but used his familial connections to profit greatly by playing American and Indian interests against each other. Americans misinterpreted Lasselle's economic ventures as loyalty to the United States when in fact he was simply protecting his own interests. Most Americans believed that the French traders were pro-American because they negotiated for the United States in important treaty councils. However, some of these traders, like Lasselle's family, had a history of switching sides.

³⁵ To Thomas Jefferson from the French Inhabitants of Vincennes, "Resolutions adopted at a meeting of the French Inhabitants of Vincennes," *WHH Papers*, October 10, 1807; Reel 3, 9. William McIntosh to Jefferson, December 15, 1807 in Carter, (ed.), *Territorial Papers*, 7:503.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Thomas Jefferson to the French Inhabitants of Vincennes, *WHH Papers*, January 30, 1808; Reel 3, 105.

His Uncle Antoine was almost shot in 1794 as a British spy and his brother Francois was accused of war crimes during the War of 1812.³⁸ One historian concluded that “it is hard not to notice a certain self-serving persistence in French attitudes” in Vincennes.³⁹

Longtime resident of Vincennes, Michelle Brouillet, held commissions as both a British and American officer; playing both sides would serve in the best interest of the French community.⁴⁰ Even Harrison recognized the ulterior motives of the French interpreters when he wrote William Eustis that “nine tenths of them prefer the interests of the Indians to that of their employers.”⁴¹ Harrison failed to recognize fully how the French used both the Americans and Indians to maintain some degree of independence.

He also did not comprehend the extent to which the American settlers disagreed with his politics. Harrison’s success in buying the lands around Vincennes allowed American settlers to discuss the ideological boundaries of their town and territory. Two American factions began debating the development of the territory in relation to the use of unfree labor and slaves. By 1805, slavery had become the most divisive issue in Vincennes. Several influential men objected strenuously to the legalization of slavery and sought to replace Harrison in order to protect their European American community from its polluting effects. Men who initially supported Harrison found themselves disgusted by governor’s sponsorship of unfree labor. John Badollet, for example, rankled at Harrison’s attempts to legalize slavery in the region. Born in Geneva, Switzerland in 1758, Badollet immigrated to Georges Creek by the fall of 1786 to join his close friend Albert Gallatin. Badollet eventually moved to Vincennes with his wife Hannah

³⁸ Gitlin, *Old Wine in New Bottles*, 50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁰ Gitlin, *Old Wine in New Bottles*, 40.

⁴¹ Harrison to Eustis in Logan Esarey, ed., *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 395.

Nicholson in 1804.⁴² Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury for Thomas Jefferson, had appointed Badollet as registrar for the land office in Vincennes. Within a year of his arrival in Vincennes, Badollet voiced his displeasure with Harrison's attempts to negate the sixth article of the Northwest Ordinance; Badollet wrote that "[t]he introduction of Slavery into this territory continues to be the Hobby horse of the influential men here."⁴³ He continued, "The members of the legislature [men appointed by Harrison] have signed a petition to Congress praying for some reasonable modifications to the ordinance, but this favorite topic of slavery, will I trust meet with a general disapprobation in Congress." Badollet saw these Harrisonian legislators as "shallow" men who were "willing to entail on their Country a permanent evil."⁴⁴ For Badollet and men like him, national policies mattered as much as local security, which is why they became obsessed with the issue of slavery even as they lived in such volatile community.

Badollet and other residents soon coalesced into two large factions defined by their stance on slavery. The factions consisted of well-educated men from around the United States and Europe who had a firm understanding of republican ideology and the political atmosphere in Washington D.C. Benjamin Parke, Thomas Randolph, Elihu Stout and William Henry Harrison were pro-slavery and hoped to overturn Article Six of the Northwest Ordinance or at least pass a law restricting its application in the territory. Parke served as the attorney general to the territory from 1804 to 1808, a position held thereafter by Thomas Randolph, a first cousin to Thomas Jefferson. Stout, originally from New Jersey, had immigrated to the territory from Kentucky to serve as the territorial

⁴² Gayle Thornbrough, ed., *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Historical Society, 1963), 9-14.

⁴³ Badollet to Gallatin, August 31, 1805.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Francis S. Philbrick, ed., *The Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1930), xxxviii.

printer. These men represented Harrison's core group of supporters and defended the governor's stance on slavery as well as his policies towards the Wabash Indians. They hoped to force the Indians out of the territory by purchasing their lands and then open up the area to slaveholders in order to spur settlement.

Other residents of Vincennes opposed many of the Harrisonian's policies, especially slavery. They believed that slavery would undermine European American labor and prevent the settlement of the territory, and they disagreed with Harrison's Indian policy because it seemed to punish the Indians for defending their property. Besides Badollet, the most influential of these anti-Harrisonians were Nathaniel Ewing, Dr. Elias McNamee, Judge John Johnson, William McIntosh and Jonathan Jennings. All of these men met each other while working for the territorial government. Ewing was the receiver of public monies, McNamee a doctor in town, Johnson a territorial judge, and Jennings worked with Stout before he became the territorial representative in Congress. McIntosh had moved to the territory after fighting with the British during the Revolutionary War, serving as the territorial treasurer until 1804. These men, though from divergent backgrounds, were unified in their opposition to Harrison's pro-slavery policies. They welcomed an opportunity to discuss slavery when the factions began mobilizing for the territorial elections in 1809.

A contentious debate over slavery's influence on Indiana territorial affairs broke out in *The Western Sun* in early 1809. The Harrisonians and anti-Harrisonian's published lengthy articles about the American Revolution and the ways in which their politics embodied the ideals of the newly independent republic. The parties oriented their articles around the views of President Jefferson in order to connect themselves to a republican

tradition they believed should be guiding territorial politics. When discussing Jefferson, the factions usually evaluated his relationship to slavery. The Harrisonians argued that Jefferson's support for slavery justified its use in Indiana Territory, while the anti-Harrisonians believed that Jefferson's residence in Virginia had forced him to accept the institution. The men used Jefferson as a way to rationalize their stance on slavery to voters. Most of the men involved in the dispute wanted to win the lone seat to Congress as territorial representative and hoped that their articles in Stout's papers would tip the balance.

Stout, the printer of Indiana Territory's only newspaper, found himself the facilitator of the dispute. Ewing and Badollet attributed Stout's behavior to the governor's machinations, claiming that Harrison manipulated the printer in order to spread propaganda. Although Stout had benefited from Harrison's generosity when he first moved to the territory, he did not allow his newspaper to become Harrison's mouthpiece. Not only did Stout print material objectionable to Harrison, but he maintained an independent press in order to protect his sources of information.⁴⁵ It was at Stout's office where people reported local news or addressed their grievances about the territory, grievances many feared vocalizing to a governor they disliked. The last thing Harrison wanted to do was to undermine Stout's press to the extent that no one trusted him, which is why he stayed out of the dispute that raged in the pages of *The Western Sun*. Both factions refashioned President Jefferson's relationship with slavery and the meaning of republicanism, but never discussed the actual slave presence in Vincennes.

It is possible that the differing perspectives regarding slavery reflected the developing economic structure in the territory. Most of the Americans owned individual

⁴⁵ WHH to Elihu Stout, *WHH Papers*, February 13, 1806; Reel 2, 494.

farms outside of Vincennes while the French continued to farm their communal holdings in town. Small manufacturers also popped up throughout the southern half of the territory so that by 1810, 33 grist-mills, 14 saw-mills, 28 distilleries, 1256 looms, 1850 spinning-wheels, and 18 tanneries produced nearly \$160,000 worth of manufactured goods.⁴⁶ In other words, small-scale manufacturing and farming dominated the economic landscape in the region. Most American residents opposed the legalization of slavery in the territory because it would provide incentive for individuals to buy vast tracts of land while also undercutting the need for hired help, thereby replacing free labor with slaves. Labor was a precious commodity during this period. Those who supported slavery tended to own a great deal of land and likely wished to work it with unfree labor. They hoped that slaves and large-scale agriculture would increase their profits.

Vincennes was a society with slaves that lacked the restrictive codes present in the southern states, and, while the legal record reflects this, the public rhetoric regarding slavery does not. European Americans circumvented the sixth article of the Northwest Ordinance that banned slavery north of the Ohio River by freeing their slaves and then forcing them to agree to ninety-nine year indentures. Some residents found slavery in any form to be directly against the soul of the American Revolution. The town's factions argued about republican ideals and the founding fathers' relationships with slaves, but without mentioning the actual slave community in Vincennes. The judicial record of Vincennes reflects an African-American community that enjoyed relative social and legal freedoms in Vincennes when compared to the more restrictive lives of slaves in the southern states. When some slaves in Vincennes lodged complaints against European

⁴⁶ John B. Dillon, *A History of Indiana* (Indianapolis: Bingham & Doughty Publishers, 1859), 439.

American residents for “ill usage & cruel treatment,” the court responded in their favor.⁴⁷ Slaves and free African Americans gathered freely with each other and walked throughout the town without passes or supervision; even when imprisoned, slaves could count on the European American community to protect their rights.⁴⁸ Yet despite African-American mobility, the anti-slavery men in Vincennes continued to emphasize slaveholding practices in the Carolinas and Georgia as representative for Indiana Territory. Slave experiences in Vincennes did not reflect the anti-slavery rhetoric printed in *The Western Sun*. The disconnect between the reality and rhetoric reflected the extent to which the parties would ratchet up their language in order to marginalize their political enemies. The factions might have found common ground had they actually discussed the practical application of slavery in their community. Instead, the groups sought to influence Congress through petitions and by electing a territorial representative responsive to their desires. Congress ignored their petitions, which left the factions to settle the issue themselves. However, the factions continued to bicker over slavery and congressional representation even though Indian affairs threatened to undermine the safety of their town.

Despite the Americans’ success in securing the political boundaries of Vincennes and gaining new lands from the Indians, their community remained factionalized and at

⁴⁷ In December of 1807, Ann, an indentured servant labeled a “Mulatto” and “Negroe” in the judicial record, lodged a complaint against her owner James Trimble for “ill usage & cruel treatment” in the Court of Common Pleas. The court ruled that Trimble “enter into recognizance” at the clerk’s office and ordered that he “shall not in [the] future abuse or unreasonably chastise his said servant during the time she remains in his . . . controle.” Court of Common Pleas for Knox County – Saturday December 5, 1807 – Indiana State Archives; Box 12, folder 856. I use the term slave to describe the indentured African Americans in Vincennes because their owners forced them to sign ninety-nine year indentures. They were de-facto slaves.

⁴⁸ In 1808, authorities discovered a “coloured man” named Caleb dead in the town jail, but after the coroner, Jacob Kuykendall and twelve men inspected the body, they concluded that Caleb died from “natural sickness & malady, and not otherwise.” The town authorities made sure that the slave’s rights had been protected. Ibid., October 1808 – File 1013, Box 15.

risk. Central to the threat was the growing rift between Wabash Valley Indian communities caused by both the American efforts to negotiate land cessions and the foreign Indians who had moved into the region. Little Turtle, speaking for many of the Miami, rejected the Piankashaw and the Delaware treaties that had been necessary to secure Vincennes. Indians resided on these lands without, according to the Miami, historical connections to them, but still ceded the lands as if they were their own. In fact, many of the Delaware initially lived near Kekionga under the auspices of the Miami and had since moved south to the White River. Miami identity grew out of local hegemonic relationships whereby the Miami incorporated outsiders like the French, British, or Indians into their communities while maintaining their sovereignty over established trading networks and sacred places like Kekionga. The Piankashaw, a Miami-speaking group with cultural ties to the area, lacked the right to cede land “without the consent of the Miamis, or so Little Turtle argued.”⁴⁹ From the Miami perspective, they maintained sovereignty over the land even though they had welcomed various groups like the Potawatomi and Delaware into the area.⁵⁰ In response to Little Turtle’s objections, Harrison belittled Little Turtle’s authority among the Miami, stating that “nine tenths of that tribe who acknowledge Richardville & Peccan for their Chiefs . . . utterly abhor . . . the Turtle.”⁵¹ In deflating Little Turtle’s importance, Harrison acknowledged the factionalism among the Miami. He also weighed the relationships between the various Indian groups and concluded that,

neither the Miamis nor the Putawatamies have any just claim either in common or otherwise to any part of the tract ceded by the Delawares & Piankeshaws. . . The Delaware claim to that particular tract was derived from present occupancy and

⁴⁹ Henry Dearborn to William Henry Harrison, *WHH Papers*, January 17, 1805; Reel 2, 78.

⁵⁰ WHH to Dearborn, *WHH Papers*, March 3, 1805; Reel 2, 104.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

from a grant said to have been made to them upwards of thirty years ago by the Piankeshaws. . . That the Piankeshaws are a tribe of the large confederacy which obtained the appellation of Miamis from the superior size of the particular tribe to which that name more properly belongs is not denied—the tie however which united them with their brethren has become so feeble that for many years past the connection has been scarcely acknowledged.⁵²

Harrison defended the rights of the Piankashaw in order to secure more lands for the territory.

Harrison's desire to negotiate, rather than to recognize the intricate relationships unique to the Wabash Indian community, clouded his understanding. Arguing that the Piankashaws had made their own peace with the United States three years before the Miami surrendered at Fallen Timbers, Harrison believed that since "the Piankeshaws were competent" to make "peace and war without the consent of the Miamis—they must be equally so to sell lands which is acknowledgedly theirs & which is no longer useful to them."⁵³ Harrison contended that the Piankashaw had acted without the consent of the Miami before the Treaty of Greenville and should be allowed to act independently in the period after it. This logic ignored the fact that Miami-speaking peoples had always been able to negotiate their own alliances without undermining the interests of the larger Miami nation. There was a difference, though, between making peace and ceding land. Peace negotiations did not always involve land. Harrison's approach ignored the historical circumstances underlying Piankashaw behavior. Their diplomatic relationship with the Americans before the Battle of Fallen Timbers was a product of the increasing violence in the southern region of the Wabash River where the Piankashaw lived. They sought peace to protect their community but not because they considered themselves

⁵² WHH to Dearborn, *WHH Papers*, March 3, 1805; Reel 2, 104. Harrison crosses out the word "twenty" in the letter and replaced it with "thirty years" when discussing the grant made to the Delaware by the Piankashaw.

⁵³ WHH to Dearborn, *WHH Papers*, March 3, 1805; Reel 2, 107.

independent from the Miami nation. Realities of war convinced them to make peace or to suffer instead. Harrison interpreted Piankashaw behavior as a reflection of Piankashaw independence when in fact it only displayed traditional Miami behavior in the valley.

Understanding the ways in which the Miami Indians managed place would have helped Harrison in his negotiations. He grew frustrated and angry with the Miamis when he met them in council at Fort Wayne in 1805 because they remained adamantly opposed to the land cessions around Vincennes and the White River. They “strenuously contended” that the declaration which they made at Fort Wayne in 1803 regarding the right for the Delaware to inhabit the White River area “meant nothing more than an assurance to the Delawares that they should occupy the country as long as they pleased.”⁵⁴ The Miamis never wanted “to convey an exclusive right” to the lands.⁵⁵ In attaining Harrison’s recognition of Miami sovereignty in the region, they initiated another cession of lands amounting to almost two million acres that embraced “some of the finest land in the Western Country.”⁵⁶ Although the Miami did indeed cede land, they did so on their terms and with “persevering obstinacy,” which compelled Harrison to recognize the lands on the Wabash River as the common property of the “three tribes who call themselves Miami.”⁵⁷ Harrison dismissed Little Turtle’s “violent opposition. . . to the Delaware and Piankashaw Treaties” as a product of his “consciousness of the superiority of his talents over the rest of his race and colour.” Little Turtle lacked the “opportunities for exhibiting his eloquence” among his own race and therefore used the stage provided

⁵⁴ WHH to Henry Dearborn, *WHH Papers*, August 26, 1805; Reel 2, 324.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

by the treaty negotiations to “satisfy his vanity.”⁵⁸ Unable to dissect cultural differences between the Indian groups, Harrison concluded that their anger and frustration was simply a product of their vying for attention. To Harrison, the Indians recognized their own inability to stem the tide of American settlement and wanted his favor in order to attain more annuity goods. What Harrison did not see was how the Wabash Indians used him to maintain their traditional interests in the territory. The Wabash Indians realized that the power dynamics were shifting throughout the region, but they also believed that any change should be subject to the established cultural dynamics of the area. Little Turtle, like many of the Indian leaders, was not seeking Harrison’s attention; Little Turtle was trying to force the governor to recognize Miami connections to place.

Even though the Americans had settled at Vincennes, the Miami still laid claim to it. In securing Vincennes and the surrounding area from the Piankashaw and the Delaware, Harrison initiated a much larger debate over sovereignty by including several outside Indian groups in the discussion and by treating the Piankashaw Indians as a group separate from the Miami. Whether he intended to do so, Harrison opened the discussion over the ownership and control of land to many of the Indians groups in the territory. Soon, other Miami leaders began signing land cessions as a way of asserting their rightful authority in the region. Such behavior had become more commonplace after the Revolutionary War as American Indians tried to rebuild their decimated communities.

Pressure to defend their rightful place in the Wabash-Maumee Valley forced the Miami to confront a Shawnee prophet who had reportedly been chastising Indians for selling their lands. William Wells, Little Turtle’s adopted son, desperately wanted to control the Prophet, whom he viewed as a threat to Miami hegemony. In June of 1807,

⁵⁸ WHH to Henry Dearborn, *WHH Papers*, March 3, 1805; Reel 2, 104.

Wells issued a warning to Vincennes that the Shawnee Prophet intended to “destroy every white man in America.”⁵⁹ Wells abhorred the Prophet’s “insolence” largely because Tenskwatawa’s rhetoric challenged Little Turtle’s leadership in the valley. By claiming that no single Indian polity had the right to sell lands without the consent of all Indian nations, the Prophet defied the authority of Indian communities like the Miami. The Prophet argued that the Wabash-Maumee Valley was the property of all Indians; the Miami disagreed. The Miamis believed that the Treaty of Greenville was essentially an agreement between the Miamis and the Americans, even though other Indian groups had signed it.

However, Tenskwatawa rejected the Treaty of Greenville which some of the Miami Indians had signed. He also ignored the treaties that Harrison had used to secure Vincennes because only a minority of Indian leaders had signed them. As a result, Harrison and his Indian agents worried about the Prophet and his potential destabilizing influence in the Ohio Valley.⁶⁰ Indian agents at Fort Wayne and Detroit reported to the governor that various Indian communities had traveled great distances to hear the Prophet speak about Indian unity. Harrison feared that the large migrations of Indians would create trepidation among European American frontier communities and increase the likelihood of violence. Harrison feared that the growing number of Indians at Prophetstown would undermine his efforts to secure more land cessions. Well aware that many Indians retained their attachment to the French, Harrison hoped to use the French to undermine Prophetstown and make the Indians dependent upon the Americans. He

⁵⁹ William Wells to William Henry Harrison, *WHH Papers*, August 20, 1807; Reel 2, 900.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* William Henry Harrison to the Delaware Indians, *WHH Papers*, April 12, 1806; reel 2, 525. Harrison questioned how the Prophet could speak for the Delaware. “But who is this pretended prophet who dares to speak in the name of the Great Creator. Examine him. Is he more wise or virtuous than you are yourselves . . .?”

believed that Indians would “look upon the United States in the same light that they had formerly done their fathers the French.”⁶¹ However, Harrison’s efforts to orient the Indians towards Vincennes proved difficult because much of the information the French provided shaped Harrison’s Indian policies, which were increasingly confrontational.

By 1808, fears that the people of Prophetstown were preparing to attack destabilized society in Vincennes. Not only did many residents dread the growing number of Indians to the north, but internal divisions over the threat posed by Prophetstown fueled violence in the streets of Vincennes. Some Americans believed that their neighbors were conspiring to help the Prophet. These divisions increased in intensity as the Prophet moved into Indiana territory and especially as he became more militant. Rather than unite, the Americans, French, and Miami secretly worked to protect their own interests at the expense of the other. All saw their identity and interests increasingly connected to the Prophet and his settlement on the Tippecanoe. Few Americans realized that the Prophet was dealing with similar divisions in his own town.

Greenville

Tenskwatawa’s mission to reform Indian society began in the spring of 1805 when he experienced a vision so profound that he gave up alcohol and decided to help his fellow Shawnees separate from the destructive forces of European American culture.⁶² Within a year, he established a settlement for this purpose at Greenville, Ohio, three miles from Anthony Wayne’s Fort Greenville. The Shawnees constructed nearly 60 lodges surrounding a long and imposing council house that sat atop a hill. From the hill, visitors could watch throngs of Indians set up their portable dwellings around the lodges

⁶¹ Harrison to Thomas Jefferson, *WHH Papers*, August 29, 1805: Reel 2, 328.

⁶² Cave, *The Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 65.

while many others gathered in anticipation of hearing Tenskwatawa's teachings. Dawn and dusk were met with equal drama as "the faithful offered prayers to the Great Spirit . . . in a ceremony described by white visitors as both solemn and dramatic."⁶³

Tenskwatawa hoped that their settlement at Greenville would become a cultural center where all Shawnees from North America would gather in unity.⁶⁴ Greenville's reach extended to Indians from various communities including the Potawatomis, Delaware, Ottawas, Ojibwa, Sacs, Wyandots, and Shawnees. To a certain extent Greenville only continued a tradition of diverse Indian gatherings in the region, embodied best by the diverse groupings of Indians who gathered at the Glaize in 1792 and 1793.⁶⁵

Like the meetings at the Glaize, Indian factionalism prevented Tenskwatawa from establishing a unified Indian community. The diverse nature of Indian society at Greenville lead to disputes over the advantage of continuing to oppose European American intervention in Indian affairs and prevented Tenskwatawa from unifying his followers. This was especially true for the Shawnee people. While the Prophet hoped to construct a permanent physical and cultural barrier between the Shawnees and European Americans, he watched as Black Hoof's Shawnees rejected his message. Black Hoof, like Little Turtle, feared continued militancy against the Americans after Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers. In turn, he advocated adapting to American social mores in order to prevent full-scale annihilation of the Shawnees. Desperate to protect Shawnee culture, Black Hoof believed that associating with the Prophet would spell disaster because it would invite further American excursions into the area. As a highly influential leader,

⁶³ Cave, *The Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 91- 92.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶⁵ Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Glaize in 1792: A Composite Indian Community," *Ethnohistory* Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter, 1978), 15-39.

Black Hoof's resistance was especially difficult for Tenskwatawa, Tecumseh, and Blue Jacket to bear. Without Shawnee support from Black Hoof, Greenville became more of a symbolic settlement for displaced and frustrated Indian communities throughout the Ohio Valley than a cultural capital for the Shawnee people. Tenskwatawa probably hoped that his fellow Shawnees would see the remarkable influence he had upon other Indian communities and eventually join him in Ohio. This did not happen, however, and Greenville remained a heterogenous Indian settlement rather than a Shawnee center.

Despite Tenskwatawa's failure to unite Shawnee peoples at Greenville, other Indians remained convinced that the Prophet exercised too much influence. Little Turtle's son-in-law William Wells continued to pressure the Prophet to leave as did other non-Indian residents who feared an imminent attack by him. However, Wells and the European Americans had little power to force Tenskwatawa's removal from Ohio. Wells hoped to protect the Miami Indians; they had grown increasingly wary of the Prophet's confrontational statements and feared he might start a war. Taken captive by the Miami at age twelve, Wells forged strong relationships with the Miami Indians and eventually married Little Turtle's daughter while re-establishing connections with his European American family in Kentucky. Little Turtle knew Wells's value as a go-between. Harrison recognized this too, for he made Wells the Indian agent at Fort Wayne. Devoted to Little Turtle and fearful that the Prophet might overshadow his father-in-law, Wells manipulated information and material goods to protect the interests of Little Turtle and the Miami. He purposely overspent his allowance as factor of the Fort Wayne Indian agency in order to distribute goods and garner support for Little Turtle. Wells wanted Tenskwatawa and his brother to leave the area; he grew even more resentful when they

migrated west to the heart of Miami country near the Tippecanoe River. Some historians have framed Wells's actions in relation to his desire to protect "American expansionism," but this neglects the cultural and familial ties he had to the Miami.⁶⁶ At that moment, his efforts to force the Prophet out of Miami affairs appeared to backfire. In fact, an Indian agent at Fort Wayne questioned Wells's contribution to the government's assimilationist plans and suggested to Henry Dearborn that they transfer him to Vincennes because he had failed to "answer the purposes of the government" at Fort Wayne.⁶⁷ Wells could not separate himself from his Miami roots when dealing with the Prophet and the Indians in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. His advice to William Henry Harrison and other Indian agents was deeply biased, and as the Prophet tried to unite his followers, he also had to contend with Wells's influence on both Indians and European Americans. Wells's rhetoric about the Prophet convinced many Indians and European Americans in the area that Tenskwatawa meant them harm. However, the Prophet benefited from nearby missionaries who countered these accusations.

European Americans, Indians, and missionaries lived throughout the region surrounding Greenville and most interacted with each other on a regular basis. The presence of missionaries near Greenville tempered relationships between Indians and European Americans in western Ohio by defending the Indians' efforts to convert to Christianity. The support of the missionaries mattered a great deal to Indians like the Prophet who continually dealt with men like Wells who remained adamantly opposed to the Shawnee leader's presence in the region. Western Ohio served in many ways as the

⁶⁶ Alfred Cave refers to Wells and his fear of the Prophet and other Indians he labels as a "nest of trouble makers. Well aware of the threat that the Prophet and his brother might pose to American expansionism . . ." Cave, *The Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 97.

⁶⁷ John Johnston to Henry Dearborn, from Fort Wayne May 31, 1807. Potawatomi File, Great Lakes Indian Archives.

vanguard of American westward settlement, and the diversity of peoples and interests proved challenging to the Prophet's mission. Although the Prophet benefited from Quaker and Catholic missionaries who helped his community, European Americans fearful of an Indian attack and oppositional Shawnees spoke out against the Shawnee leader. A group of Shakers that lived near Greenville witnessed the Indians' devotion and spirituality, which one historian claimed could "shame the Christian world."⁶⁸ Many of the missionaries believed in the Prophet's pacifist rhetoric, which challenged Wells's professions that the Prophet served the British and hoped to destroy the Americans. Weary at the hostility from his fellow Shawnees and from European Americans, the Prophet decided to move west where there were far fewer non-Indians and a greater opportunity to influence Indian nations not yet surrounded by European Americans.

In early 1808, the Prophet, his brother Tecumseh, and a host of followers trudged west through the woods bordering the Miami and Maumee rivers. They were on their way to Main Poc's Potawatomi settlement near the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe rivers. The Prophet's migration west represented more than a piece of the Shawnee diaspora; it was also a shift in Wabash-Maumee Valley politics that would influence the structure of the Prophet's town. The new settlement along the Tippecanoe resembled what he and his followers constructed at Greenville, but with some noticeable differences. Among these was Main Poc's militant resistance to the Americans that also complimented Tenskwatawa's struggle against European American culture.

Main Poc visited the Prophet at Greenville during the summer of 1807 where he heard Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh discuss how interracial marriages, liquor, witchcraft,

⁶⁸ John Patterson MacLean, "Shaker Mission to the Shawnee Indians," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 11 (June 1903): 215-229; Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 54.

and American goods had polluted Indian culture. The three men forged a close friendship through their shared rejection of American hegemony and the Indian communities that collaborated with the United States.⁶⁹ Main Poc exercised great influence among Potawatomi Indians communities as a spiritual leader. The Potawatomi relied on his spiritual powers to heal sickness, locate animals for the hunt, and to see the future, but many also sought his support because he rejected the growing American intervention in the region after 1795. Main Poc hoped to protect Potawatomi interests by forcing the Americans out of their new settlements at Vincennes and St. Louis and by continuing to war against his traditional enemies, the Osage. This angered the Americans and Miami Indians, who feared Main Poc's growing influence among the Kickapoo and Sacs and Foxes because it primed the area for open war.

Main Poc was a relative outsider to the valley and inviting the Prophet to Tippecanoe insulted the Miami and traditional inhabitants of the valley. The Prophet's presence at Tippecanoe placed him in an important position to influence Indians deep in the interior of Miami territory. Not only had Wells tried to banish the Prophet from the region, but he also hoped that Main Poc, "the pivot on which the minds of all the western Indians turned," would aid him in that endeavor.⁷⁰ He hoped to rein in Main Poc when the Potawatomi visited Fort Wayne in 1808 by bribing him with over \$800 worth of food and other supplies. Wells's expense produced nothing. Main Poc bested Wells, enjoying free food and provisions while organizing an attack on the Osage, in direct opposition to Harrison's desires. Main Poc remained independent from American and Miami control, which represented another threat to Little Turtle and the Miami polity.

⁶⁹ Edmunds, *Keepers of the Fire*, 166-167.

⁷⁰ Wells to Henry Dearborn, April 20, 1808 in Carter and Bloom, eds., *Territorial Papers*, 7:556.

Tenskwatawa and Main Poc settled right in the heart of Miami country without fully considering the extent to which their communities' politics might upset the established economic, political, and social relationships between the Indians, French, and Americans. The Miami could no longer associate with the Americans without first proving their loyalty. The French watched trade decline throughout the area around Ouiatenon and Prophetstown due to the Prophet's demands that his followers abstain from the destructive nature of non-Indian goods. More importantly, previous Potawatomi attacks on various groups of Piankashaw and Wea Indians a decade earlier convinced many that the attacks would resume once Main Poc and the Prophet settled in Wea country.⁷¹ But the local geopolitics of the Wabash-Maumee Valley mattered little to Tenskwatawa or Main Poc, two men who valued Tippecanoe for its location between large settlements of Indians along the Great Lakes and the Mississippi and Ohio valleys. It was an important thoroughfare for trade and Indian migrations. In addition, any settlement at Tippecanoe was just two days' canoe trip from Vincennes and less than four days from Fort Malden, which facilitated communication and trade with the British and other Indians. Communication was swift via river travel and these same rivers enabled warriors from various Ohio Valley communities to gather there whenever necessary. Harrison recognized the tactical advantage of the settlement and its location in the center of the "tribes which [Tenskwatawa] wishes to connect . . . he has immediately in his rear a country that has been but little explored, consisting principally of barren thickets, interspersed with swamps and lakes, into which cavalry could not penetrate, and our infantry only by slow laborious efforts."⁷² Its location proved to have a tactical

⁷¹ Edmunds, *Keepers of the Fire*, 156

⁷² Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, July 10, 1811; Reel 4, 629.

advantage, but was also problematic considering that the Miami no longer controlled a place equivalent to Tippecanoe that would attract large numbers of Indians.

Prophetstown, for all intents and purposes, replaced the once vibrant Indian center at Kekionga. The multi-ethnic trading center that defined Kekionga vanished after Wayne constructed a fort there and when the Prophet's settlement attracted Indians to the Tippecanoe rather than the Wabash-Maumee portage. By 1808, the Kickapoo, Shawnees, and Potawatomi had displaced the traditional Miami-speaking residents of Tippecanoe. The Prophet's settlement at Greenville proved more attractive for the Miami because they could associate with it while not necessarily undermining Miami interests. Doing so at Prophetstown would indirectly acknowledge the Prophet's influence in the heart of Miami territory. The geographical differences between the Prophet's two communities were quite important. While Miami Indians visited Tenskwatawa's settlement at Greenville, they refrained from doing so when the Shawnee leader moved to the Tippecanoe.⁷³ The likelihood of the Miami ever recognizing Tenskwatawa's and Tecumseh's pan-Indian confederacy diminished greatly when the outsiders constructed their capital in the heart of the remaining Miami territory.⁷⁴

Prophetstown

Despite moving to a much more isolated area with fewer European Americans present, the Prophet encountered resistance from the Indians who already lived there. Having left Indiana Territory years before to establish a community at Greenville, Ohio, the Prophet recognized that Main Poc's invitation for him to return to Indiana was not without controversy. Tenskwatawa was well acquainted with the politics of the Wabash-

⁷³ Alfred Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 94.

⁷⁴ Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana*, 71.

Maumee Valley and understood that his movement into the area challenged Miami hegemony. It was one thing to have lived at Greenville near many of his fellow Shawnees, even if some of them objected to his call to resist the Americans, but it was an entirely different matter to move west and settle in the heart of Miami country.

The Miamis feared that Tenskwatawa's militant politics would upset the region and displace the Miamis further. After the Miami lost Kekionga following the Battle of Fallen Timbers, they found themselves threatened by various Indian communities using treaty negotiations to access trade goods and annuity payments. Also, by 1808, the Kickapoo and Americans had displaced the Miami from their settlements along the Vermillion River and at Vincennes. The Miami feared that the Prophet would soon do the same. The Miami despised the Prophet's intrusion into the complex political affairs of the region because it polarized relationships between Indians and non-Indians, which challenged traditional Miami diplomacy. The Miami used the British, the French, and Indians to construct their hegemony in the valley during the previous decades; they feared that the Prophet's rhetoric would undermine their customs when dealing with the Americans.

The Prophet knew that his settlement, located among the beech-maple forests and wetlands along the Wabash River, upset Americans and Indians alike. In the post-1795 era in the Wabash-Maumee Valley, the area around Ouiatenon, like Vincennes, took on greater meaning because it remained one of the last vestiges of Miami territory. French traders recognized the area as Miami lands as early as 1717. Thomas Hutchins described the fort as small and stockade "in which about a dozen (white, of course) families

reside.”⁷⁵ Various Indians lived in the area, including some Kickapoo, Piankashaws, “and a principal part of the Ouiatenons. The whole of these tribes consists, it is supposed, of about one thousand warriors.”⁷⁶ Even though the region around Ouiatenon lacked the political importance of Kekionga, it nonetheless facilitated trade from areas further north along the Tippecanoe to the settlements around Kekionga.

C.C. Trowbridge confirmed the value the Miami placed on the region around Tippecanoe when he interviewed the Miami in the 1820s. The Miami’s story reflected the cultural importance of areas like Kekionga, Ouiatenon, and Vincennes, and why they objected to the Prophet’s settlement near Ouiatenon. Their migration story focused on Quyoukeetonwee, the first emigrant to Ouiatenon, who “traveled to the south, and having selected a prairie on the Wabash, about twenty miles below the mouth of the Tippecanoe River.”⁷⁷ The Wea Indians were initially called the Wuyoakeentonwau, eventually shortened to Wuyautonoa and then to Weeau. After the Weeaus increased in number, some moved “west to the mouth of the Vermillion River and were known as [Piankashaw] because they lacked “holes or slits in [their] ears.”⁷⁸ Ultimately, one of the Piankashaws “descended the Wabash, and settled at a place called Tshipkohkroanyee, (literally at the root)” which is now known as Vincennes.⁷⁹ In talking to Trowbridge, the Miami emphasized geographic markers, specifically their historical connections to Ouiatenon, the Vermillion River, and Vincennes. However, groups like the Potawatomi

⁷⁵ Fredrick Charles Hicks, Thomas Hutchins, Patrick Hennedy, *A Topographical Description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina: Reprinted from the Original Edition of 1778* (Cleveland: Burrow Brothers Company, 1904), 101.

⁷⁶ Robert G. McCullough and Michael Strezewski. *Report of the 2006 Archaeological Investigations at Kethtippecanunk (12-T-59), Tippecanoe County, Indiana* (Fort Wayne, Ind: IPFW Archaeological Survey, Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne, 2007), 227-235.

⁷⁷ Vernon Kinietz, ed., “*Meearmeear Traditions*” by C.C. Trowbridge (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938), 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

and Kickapoo settled in the area and upset the regional social and trading networks established by the Miami-speaking Indians. Kickapoo and Potawatomi conception of place was in many ways portable, while the Miamis rarely if ever considered outmigration as an option to protect their interests. More importantly, the Miamis feared that the Kickapoos and Potatomies would be more resistant to European Americans and upset regional trade.

European Americans also noticed differences between the Miami and the Indians that had recently migrated to the valley. John Wade, an officer in General Anthony Wayne's force, commented on the changing dynamics near the Tippecanoe River. Having traveled far in Miami territory, Wade recognized the Miami's "civility and attention" which convinced him "of the difference between the Wabash and Potawatomi Indians."⁸⁰ Wade understood that the Wabash Indians were capable of negotiating and maintaining peaceful trading relationships, while the Potawatomi could not be trusted.

The [Potawatomi] I found to be much under the influence of the British, insolent – haughty – and domineering – holding forth the power and consequence of the British, declaring their determination to exact from every Boat which ascended such proportion of presents as they deemed proper and boasting of the quantity they received from Great Britain.⁸¹

Unwilling to abandon their remaining lands, the Miami Indians were forced to contend with a growing presence of outsider Indians who disregarded Miami hegemony. The Miami wanted to protect their traditional places in order to defend their identity, while the Kickapoo, Shawnees, and Potawatomi were more willing to establish new settlements

⁸⁰ John Wade, Extracts of a Journal up the Wabash from Fort Knox to the portage within 8 1/2 miles of Fort Wayne, at the Miami Villages--Commencing the 8th of May, and Concluding the 2d day of June 1795. Historical Society of Pennsylvania Ms., Wayne Papers, vol. 41. 8 pp. Thomas Bodley and John Wade, "Notes on the Wabash in 1795," ed. Dwight L. Smith, *Indiana Magazine of History* 50, no. 3 (September 1954): 277-290.

⁸¹ Thomas Bodley and John Wade, "Notes on the Wabash in 1795," ed. Dwight L. Smith, *Indiana Magazine of History* 50, no. 3 (September 1954): 287.

in foreign areas. While their lands had diminished, the Miami still maintained a large swath of their historical homeland.

Unlike the Miami, Shawnee creation stories reflected a malleable sense of place due to their constant displacement and migration. Stephen Warren says that they learned to maintain their “distinctiveness through beliefs and practices that were not linked to place and that could be sustained in a wide variety of geographic contexts.”⁸² Like the Miami, Tenskwatawa also shared his beliefs with Trowbridge in 1824, a point Stephen Warren highlights by connecting Shawnee stories of migration and identity.⁸³ The Shawnees had a diasporic history and moved frequently in order to access trade and to solidify diplomatic relationships. The Shawnee were willing to migrate in order to access trade, unlike the Miami who believed that controlling trade in the valley was essential to their sovereignty.⁸⁴ The Miami, by consensus, had protected their settlements and interests by controlling an important trade portage between the Wabash and Maumee rivers and by accommodating outsiders in order to access their trade goods. The Miamis perfected a system that compelled outsiders to adjust their interests and migrate to Miami country, which enabled the Miamis to remain relatively sedentary.

Prophetstown’s exact location remains vague in the historical record. John Tipton, one of Harrison’s subordinates at the Battle of Tippecanoe, placed it “near the Tippecanoe on the Wabash” while Harrison judged that it was “about two miles” east of Burnett’s Creek.⁸⁵ Veteran Indian fighters Adam Walker and Peter Funk situated the

⁸² Stephen Warren with Randolph Noe, “‘The Greatest Travelers in America’: Shawnee Survival in the Shatter Zone” in Robbie Ethridge and Sheri Shuck-Hall, eds., *Mapping the Shatter Zone*, 334.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Warren argues that for the Shawnee, “Diplomatic considerations outweighed any long-standing attachments to homeland. The vicissitudes of trade and alliance determined migration patterns.” 334.

⁸⁵ Logan Esarey, Kate Milner Rabb, and William Herschell. *History of Indiana from Its Exploration to 1922* (Dayton, Ohio: Dayton Historical Pub. Co, 19240: 608 – 619.

town three quarters to one mile southeast of the battlefield. Upon visiting the area, Tipton gave the most precise location of the settlement, locating the town

on the NW side of the [Wabash River] from north to south 2 mile[s] below the mouth of the Tippecanoe River on a second bank or high ground between the eminence on which the town stood an[d] the river is a bottom of 50 yds breadth the site high & beautiful[.] Extending back half [a] mile near one mile NW of this is the Battleground in a small grove of timber surround[ed] by a narrow prairie through which on the N runs a small creek called Little Tippecanoe.⁸⁶

Traveling down the Wabash, one would have seen an expansive and impressive Indian settlement stretching for a mile and just 200 yards from the Wabash River.

Complimenting the settlement was a large cornfield that fed between “one and two hundred huts or cabins.”⁸⁷ The Indians constructed a large storehouse where they could place corn, beans, and other goods to feed the Prophet’s followers, after the battle at Tippecanoe, an American militiaman ventured into the storehouse and discovered “3,000 bushels of corn and beans.”⁸⁸ Decades later, David Turpie described the layout of Prophetstown from information given to him by a “French half-breed who had visited the Prophet’s town during the time of peace.”⁸⁹

The dwellings were built in rows, with lanes or streets between them; there were wigwams (or huts) built of poles and bark, furnished inside with robes and skins, the spoil of the chase. There was a large wigwam called the house of the stranger, where a traveler might find meals and lodging after the Indian fashion. . . part of the town stood in the prairie above the valley, and in this quarter, not far from each other, were two public buildings – the Council House and the Medicine Lodge-Long, low structure of some size, somewhat like a log cabin, but of slighter structure.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Robertson and Dorothy Riker (eds.), *The John Tipton Papers* (3 vols., Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1942): 274-275.

⁸⁷ Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana from Its Exploration to 1922*, 705.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ David Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1903).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Later and less reliable accounts describe a racetrack “for pony races and foot races, and an athletic field where Indian games were played.”⁹¹ Reflecting their long-standing interests in the area, French traders from Vincennes maintained a trading post near the town, but it was nothing in comparison to the numbers of traders and missionaries who had lived near Greenville.

The lack of contact with European American people compounded negative perceptions of Prophetstown in Vincennes because so few non-Indians knew what was happening at Prophetstown. A small number of European Americans interacted with Prophetstown except for the French traders who visited the town to trade and spy, but Americans, including Harrison, questioned many of their reports because he did not trust the French. The lack of missionaries near Prophetstown allowed Wells to influence European Americans’ perceptions of the Shawnee brothers and their followers. Missionaries functioned similarly to Indian go-betweens in that they often facilitated communication between European Americans and Indians. Harrison and the U.S. government understood the importance the French priests played in the territory and their ability to use long-standing ties with the Indians to protect territorial stability, which is why the federal government appropriated funds to pay for a resident priest in Vincennes.

Father Jean Francis Rivet, a French priest who arrived in Vincennes in 1794, considered moving north to a Potawatomi settlement along the St. Joseph in the early 1800s where eventually he could have aided Harrison’s mediations with Prophetstown. Rivet had earned “the trust and affection of the Indians,” who found in the Black Robe a

⁹¹ William C. Mitchell, *Stories and Legends of the Wabash Country* (Lafayette, IN: Tippecanoe County Historical Association, 1947), 21.

man on whom they could rely to arbitrate their quarrels.⁹² As a result of his death in 1804, there was no resident priest in Vincennes for 14 years to act as an intermediary between European Americans and Indians especially when it came to issues surrounding Tippecanoe. Had Rivet moved to the Potawatomi settlement north of Prophetstown, he would have dealt with the disagreements arising over the Prophet's rhetoric and might have played an important role in maintaining peace between the Indians and the European Americans. Without a substantial European American presence near Prophetstown, the Prophet and Wells's statements upset Indian/European American relationships in the Wabash Valley to a far greater extent than they did at Greenville. Wells influenced Harrison to such an extent that the governor accused the Prophet of being "a fool that speaks not the words of the Great Spirit, but the words of the devil."⁹³ Tenskwatawa responded sharply and asked Harrison not to "listen any more to the voice of bad birds" like Wells.⁹⁴

The polarizing rhetoric was also the product of Indians seeking refuge from American settlers and policies that the Indians felt were destroying their way of life. Prophetstown provided various Indian communities with an opportunity for security and a place to voice their disgust with American policies and the Indians who supported the United States. Prophetstown was not a static community – it was highly fluid with permeable boundaries. Rather than monitor the diverse groups of Indians that rarely remained for an extended period of time, non-Indians began to focus on Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh who were two of the few permanent residents in the town. Other Shawnees joined Prophetstown largely in support of Tenskwatawa's nativist rhetoric, but

⁹² John J. Doyle, *The Catholic Church in Indiana, 1686-1814* (Indianapolis: Criterion Press, 1976), 83.

⁹³ The Prophet to Harrison in Esarey, *Harrison Letters*, 251.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

some of the Kickapoo, Potawatomies, and Miami settled there because it provided a convenient opportunity for them to access trade routes and find stability. At the same time, the Kickapoo voiced their anger toward Harrison and his policies designed to stop their attacks on the remaining Illinois Indians. For their part, some Potawatomies saw Prophetstown as a platform to voice their displeasure at the decline in annuity payments, and some Miami visited Prophetstown in order to marginalize rogue leaders like Little Turtle. Indians associated with Prophetstown for practical reasons outside of Tenskwatawa's ideology. It provided convenient opportunities for Indians to reinforce their ethnic interests.

Shawnee Indians could travel to Prophetstown and find a settlement that incorporated Shawnee beliefs and ideals while also adhering by the Prophet's nativist teachings. Many of the Shawnees who had lived at Greenville in support of Tenskwatawa's mission followed him west to Prophetstown. The Shawnees could participate in the Prophet's renewal while also finding it acceptable to maintain kinship ties with their fellow Shawnees; they could act both racially and culturally without necessarily undermining the Prophet's message. The Prophet's vision allowed Shawnee Indians to practice a dual identity as both racially Indian and specifically Shawnee. They were not in a position where living at Prophetstown separated the Shawnee from family or clan members, but this was not the case for the other Indian groups in town. The Shawnees accepted Tenskwatawa's rules because they required less of a sacrifice on their part.

Weighing the different identities of his followers with his racial message of unification was a constant process for the Prophet. Tenskwatawa challenged his

townsmen who placed their traditions above the interests of their fellow Indians, but at the same time he understood that he could not be too heavy handed and risk angering them into leaving his settlement. Living at Prophetstown was a unique experience and quite challenging for the Shawnee leader. Tenskwatawa had to provide for the many different migrations of Indians into his town, offer instruction so that they could purify themselves from the polluting influences of European American culture, and manage outside perceptions of his community.

Tenskwatawa also had to confront European American perceptions of him. Initially, residents of Vincennes viewed Tenskwatawa as simply a religious prophet. It was after he settled along the Tippecanoe that most residents began to consider him as a potential threat because of the large migrations of Indians to the town. In the spring of 1808, the Prophet sent a speech to Harrison guaranteeing his intent to “live in peace and friendship” with the Americans.⁹⁵ Harrison echoed these sentiments when he responded that the Prophet’s “religious opinions [will] never be the cause of dissention and difference between us.”⁹⁶ Tenskwatawa tempered his religious statements to Harrison in order to avoid conflict, but in private he called for the segregation of Indians from the Americans. It is ironic that in doing so, he and his followers became increasingly connected to the events and peoples at Vincennes; by trying to stop Indians like Little Turtle from siding with the Americans, he increased his own connection with the territorial government. He could not escape the inter-tribal politics of the valley.

The American residents at Vincennes and Shawnee Indians at Prophetstown hoped to construct communities based on singular ideological visions, but were unable to

⁹⁵ Prophet to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, June 24, 1808; Reel #3, 173.

⁹⁶ Harrison to the Prophet, *WHH Papers*, June 24, 1808; Reel #3, 178.

do so because of internal factionalism and a growing dependency on outsiders to aid their cause. Constructing place proved to be remarkably difficult for these two influential and powerful communities. The Americans needed the French in order to protect their economic and political interests, while the Shawnees depended upon the Americans and other Indian communities to reject Miami regional hegemony. Furthermore, disputes among the European American in Vincennes and the Indians associated with Prophetstown redirected their larger ideological goals. Although Prophetstown and Vincennes became increasingly adversarial, the animosity was as much a product of internal factionalism as it was a result of racial relationships.

Both Prophetstown and Vincennes were foreign political entities in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. They were, in effect, transplants from geographical areas farther east. The Shawnee leaders Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh founded Prophetstown in reaction to decades of displacement and warfare, advocating a national Indian identity in an attempt to unite Indians against further displacement. Vincennes was a physical representation of national goals. As capital of Indiana Territory, it was supposed to facilitate the western expansion. Both “new” settlements were hosts to nascent national and racial ideologies that redirected the chorus of local disputes, dividing communities further. Even though both settlements flourished in the area, they were fundamentally opposed to each other. The Indian-dominated Prophetstown contested the expansive American nationalism of Vincennes. It was the arrival of the Americans that threw the region into upheaval, but it was largely the relationship between Vincennes and Prophetstown that created war.

Chapter Three – A Town Divided: Vincennes Fights the Prophet

Vincennes in 1800 was a contested space. Various Indian communities had inhabited the area for centuries and played an important role in the imperial contests between French, British and Americans. During the eighteenth century, Vincennes grew from a small trading post into an important trading hub. It lay along the Wabash River, strategically placed between the Illinois country and Ohio River. Even though the Americans had political control of the town by 1800, Vincennes remained a pluralistic society – a hybrid of Indian, French, and Anglo cultures. Americans hoped to displace the French and Indian residents in order to control their lands and trade, yet the Americans also depended upon diplomatic connections with Indians in order to maintain stability in a contested region. Forced to accept the heterogeneous community for practical purposes, the Americans found themselves trapped by their desire to fashion a political system that could not be imposed upon the French and Indian population.

Constructing a uniform political system in such a cosmopolitan settlement was nearly impossible, and most people either ignored laws they disliked or they divided into factions over the laws. Some, like the French, used opportunities within the oppressive American political structure to protect their community by serving as diplomats and interpreters for the territorial government. Increasingly marginalized from mainstream political and economic life in Vincennes, these Frenchmen manipulated treaty negotiations and reconnaissance missions as a way to reaffirm both their trading interests and familial connections with the Miamis. Largely dependent upon the French to facilitate the negotiations that led to land cessions, the Americans had little choice but to trust the French community they so desperately wanted out of Vincennes. Unity among

the American communities in Vincennes was equally elusive. Although the Americans united around their distaste for the French, the Americans could not compromise on the issue of slavery. The Northwest Ordinance banned slavery north of the Ohio River, but the French and Indian inhabitants of the Wabash Valley, to whom the Ordinance did not apply, continued to own slaves. Some American residents of Vincennes, however, rejected the institution because it undermined the republican ideals of the American Revolution. Their opponents, meanwhile, felt that legalizing slave labor was essential to spur the settlement of the territory by attracting wealthy landowners. Like the French who were largely free of federal interference, many Americans retained slaves as well. The issue was so divisive that it radically transformed territorial relationships. It reshaped how residents viewed their Indian neighbors, particularly the heterogeneous Indian settlement at Prophetstown.

From 1807 to 1812, the French and American residents found themselves increasingly tied to Prophetstown, but for entirely different reasons. Well aware that Prophetstown represented a direct threat to Miami hegemony, the French traders manipulated intelligence in order to construct a false and more militantly disposed characterization of the Prophet and to protect the relationships they had constructed with the Miami over the previous century. Their hope was that the Americans would move against Prophetstown. This would allow the French to continue trading with the various Indian communities throughout the region. The Americans, however, found themselves increasingly concerned with Prophetstown for reasons well outside of Indian affairs, which they used as a convenient tool through which they could debate territorial policies like slavery. The heated disputes over Indian affairs masked the central underlying issue

of the prospect of slavery in the territory. Public officials in Vincennes argued about slavery and Indian affairs, and their failure to come to terms led to a fierce taking of sides. The debate within Vincennes dictated the course of events within Indiana as a whole, for the influence of a small number of public officials and French traders would resonate with their connections in Washington D.C. and determine territorial politics.

This chapter examines Vincennes and the growing factional rifts between the French and American settlers but also within the American community. American policies increasingly isolated the French settlers in Vincennes, which led to greater poverty among them and further marginalization from the American community. However, several key French traders were able to function within the American system and profit from it. These traders used the opportunities provided by the Americans to protect themselves rather than to assimilate into Anglo culture. This in turn presented more problems for the Americans, who came to rely on the “interested” French traders to facilitate diplomatic negotiations with the nearby Indian communities, especially Prophetstown. At the same time, they never fully realized the extent to which the French manipulated the intelligence to suit their own ends. The second part of the chapter delves into the political dispute between two groups of Americans who disagreed over the issue of slavery. It analyzes how these factions used and even manipulated Indian affairs, particularly issues surrounding Prophetstown, to attack their enemies in the slavery debate. This chapter ends with the consideration of the printer of Vincennes’ newspaper, *The Western Sun*, as a way to show how the information provided by the French traders and the debate over slavery influenced one Vincennes man’s life. Taken together, these

three sections examine the ways in which factionalism within Vincennes pushed the town towards conflict with Prophetstown.

The Americans Replace the French

During the first five years of William Henry Harrison's tenure as governor which began in 1800, the French watched in horror as Americans snatched up the lands surrounding the French sector of town. The lucrative fur trade and fertile agricultural lands tempted many Americans into settling the region, but they grew frustrated that the French community remained entrenched in the center of town. The French did not farm extensively but rather owned merchant houses, groceries, and taverns in town where they could profit from the Indian trade. Few Frenchmen could compete with the Americans who earned large profits from land speculation, nor were the French willing to sell their commonfield in town. Some French protected their economic interests by establishing partnerships, loaning money to new settlers, or by speculating in land, but few had the means to do so. Antoine Marechal made a profit by loaning money out to the Americans, while Claude Coupin, Pierre Menard, Louis Fortin eventually collaborated with Toussaint Dubois, a successful and literate trader.¹ Others served as go-betweens for the territorial government, but most French settlers suffered from increasing poverty brought on by higher taxes and land foreclosures.²

The divisions present between the two groups were not simply the product of ethnocentric policies. Their cultural background also hurt the French. Most lacked a formal education and could not read or write, nor could many speak English. Unable to

¹ Hyacinth Lasselle and Liliane Krasean. *Lasselle collection transcripts and translations*. 1713; January 3, 1801.

² The larger percentage of French residents experienced a drastic decline in their standard of living during the early part of the nineteenth century.

communicate with the Americans and incapable of reading their newspapers, postings, and books, the French lacked the tools to survive within the much more competitive American community.³ The one school (Jefferson Academy) in town lost its teacher when Father Jean Francis Rivet died in 1804; thus, Vincennes went without a resident Catholic priest for almost another ten years. The lack of formal instruction forced the French to forgo education but more affluent Americans continued private tutoring. Many Americans recognized the inability on the part of the French to operate within the community, and most were happy with that.

Getting rid of the French seemed to be the logical step in making Vincennes a truly American town. It was to be an American town before it was a “white” town. Watching the French race horses and hold dances after mass on Sundays bothered Americans who saw such behavior as uncouth and backwards. One American stated that the “customs of [Vincennes] are hardly compatible with my ‘Steady habits,’ one of which is the practice of dancing on Sunday.”⁴ The Americans also blamed the French for the Indian presence in turn, because the two groups traded and cavorted on a regular basis. The French had little chance at surviving in a town where they could not communicate effectively, function within a vastly different economic system, or live in their traditional manner. One Frenchman feared the Americans who brought “with them, in a free and peaceful country, the discord and disunion of families through lawsuits and taxation. Lawyers, sheriffs, and constables will [come] crowding in here “dressed in “motheaten

³ Denise Wilson, “Vincennes: From French Colonial Village to American Frontier Town, 1750-1820,” (PhD Dissertation, West Virginia University, 1997).

⁴ Jared Mansfield, Esq., to Edward Hempstead, Vincennes, I.T., July 30, 1804.

blacksuits.”⁵ For their part, the Americans scoffed at the notion that the “lazy” French merchants and farmers would control and profit from local trade when they had done so little to facilitate it. Unwilling to submit themselves to the French, the Americans slowly whittled away at the French community by marginalizing the French from the political system, raising taxes, and foreclosing on their small plots of land. For the most part, cultural boundaries were impermeable, except for a few men who possessed the linguistic skills to operate within the American system.

Some Frenchmen managed to prosper during this period because they possessed the tools that so many of their neighbors lacked - wealth and literacy. Harrison relied on these men when negotiating with the Indians. Without their support, diplomacy with the Indians would have proven far more difficult. Michel Brouillet, Toussaint Dubois, Hyacinthe Laselle, and Jean Baptiste LaPlante played a vital role in Harrison’s diplomatic missions among the Indians because they could understand and translate several Indian languages. Despite their shared racial heritage, it rankled the Americans in Vincennes to watch Harrison collaborate with the French traders – the same men who owned the taverns, groceries, and trading posts in town that the Americans desperately wanted.

Born at Kekionga in 1777, Laselle entered into the fur trade at an early age, which enabled him to forge lasting relationships with the various Indian communities in the region.⁶ He had watched his brothers Coco and Francois and his mother collapse into debt during the Revolutionary War. Well aware that the majority of the French enjoyed

⁵ Hyacinth Lasselle and Liliane Krasean. *Lasselle collection transcripts and translations*. 1713; Louis Fortin to Antoine Marechal, , July 25, 1803.

⁶ Jacob Piatt Dunn and General William Harrison Kenper, *Indiana and Indianans: A History of Aborginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood* (The American Historical Society, 1919), 346.

little economic prosperity during the American period, Lasselle appeased local elites and entertained many residents and honored guests at the Lasselle Ball Room in the French district of Vincennes. He used the profits to run a very successful tavern in Vincennes, where people could get a cheap meal, play billiards, and dance, but the majority of his income came from two trading posts to the northwest, near the Kickapoo settlements.⁷ Lasselle served Harrison in diplomatic negotiations with the Indians, which earned him the right to trade with the Kickapoo and allowed his tavern to thrive while fellow Frenchmen Frederick and Christian Graeter struggled to keep theirs afloat.⁸ Lasselle even served as the lead negotiator during the 1809 supplementary treaty with the Kickapoo, which Harrison used to legitimize the Fort Wayne Treaty of 1809.

Michel Brouillet's connections to the Lasselle family helped him get a license to trade with the Indians. Brouillet clerked for Lasselle's uncle Antoine, a trader at Kekionga, and eventually served as the agent in charge of Lasselle's trading posts near present-day Terre Haute.⁹ Literate and knowledgeable about Indian affairs, Brouillet served Harrison's diplomatic missions as an Indian interpreter. Harrison eventually awarded Brouillet a license to trade with the Miami in 1801 and with the Kickapoo in 1804, but this was probably at Lasselle's behest. Trusting the Lasselle family could not have been the easiest thing for Harrison. He knew that Anthony Wayne had almost hanged Antoine Lasselle for helping the Indians during the Battle of Fallen Timbers, and

⁷ Hyacinthe Lasselle was a multilingual trader who could speak French, English, and some Indian languages. Michael McCafferty, *Native American Place Names of Indiana* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 58.

⁸ The daybooks show that the Graeter brothers charged higher prices than most other taverns likely because they had more debts and little available capital after migration from the Alsac-Lorraine region of France. Malcolm Maurice Hodges, *A Social History of Vincennes and Knox County, Indiana, from the Beginning to 1860*. Thesis (D. Ed.)--Ball State University, 1968.

⁹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650 – 1815* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 452. Nancy Niblack Baxter, *The Movers: A Saga of the Scotch-Irish* (Emmis Books, 1987), 370.

was also well aware that the family had strong connections in the Miami community.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Harrison needed Brouillet, who lived in town just a few blocks from Harrison's mansion, Grouseland. Brouillet owned a modest cottage where he socialized and traded goods with his Indian friends and rested after journeying out to meet with various Miami and Kickapoo communities. Like the Lasselle family, Brouillet also had connections to the Miami. Brouillet's first wife was a Miami woman and their son, Jean Baptiste Brouillet, became a Miami leader.¹¹ Although Brouillet eventually married a French woman, with whom he had several children, he likely maintained connections with his metis son and affirmed these relations in order to maintain his trading connections.

Like Brouillet, other Frenchmen used American policies to their advantage. Toussaint DuBois, Peter Lafontaine, and Jean Baptiste La Plant and his son Pierre all served Harrison and the territorial government in some capacity. Lafontaine had lived in the area for many years and had even helped Little Turtle defeat La Balme's men when the French leader tried to destroy Kekionga.¹² Lafontaine eventually married a Miami woman and their children became influential in the Miami community.¹³ DuBois and La

¹⁰ Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio: Containing a Collection of the Most Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, Etc. Relating to Its General and Local history: with Descriptions of its Counties, Principal Towns and Villages* (Henry Howe, at E. Morgan & Co., 1851), 327.

¹¹ Walter J. Saucier, "Brouillette to Louisiana and Much Before," Raleigh, NC: 1995, 87; Bob Page, "Brouillet: Jacques Brouillet Descendency Narrative," Sept. 2, 1999, 3.; Mary Taugher compil. Old Cathedral Records, "St. Francis Xavier Parish Records.;" Walter J. Saucier, "Brouillette to Louisiana and Much Before," Raleigh, NC: 1995, 41, Poste Vincennes Recensement, or Verification of Titles.; Indiana Historical Society Publications, Journal of Thomas Dean, (Vol. 6, 1919.); Mary Taugher compil. Old Cathedral Records, "St. Francis Xavier Parish Records."

¹² Bert Anson, *The Miami Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 91.

¹³ Logan Esarey, *Governors Messages and Letters*, 337. Peter Lafontaine came from Detroit to Fort Wayne about 1776 and established a trade among the Miami.

Plante served as spies for Harrison throughout the period, and the La Plantes established Indian connections among the Potawatomi Indians who lived along the Tippecanoe.¹⁴

These Frenchmen served Harrison and the Americans during this period, but their experiences in Vincennes altered the extent to which they were willing to help the Americans. The Americans were unwilling to accept the French because they differed culturally. Watching their fellow Frenchmen fall into poverty because of oppressive American laws placed the traders in a difficult position. Many of these men continued to live and work within the deteriorating French sector of Vincennes, which obliged them to deal with their fellow Frenchmen on a daily basis. One could walk through the heart of Vincennes and see Brouillet's comfortable house, Lasselle's tavern, and the Dubois trading shop surrounded by small, dilapidated homes where the majority of the French struggled to make a living.¹⁵ To a certain extent these class distinctions also marked the American settler houses and establishments, but not to the degree that they did the French. The Americans enjoyed greater opportunities for upward mobility because the territorial system favored their language and economic interests. The system worked directly against the French for those same reasons. Trapped by an American government that sought to displace them, men like Brouillet and Lasselle used Indian affairs as a way to protect their interests rather than simply as an avenue for profit.

The literate French with strong connections to the Indian communities had a far greater chance to succeed economically and socially, but few if any had much of a political voice. Lasselle, Brouillet, La Plante, and Dubois took on even greater

¹⁴ Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana* (W.K. Stewart co., 1915), 183-185. Pierre La Plante was the son of Jean Baptiste La Plante. *Indiana Historical Collections* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1942), 262.

¹⁵ Population of Vincennes during this period grew from 800 in 1800 to nearly 5,000 in 1810. The French numbered around 900 in 1788 but that number dropped to less than 500 in the early 1800s.

responsibility in territorial affairs in the period after 1808. As the Americans recognized the increasingly militant nature of the Prophet, they relied on the French traders and interpreters to legitimize land cessions and to spy on Prophetstown. While the Americans and French shared a common purpose in undermining the Prophet's influence, they differed in their long-term goals. The French hoped to protect trade and the hegemony of the Miami Indians with whom several of the French had intimate connections, while the Americans wanted to get rid of Prophetstown in order to establish their dominance in the territory. Most Americans hoped to marginalize and then displace the French and Indian communities that remained in the territory. In attempting to do so, they put the French traders in a position to influence the decisions of the Americans.

The French traders amplified the threat posed by the Prophet in order to force the Americans to move against the nativists. In the spring of 1809, two subordinate Indian traders, residing at the Potawatomi villages south of Prophetstown, reported that the various Indian communities associated with the Prophet, except the Kickapoo, had turned against Tenskwatawa in 1809. The French traders fashioned a story about how the Prophet "had always declared that the least violence which would be offered to him, or his followers, would be punished by the immediate interposition of the Great Spirit who would not fail instantly to destroy the Perpetrators of so great a Sin."¹⁶ A few Ottawas and Ojibwas planned to test the Prophet's powers by killing an Indian woman within Tenskwatawa's village. The Prophet's doubters killed a woman just outside of his hut; traders reported that the rebellious Ottawas and Ojibwes fled unharmed, convinced that the Shawnee leader was a fraud. Upon hearing this story, Harrison considered reversing an earlier decision to call out two companies of the militia, but he "thought it best not to

¹⁶ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, April 26, 1809; Reel 3, 399.

disband them until [he] heard something decisive from Governor [Meriwether] Lewis.”¹⁷ Dubois used the story from the subordinate traders to influence Harrison. Dubois told Harrison that the murdered Indian woman had been killed by “by Some of the Prophets Party to carry on the deception and to prevent us from taking the alarm at the force he is collecting and which he pretends is to protect him against the Chippiwas [sic] and Ottawas.”¹⁸ Dubois reassured Harrison that there was no truth to the rumor that the Ottawa and Ojibwe Indians had defected from Prophetstown. Peter Lafontaine supported Dubois and told Harrison that the Prophet “and his followers had determined to commence hostilities as soon as they could be prepared & to ‘sweep all the white people from the Wabash and white River’” after which they intended to attack the Miamis.”¹⁹ In response, Harrison readied the militia. The physical act of marching men through the streets of Vincennes made the Indian threat very real to the local residents because such preparations spoke of the likelihood of an Indian attack. By mid-May, Harrison received information that the Ottawas and Ojibwes had indeed left Prophetstown, entirely dispelling “all apprehension of Indian hostilities.”²⁰ Although the intelligence concerning the Prophet remained contradictory, the defensive preparations convinced many non-Indians that the Prophet was indeed a threat. Neutral Indians found themselves compelled to ally with the Americans or the Prophet, which only inflamed relationships further by convincing Harrison that a larger threat existed.

The French traders influenced Harrison’s policies towards Prophetstown far more than historians have previously considered. The fact that DuBois and LaFontaine, two

¹⁷ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, April 26, 1809; Reel 3, 400.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 409.

²⁰ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, May 3, 1809; Reel 3, 409, WHH to John Johnston, May 4-12, 1809; Reel 3, 411.

men with connections to the Miami Indians, challenged what turned out to be credible information regarding the Ottawas and Ojibwas at Prophetstown may have been a product of their personal relationships with the Miami Indians. The French had long-standing relationships with the Miami Indians and likely shared their vision of Prophetstown even if it was not entirely objective. Michel Brouillet estimated Prophetstown's population to be near 3,000 people, an estimate Harrison relied on to characterize the Prophet's power. Brouillet eventually admitted his error and suggested that there were only 650 warriors at Prophetstown, which meant the population of the town was likely less than two thousand, if that.²¹ The information he provided was inaccurate and unreliable and that forced Harrison to question the competency of these traders at times.

Harrison openly challenged Brouillet's value as a spy and replaced him with Jean Baptiste LaPlante in the summer of 1810. The governor sacked Brouillet because he wanted "to Procure correct intelligence [sic]" and replaced Brouillet with LaPlante who had lived among the Potawatomes near Prophetstown.²² LaPlante did not speak English and had always been engaged in the Indian trade, which made him an excellent choice to spy on the Indians at Prophetstown. Harrison felt that the Indians would not consider him "much attached to the American Government." Not only did the Indians know that Harrison employed Brouillet, but the governor was "not satisfied with Some part of his conduct."²³ Although Harrison questioned Brouillet's intelligence regarding Prophetstown, he did not alter his policies.

²¹ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, May 3, 1809; Reel 3, 409, WHH to John Johnston, May 4-12, 1809; Reel 3, 411. WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, June 6, 1811; Reel 4, 541.

²² WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, June 6, 1811; Reel 4, 541.

²³ *Ibid.*

Harrison and the Americans simply had no other option but to ask the French traders to spy on the Prophet. There were very few Americans who were as capable as the French go-betweens. Although frustrated by their reliance on the French, Harrison believed that the French, like the Indians, would eventually disappear from the valley. The French, however, saw the Prophetstown affair as an opportunity to maintain their influence in the region. By characterizing Prophetstown as a threat to the Americans, the French hoped that Harrison would chase Tenskwatawa out of the territory. Without the Prophet chastising Indians for associating with European Americans, the French would once again profit from the Indian trade. Harrison believed that the influence the French had on his policies was negligible. Allowing the French to play a role in Indian affairs would, in the end, aid the Americanization of the territory. Despite their fears of the Indians nearby, the Americans refused to unite with the French and instead sought to reshape the cultural, rather than racial, identity of Vincennes.

Slavery and Indians

The Americans had spent much of 1807, 1808, and 1809 arguing about slavery by petitioning Congress and members of the executive branch, and by attacking each other in *The Western Sun*. The debate became for more contentious as the election for territorial representative to Congress approached in late 1809. The debate began with tepid articles stating various cases for slavery, but increased in intensity as the factions argued about the foundations of American nationhood, particularly the method and ideological justifications for territorial expansion. Each side constructed a version of Jeffersonian-Republicanism to defend their stance on slavery, focusing on issues like

religious rationale for slavery, the ways in which slavery would affect European American labor, and the implications of these issues for Revolutionary republicanism.

Badollet spoke of maintaining “free and independent men” in the territory, a point defended by his fellow anti-Harrisonians. One anti-Harrisonian argued that the “stocking of [the territory] with herds of negroes the now poor would become indigent, because in proportion as the negroes increase in our territory, the price of labor will assuredly decrease,” causing the “hard working poor white man” who earned 50 cents per day for his family to be displaced by the slave earning no more than 25 cents.²⁴ Slavery would “tarnish the fame of our growing country, hitherto held up as the asylum of freedom!!”²⁵ A loyal Harrisonian, Benjamin Parke claimed that slavery was necessary in the territory because a class of laboring poor did not exist in the area. Residents were “too proud and independent to be day labourers.”²⁶ Slaves were like spinning machines and printing presses – they were tools necessary for the advancement of industry and the creation of a competitive and open market. If one restricted invention and progress, one courted aristocratic autocracy. Legalizing slavery allowed Americans to shape their own futures by creating the tools through which they could succeed. Parke argued that God had ordained slavery by favoring slave owners Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and vowed to “unmask [the] gentlemen” so that the public could “behold [them] in all [their] naked deformity.”²⁷ According to Badollet, Parke laid the groundwork for a factionalized Vincennes.

Alarmed at the approaching destruction of all his [Harrison’s] hopes[,] . . . he [Harrison] formed with Judge Park & Randolph a Caucus wherein were written &

²⁴ “For the Western Sun,” *The Western Sun*, February 7, 1808.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1808.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ “For the Western Sun,” *The Western Sun*, February 7, 1808.

whence flew in every direction the most abusive and artful pieces. Parke whose republicanism had been neutralized in the Governor's atmosphere, did not disdain at the nod of his master to descend from his elevated station, to enlist in the ranks, nay to place himself at the head of a faction.²⁸

The factions refused to compromise on the issue and hoped that the election would settle the debate.

The factions viewed the upcoming election for territorial representative to Congress as a referendum on the slavery issue. As the territorial election neared, the anti-Harrisonians focused on differentiating the pro-Harrison candidate Thomas Randolph, from his first cousin, President Thomas Jefferson. Associating with Jefferson played well among the voters of the territory, who were increasingly fearful of the aristocratic tendencies of the Federalists. The anti-Harrisonians saw Randolph's political principles as "diametrically opposed to those of Jefferson."²⁹ Dr. Elias McNamee even labeled Harrison a Federalist, recalling his role as a delegate to Congress from the Northwest Territory when, according to McNamee, Harrison advocated Federalist principles like the need for a standing army. To McNamee, such a position reflected "the extravagant measures of John Adams's administration." McNamee also reminded people that former President John Adams "made [Harrison] governor of Indiana."³⁰ By characterizing Harrison as a Federalist and then associating Randolph with him, the anti-Harrisonians hoped to undermine Randolph's Jeffersonian connections and convince people to not vote for him. The election was extremely close – Jonathan Jennings, an anti-slavery advocate and friend to Badollet received 428 votes to Randolph's 402. Jennings had

²⁸ Badollet to Gallatin, November 13, 1809.

²⁹ *The Western Sun*, May 13, 1809.

³⁰ *The Western Sun*, May 13, 1809.

refrained from the newspaper debate, largely because he was busy campaigning throughout the territory.

French settlers flooded Vincennes on voting day because territorial laws allowed them to cast their vote outside their township.³¹ They used the occasion to reconcile old disputes and to join in a raucous celebration that proved increasingly important to the French community. The French men would settle their disagreements through feats of strength that ended when a man cried “Hold, enough!”³² Hundreds assembled in the French sector of town near the intersection of Third and Main Streets to witness nearly a dozen fights and to join in the merriment of election day. The French who voted no doubt played an important part in Jennings’s election. Not only had the Harrisonians lost the electoral battle over slavery, but the French reminded the Americans that they had not pushed the French out of the area either.

The Harrisonians’ defensive nature furthered the factionalism in Vincennes after Thomas Randolph lost the election.³³ The Harrisonians became obsessed with Randolph because of their distaste for the anti-Harrisonians. Randolph served as the symbol of the Harrisonian policies and his defeat forced the Harrisonians to find new avenues to shape territorial politics. They feared what might happen to their influence in the territory now that they had lost the election, especially once Jennings began campaigning against Harrison in the halls of Congress. Jennings called for a six-part investigation of the governor in an attempt to negate the governor’s reappointment. At the same time, John Johnson authored an article in *The Western Sun* claiming that Harrison dissolved the

³¹ Mary A. Brouillette, “The Creole (French) Pioneers at Old Post Vincennes.” A Product of Federal Writers Project District #4 (Vincennes Office), 238-246.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ralph D. Gray, *Indiana History: A Book of Readings* (Indiana University Press, 1995), 66.

territorial assembly, a right given him in the Ordinance of 1787, when it failed to meet his expectations. Johnson's article echoed similar accusations offered by McNamee in a letter to the President of the Senate. The anti-Harrisonians recognized the governor's right to dissolve the assembly, but felt that he had abused his power. In desperation, the Harrisonians sent Johnson's article throughout the territory in order to garner support against their "malicious" and "vapid" enemies, but it had little effect.³⁴ The letter only further angered the Harrisonians who were distraught over their loss in the territorial election. The reassigning of the western counties to Illinois Territory in February of 1809, as well as the more democratic political atmosphere, isolated and marginalized Harrison thereafter.³⁵ While the Harrisonians once sought to construct a society around slavery, they were now fighting to maintain any sort of political power.

Following the election, Harrison approached Badollet after discovering that he had circulated an anti-slavery petition throughout the territorial counties. Their heated discussion dampened what had been a friendly relationship. Harrison took personal offense to the petition and remonstrated against Badollet in a letter to Albert Gallatin. "I demanded of him only as the price upon which my confidence and friendship would be restored an avowal that it was not his intention to condemn the *Motives* under which I had acted in signing the law – This avowal was however not given & a distant & cold politeness succeeded to our former intimacy."³⁶ The governor attributed much of Badollet's behavior to his association with McIntosh, who, according to Thomas

³⁴ Harrison to Thomas Randolph, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3 645. Thornbrough and Riker, eds., *Journal of the General Assembly of Indiana Territory*, 268, 314.

³⁵ Andrew R. L. Cayton in *Frontier Indiana* states that, "Congress declared that the territorial delegate and the members of the legislative council would hereafter be elected by the people rather than by the house of representatives. In addition, the legislature was to decide how to apportion seats in the lower house. These measures, combined with a reduction in the property qualifications for voting the previous year, amounted to a significant opening of the political system in the Indiana Territory." 248.

³⁶ Harrison to Gallatin, *WHH Papers*, August 29, 1809; Reel 3, 404.

Jefferson, was the leader of the French faction in Vincennes. Many Harrisonians believed that McIntosh had swung the election for Indiana territory's congressional representative to Jennings.³⁷ Harrison believed that McIntosh manipulated Badollet because "there was not a man on earth more easily duped."³⁸ Claiming to protect Badollet, Harrison said that he had "prevented a petition being sent from this county signed as I am sure it would be by at least four fifths of the citizens for the removal both of the Register [Badollet] & Receiver [Ewing]."³⁹ Harrison's post-script comment to Gallatin shows just how angry he was at the possible ramifications of Badollet's behavior, reminding Gallatin that there were people in Vincennes intimately connected to Jefferson, specifically Thomas Randolph. He wanted Gallatin to know that he had connections in D.C. as well and claimed "Ewing's disposition for tatling & scandal will . . . be the cause of" Thomas Randolph's cousin John Randolph "calling upon you for an explanation." John Randolph was an influential Virginian Congressman who supported slavery. Harrison also hoped to turn Gallatin against another anti-Harrisonian, Nathaniel Ewing, claiming that, E [Ewing] said some time since at a tavern that you had informed him that Mr. J. Randolph [second cousin to Jefferson] was known to be entirely under British influence--& may probably have communicated it to his relation—altho' he declared his disbelief of the story at the time.⁴⁰ Gallatin defended Badollet and said that he had never made any comment about John Randolph. In his anger, Gallatin failed to

³⁷ Jefferson to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, January 30, 1808; Reel 3, 105; Jonathan Jennings beat Thomas Randolph in the election 428 votes for Jennings, 402 for Randolph, and 81 for John Johnson. *The Western Sun*, July 8, 1809.

³⁸ John Louis Badollet, Albert Gallatin, and Gayle Thornbrough. *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1963), 107. Harrison to Gallatin, August 29, 1809.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ John Louis Badollet, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836*, 107. Harrison to Gallatin, August 29, 1809.

sign the terse letter. To Harrison, Badollet was now an enemy. To Badollet, Harrison was a “moral cameleon” who had “greatly impeded” the settlement of the territory and “filled it [with] intrigue and discord.”⁴¹

Before the election, the anti-slavery men had allied with the pro-slavery Illinois factions in favor of territorial division. The residents of Illinois would win division from Indiana Territory and construct a government more responsive to their needs, while also legalizing a defacto form of slavery.⁴² The anti-Harrisonians benefited because Harrison lost a large group of pro-slavery supporters, leaving the Harrisonians “on the defensive.”⁴³ It was in this context that Badollet and Ewing circulated their anti-slavery petition, which placed greater pressure on the Harrisonians to defend their political legitimacy. Badollet said Harrison “became enraged against Ewing & [himself], accustomed to a blind devotion to his mandates; he could not conceive such independence, such rebellious boldness.”⁴⁴ Harrison’s anger was understandable, considering that he had experienced a drastic decline in his ability to govern the territory on his terms.

Harrison’s desperation during this period may have influenced his handling of Indian affairs, something Badollet noticed during the previous months. Harrison’s desire

⁴¹ John Louis Badollet, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836*, 107. Harrison to Gallatin, August 29, 1809, 114. Badollet to Gallatin, November 13, 1809.

⁴² Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the founders: race and liberty in the age of Jefferson* (M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 73. Finkelman states that in 1809, “the new Illinois Territory adopted the statutes that had supported slavery and servitude in Indiana Territory.” In fact, Illinois Territory prohibited free blacks from immigrating into the territory.

⁴³ Philbrick, ed, *The Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809*, xxx. Harrison had lost the western counties currently in present-day Illinois and Wisconsin; these counties were heavily pro-slavery. Harrison continued to fight the territorial assembly and political factions within the region and as a result, “the Assembly instructed the delegate of the territory in Congress to procure a repeal of the absolute veto power, as also of the powers to prorogue and dissolve the Assemble, giving him only the powers held by the President of the United States.”

⁴⁴ John Louis Badollet, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836*, 114. Badollet to Gallatin, November 13, 1809.

to see the residents of Indiana territory elect Randolph to Congress rather than Jennings had so absorbed the governor that he did not mobilize the militia effectively in the face of a possible Indian war. Both Meriwether Lewis and William Wells had warned Harrison of a possible Indian war, but rather than sending emissaries throughout the region, Harrison “posted two companies . . . four miles from Vincennes, where they spent the working season in sloth and idle mockery of military manoeuvres.”⁴⁵ The anti-Harrisonians were especially angry at this because the militiamen were not prepared in the event of an attack. While Badollet may have overreacted to Harrison’s handling of the situation, Benjamin Parke, a close confidant of Harrison’s, expressed his fear in early May that the Indians on the Wabash were indeed a threat.⁴⁶ Whether Badollet’s behavior reflected his personal animosity towards Harrison or a fair evaluation of the situation, he nonetheless began to understand Harrison’s political behavior in relation to Indian affairs.

Harrison used the threat of an Indian war to challenge those residents of Vincennes who had undermined his authority. Some people felt that he used fear to propagate a conspiracy in an effort to discredit and marginalize his adversaries. Blaming his enemies for Indian depredations was an easy way for the governor to undermine their support. After several Wabash Indian communities declined to meet the governor during the fall of 1809, Harrison addressed the General Assembly at Vincennes, spreading “the impression and even [hinting] to the Legislature that [he] had met with difficulties in his [negotiation] from the machinations of certain enemies of their country residing at

⁴⁵ John Louis Badollet, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836*, 114. Badollet to Gallatin, November 13, 1809. Badollet to Gallatin, November 13, 1809.

⁴⁶ Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States, vol. 7, The Territory of Indiana, 1800-1810* (Washington, 1939), 650.

Vincennes.”⁴⁷ Harrison suggested that his political enemies had failed to stop his policies in the assembly and had then convinced the Indians to reject his attempts to negotiate treaties. Harrison wanted others to think that the anti-Harrisonians had excited the Wabash Indians against Vincennes in order to destabilize the governor’s leadership.⁴⁸

As the factional strife became associated with local issues surrounding Indian policy, the participants became more desperate, sometimes turning to physical violence. Discovering that McNamee had questioned Harrisonian policies in the newspaper, Randolph challenged McNamee to a duel.⁴⁹ McNamee, a Quaker, refused the duel and had Randolph arrested. He swore to Judge Henry Vanderburgh “that Thomas Randolph of the county of Knox Esquire hath challenged him to fight a duel, and that he hath good reason to believe and doth verily believe that the said Thomas Randolph will take his life and do him some bodily harm.”⁵⁰ Randolph remained on the hunt, finding and attacking William McIntosh in the streets of Vincennes.⁵¹ McIntosh suffered superficial cuts to his face, but Randolph was not so fortunate. McIntosh stabbed him in the back, leaving him close to death for several days. The vulgar rhetoric that had characterized the newspaper debate spilled out into the streets, reflecting the extent to which violence had replaced a balanced discussion of the issues.

The physical confrontation between the factions coincided with more rumors that the anti-Harrisonians had attempted to undermine treaty negotiations with the Wabash

⁴⁷ John Louis Badollet, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836*, 114. Badollet to Gallatin, November 13, 1809.

⁴⁸ Indiana, Gayle Thornbrough, and Dorothy Lois Riker. *Journals of the General Assembly of Indiana Territory, 1805-1815* (Indiana historical collections, v. 32. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1950), 321-322.

⁴⁹ John Louis Badollet, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836*, 119.

⁵⁰ William Wesley Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis: Hammond & Company, 1883), 396-397.

⁵¹ Carter, ed. *The Territorial Papers of the United*, 667.

Indians. Colonel John Small reported that “some abandoned profligate, in the garb of an American, attempted to frustrate entirely the treaty.”⁵² This report not only reinforced the fear propagated by Harrison in his speech to the territorial assembly, but it may have been a ploy to discredit the governor’s political enemies. An American had supposedly informed the discontented Indians that the President of the United States did not agree to the 1809 treaty and that Harrison had negotiated it only to “retrieve his declining popularity.”⁵³ Rather than protect his racial interests, the American had worked with the Indians to undermine Harrison. What happened next is essential to understanding the misuse of Indian affairs. When questioned about his sources, Small named Elias McNamee. When confronted, “McNamee denied ever having told Small.” The Harrisonians attributed McNamee’s denial to yet another anti-Harrisonian trick.

Stout printed this story while also requesting that residents return petitions to his office in favor of the governor’s re-appointment in an attempt to make the governor look well-liked. He owed his job to the governor and shared Harrison’s political ideals. The printer feared that the “envious ambition” of the anti-Harrisonians might show “its demoniack crest, and malignant falsehoods . . . in Washington city,” much like they had “in the Borough of Vincennes.”⁵⁴ Like his fellow Harrisonians, Stout was well aware that the governor had grown extremely unpopular in the territory, but the editor described Harrison’s declining popularity as a myth, claiming that those who supported the governor constitute[d] a majority of nine tenths of the Territory.”⁵⁵ People throughout

⁵² The treaty of which Small speaks is an addendum to the Fort Wayne treaty of 1805. By a Treaty at Ft. Wayne, Governor William Henry Harrison acquires 2,900,000 acres of land in the Wabash and White River valleys. *The Western Sun*, November 18, 1809.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *The Western Sun*, November 18, 1809.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

the Ohio Valley and eastern seaboard might read reprinted articles from *The Western Sun* and Stout hoped that his characterization of Vincennes would reflect well on the governor.

Stout's claim ignored the fact that most residents of the territory sought to expel Harrison from power. Hundreds of settlers from Knox, Clark, Randolph, St. Clair, and Harrison counties petitioned congress for the removal of Harrison in favor of a governor who was "in principal opposed to slavery."⁵⁶ The division of the Illinois country from the territory left Vincennes as the last vestige of Harrisonian policies.⁵⁷ Harrison still exercised a great deal of influence in the territory, specifically in Indian affairs, and the anti-Harrisonians believed that replacing Harrison with an anti-slavery advocate would likely stop the political intrigue and violence.

To that end, the anti-Harrisonians may have delayed the governor's reappointment, something the governor recognized. McNamee wrote the vice-president and listed Harrison's offenses, including the governor's attempt to help his friends by aiding their efforts to profit from land speculation, slavery, and by cheating the local Indians. Apparently, Harrison had ignored the law restricting Indian agents and superintendents of Indians affairs from engaging in trade related activities with the Indians. He "engaged in a mercantile partnership with the contractors for furnishing Indian provisions" and profited from it by switching similar local goods for the higher-quality goods supplied by the government.⁵⁸ McNamee did his best to characterize

⁵⁶ Carter, ed. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 703.

⁵⁷ The western portions of Indiana Territory, while more supportive of slavery, felt that they were not represented in the territorial government. Francis Philbrick states that the governor's "appointments to territorial offices were indeed made exclusively from his intimates of Knox County." In Francis Philbrick, *The Laws of Indiana Territory*, lvi

⁵⁸ Carter, ed. *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 682. – McNamee to the President of the Senate (Vincennes, December 12, 1809).

Harrison as motivated by profit, not by a desire to protect the citizens of the territory. Although the anti-Harrisonians lacked proof to substantiate their claims, they continued to characterize Harrison's Indian policy as corrupt. Harrison contacted Gallatin about McNamee's attempts to undermine himself and his supporters. The letter, however, departed from Harrison's typical professional and diplomatic tone. He attacked Badollet, Ewing, McIntosh, and others in an effort to determine the extent of their influence on Gallatin and other Washington politicians. Harrison knew that the letters and complaints had helped delay his reappointment that was several months late by November 1809.⁵⁹

Amidst the calls for Harrison's replacement, Randolph traveled to Washington D.C. to protest the election results.⁶⁰ The territorial election committee had declared unanimously that Governor Harrison lacked the authority to hold the territorial election from which Jennings had emerged victorious.⁶¹ After making his case, Randolph left the federal capitol confident that Congress would overturn the election and give him the advantage over Jennings for the next election; however, the House of Representatives refused to do so.⁶² Jennings was astonished by the efforts of his "great enemy the Governor" to overturn the election, but doing so made some sense considering the changing political atmosphere ushered in by the election of 1809.⁶³

Andrew Cayton refers to these democratic openings as the "revolution of 1808 – 1810," which culminated in Harrison's war-time resignation in 1812. The political changes greatly curtailed the powers of the governor while extending the franchise to

⁵⁹ Philbrick, *The Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809*, xliii footnote 1.

⁶⁰ WHH to Christopher G. Champlin, *WHH Papers*, November 21, 1809; Reel 3, 655.

⁶¹ Dorothy Riker, ed., *Unedited Letters of Jonathan Jennings* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1932).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Riker, ed., *Unedited Letters of Jonathan Jennings* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1932).

more white men. By 1812, “a centralized, vertical system of politics” transformed “into a decentralized, local system.”⁶⁴ Control of the territory rested more with its inhabitants than with the governor and the officials back in Washington. Although federal policy makers may have wanted to replace Harrison for his politics, they could not ignore his success in actively aiding territorial expansion. James Madison reappointed Harrison despite the changing political climate that greatly undermined Harrison’s ability to govern in the manner he saw fit. Furthermore, the governor still had many influential supporters in the region, including several French traders who helped him maintain his influence with the various Wabash Indian communities.

By 1810, Vincennes had so divided over the issue of slavery and the Indian threat that it seemed as though there were two entirely separate Vincennes – one in favor of slavery and against the Indians and the other rejecting slavery and urging common sense with the Indians. The election for the territorial delegate to Congress, as well as accusations of treasonous activities, polarized the town. Jennings, once employed by Stout during the slavery debate, had left the town he described as full of rascals. However, that did not mean that he abandoned his efforts to undermine the Harrisonians. He tried to ruin Stout’s newspaper, which Jennings believed to be Harrison’s puppet. Rather than protect his fellow European Americans, Jennings worked hard to ruin them because they mistreated African Americans and American Indians. Jennings requested that his friend David Mitchell “encourage Mr. Cooper to commence Editor at Vincennes” and thus displace Stout.⁶⁵ Jennings’s idea to ruin Stout failed and *The Western Sun*

⁶⁴ Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana: A history of the trans-Appalachian frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 251 - 252.

⁶⁵ Riker, ed., *Unedited Letters of Jonathan Jennings* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1932). Jennings to David G. Mitchell, January 18, 1810.

continued playing a key role in the factionalism dividing Vincennes largely because both factions relied on the newspaper to fight their battles.⁶⁶

While necessary for the anti-Harrisonians to express their political views, the newspaper and its editor were essential for the Harrisonians to attack their enemies. Some Harrisonians called out John Johnson in *The Western Sun* for apparently trimming on the issue of slavery. Information surfaced that Ewing and Badollet had promised to vote for Johnson if he opposed slavery in the last election. Samuel Caruthers testified before Stout that “sometime after the election in April 1809, he had a conversation with Mr. Albert Badollet, son of John Badollet, relative to his father’s voting for John Johnson . . . [who] was under promise to Ewing and his party to oppose slavery.”⁶⁷ Johnson had earned the enmity of the Harrisonians by challenging Alpheus’s pieces in the paper after discovering that Thomas Randolph was the author. Johnson condemned the Attorney General for descending “from the dignity of his office.”⁶⁸ The two men nearly came to blows, Johnson carrying “a large hickory stick for some days” in anticipation of a fight with Randolph. Randolph armed himself as well, but soon the men re-established a civil relationship, “treat[ing] each other politely in court, and touch[ing] hats as [they] pass[ed] on the streets.”⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Judge Johnson’s dispute with Randolph placed the judge firmly in the “*little* Vincennes faction,” Randolph’s term for the anti-Harrisonians.⁷⁰ Several residents believed that the real threat to Vincennes was the Harrisonians’

⁶⁶ There was one willing subscriber who desired fifty copies of a paper from any independent press, but it meant little because Cooper never started a new press.

⁶⁷ *The Western Sun*, April 28, 1810. General Washington Johnston and Samuel Caruthers depositions to Elihu Stout.

⁶⁸ John Johnson to Alpheus (Thomas Randolph), *The Western Sun*, March 31, 1810.

⁶⁹ William Wesley Woollen, *Biographical and historical sketches of early Indiana* (Indianapolis: Hammand & Co., 1883), 394-397. Thomas Randolph to Captain Samuel C. Vance of Lawrenceburg, April, 1810.

⁷⁰ Thomas Randolph, *The Western Sun*, 1810.

attempts to construct a society with slaves in the territory. Badollet felt that “as long as our Governor is really or is thought friendly to the admission of Slavery, this Territory will know no peace . . . Our next executive ought surely to come from the State of New York or Pennsylvania, no more Virginians.”⁷¹ As long as Harrison remained in charge, his sycophants would continue to challenge, if not attack, the governor’s enemies.

In the spring of 1810, fears surrounding the events at Prophetstown began to trump debates in *The Western Sun*. That spring, tales of western tribes like the Sacs, Foxes, and Kickapoos visiting Prophetstown spread throughout the countryside, alarming countless settlers.⁷² Harrison called Badollet to a meeting and told him that the Prophet intended to attack Vincennes and kill the governor. The Prophet would then attack the other residents. The governor “painted his fears in lively colours and said that if it was not for fear of spreading too great an alarm, he would immediately send his family to Kentucky and convert his house unto a fort.”⁷³ Although Badollet respected the intelligence concerning the Indians, he noticed that most of the men present at the meeting were Harrison’s sycophants. Badollet suspected a trap.⁷⁴ It appeared to Badollet that Harrison had manipulated his followers into asking the governor to order out the militia so that his actions would not appear heavy-handed. Other residents also wanted to send a diplomatic mission to Prophetstown.

Harrison used his authority to attack the anti-Harrisonians who questioned his policies towards the mobilization of Indians at Prophetstown. After hearing about the Indians at Prophetstown, Toussaint Dubois, one of the French traders trusted by both

⁷¹ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 114. Badollet to Gallatin, November 13, 1809.

⁷² R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 83.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 151. Badollet, *Correspondence*, 161. Badollet to Gallatin, June 24, 1810

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Harrison and Badollet, suggested that he visit Prophetstown and inquire about the Tenskwatawa's intentions. Several public officials supported this measure; however, Harrison did not. Badollet discussed the situation with Ewing and Judge Johnson, but they made sure to respect Harrison's authority on the issue, even though they wanted Dubois to visit the Prophet. Harrison decided to send a speech to the Prophet rather than Dubois. Nonetheless, all present at the impromptu meeting believed "that the alarm was unfounded" as the governor's previous warnings.⁷⁵ DuBois said that he would go only "if the Governor would send him," well aware that it was the governor's decision.⁷⁶ Badollet accepted Dubois's answer and then visited Ewing's house only to discover that the governor had ordered "Judge Johnson to be brought before him in the Secretary's office, where he [Harrison] had summoned a number of witnesses, and then and there in an angry magisterial and insulting manner called him to account for his having been with us."⁷⁷ He accused the men of treason and demanded that they abide by his decisions. Ewing said Harrison "exults in the idea that he will make us smart severely for our daring perseverance in opposing his darling and never abandoned plan of Slavery."⁷⁸ The governor's anger towards the anti-Harrisonians was as much a product of their opposition to slavery as it was the anti-Harrisonians questioning his policies. He used his authority in Indian affairs to marginalize his political enemies.

Harrison and his supporters constructed a false sense of support for the governor's policies by speaking for their enemies but also by portraying Prophetstown as militant. Elihu Stout aided Harrison's efforts to isolate his enemies by printing that Harrison had

⁷⁵ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 159. Ewing to Gallatin, June 26, 1810.

⁷⁶ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 151. Badollet to Gallatin, June 24, 1810

⁷⁷ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 159. Ewing to Gallatin, June 26, 1810.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

unanimous support for his policies towards the Prophet. Stout even stated that Badollet and other anti-Harrisonians supported the governor. Harrison did his part and wrote a letter to Secretary of War William Eustis claiming that he had unanimous consent for his Indian policies even though Badollet and others disagreed with the governor privately. Stout's editorials in *The Western Sun* described an increase of Indian militancy in the area. An interpreter among the Delaware reported that the Prophet was hostile and that many Indians had arrived at Prophetstown in support of his measures.⁷⁹ Reports from nearby forts raised alarms at the large-scale movements of Indians towards Prophetstown. Stout claimed that the Wyandots had joined the Prophet and that the conglomeration of Indians at Prophetstown hoped to stop the settlement of European American people in the territory.⁸⁰ Not only had the anti-Harrisonians remained silent in the face of the governor's accusations, but they also had no way of contradicting the information reported by Stout. If the majority of people believed that the Prophet was militant, then the Harrisonians could legally condemn those who opposed the governor's protectionist policies.

The anti-Harrisonians grew fearful at the news and lashed out at men who opposed the governor's policies. Nathaniel Ewing found himself increasingly fearful of the Harrisonians after witnessing the governor's tirade about the treasonous activities in Vincennes. Ewing wrote Gallatin for "protection against the persecutions of Governor Harrison."⁸¹ He apologized for using such words, but asserted that he had been punished repeatedly by the Harrisonians' threats for simply doing his "duty as an officer of the

⁷⁹ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 159; Ewing to Gallatin, June 26, 1810; *The Western Sun*, June 23, 1810.

⁸⁰ *The Western Sun*, June 23, 1810.

⁸¹ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 159; Ewing to Gallatin, June 26, 1810

United States.”⁸² Ewing also complained about Harrison’s use of the militia. The Shawnee Prophet had warned Vincennes that the governor’s “people should not come any nearer to him . . . he smelt them too strong already”⁸³ According to Ewing, Harrison then “raised a dreadful alarm of Indians [and] drafted two companies of militia . . . and stationed them at the upper end of the Town of Vincennes near his house. This shows that he does not believe there is danger or that it is only his own safety he seeks & not the protection of the country.”⁸⁴ Ewing wondered if Harrison’s real intent was to protect Grouseland. There was reason for Ewing to be suspicious of Harrison’s policies towards Tenskwatawa because the Prophet and his people appeared “peaceable” and treated non-natives “well.”⁸⁵ Ewing respected the Prophet’s effort to cultivate corn, raise cattle, fence in boundaries, and share his religious visions, concluding that the disturbances, if any, were in conflicting religious ideology. The Prophet did not have any “intention to meddle with the whites” and that many of the Indians believed that Harrison intended “to make war on them.”⁸⁶ Ewing hoped to convince Gallatin of Harrison’s guilt with evidence that Ewing had collected regarding the governor’s behavior, and enclosed a letter from Harrison and Judge Johnson in his correspondence to Gallatin. It was one thing to question the governor’s policies, but something entirely new to gather information that accused the governor of wrongdoing.

The certificate from Judge Johnson supports Badollet’s statements about the meeting with DuBois and Harrison’s subsequent tirade about treasonous American activities. On the night when Badollet spoke with DuBois, Ewing and Judge Johnson

⁸² Badollet, *Correspondence*, 159; Ewing to Gallatin, June 26, 1810.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *The Western Sun*, June 26, 1810.

⁸⁵ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 159; Ewing to Gallatin, June 26, 1810.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

were on their way to complete some business at Colonel Francis Vigo's residence when they stopped at Badollet's office for no more than fifteen minutes. The judge noticed Mr. McIntosh, A. Marshal, P. Rieue, J. Caldwell, E. McNamee, John Johnson (the judge's son), and a few others, all of whom had opposed slavery or the governor's policies. Judge Johnson stated that "[t]he conversation turned on the common report of the Indians being hostile it appeared to be the general opinion of those present that there was no truth in the report which coincided with my own."⁸⁷ He heard the discussion over Dubois and suggested that, "it would be well in doing this not to infringe on the prerogative of the Governor as he had the exclusive superintendence of Indian affairs. McIntosh and some other present said [they] did not intend to interfere with the proceedings of the Governor in any respect whatsoever."⁸⁸ According to Johnson, there was no ulterior motive behind the meeting and all of the men present recognized and respected Harrison's authority in the matter. True or not, the information given to Gallatin by Badollet, Ewing, and Johnson demonstrates that several influential residents of Vincennes questioned Harrison's policies towards the Indians at Prophetstown. Conspicuously absent from this "treasonous" group was General Washington Johnston, who had opposed slavery in the newspaper debate, but then regained the governor's favor and protection by submitting a resolution to the assembly early that year in favor of the governor's reappointment.⁸⁹ It was becoming increasingly obvious that Harrison's personal relationships influenced his handling of public affairs.

⁸⁷ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 159; Judge John Johnson to Albert Gallatin, June 26, 1810.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ The Assembly Journal states that John Johnson submitted the resolution but that is incorrect because Johnson was adamantly opposed to Harrison. General Washington Johnston submitted the resolution in order to gain favor with the Harrisonians again. Both the Harrisonians and anti-Harrisonians accused him of trimming.

While some residents tried to confront the Indian problem, most feared that doing so would only earn them Harrison's retribution. Early that summer, John Johnson organized a meeting of Vincennes citizens after two Frenchmen arrived from Fort Wayne bearing a message from a French spy who had been living in Prophetstown.⁹⁰ Though everything appeared to be quiet at Prophetstown, Michael Brouillet had learned that a grand council was to take place between the Prophet and the four hundred warriors in residence.⁹¹ Stout printed Brouillet's story along with estimates of Prophetstown's military capability. He also printed Johnson's request that all citizens of Knox County attend a meeting "at the court house in Vincennes . . . to consult upon the best plan of avoiding the threatened war with the Indians, & of securing their several families."⁹² Johnson suggested forming a committee of men who would sound alarm if an attack did take place. The citizens ignored Johnson's suggestions until General Washington Johnston suggested that the governor attend the meeting. Most citizens refused to risk discussing Indian affairs without Harrison present - they had read about his tirade against Badollet's faction.⁹³

The tenor of the meeting changed entirely once Harrison arrived. Several of his supporters, including John Gibson and William Prince, took charge and reiterated Johnson's suggestions, which the committee "unanimously adopted." Harrison and his supporters then passed a resolution concerning their political enemies. They concluded that "certain individuals in calling public and private meetings for the purpose of

⁹⁰ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 87-88. Stout calls them "two young Frenchmen" but provides no names or markers of identity.

⁹¹ Stout does not explain why Mr. Brouillet knew about the council, but it is possible her heard about it while trading with Indians. He was accused of being a spy by the Prophet

⁹² *The Western Sun*, June 23, 1810

⁹³ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 156; June 24, 1810

adopting measures relating to the present crisis, have been dictated rather by personal enmity to the Governor, than motives of public benefit, and that they deserve public execration.”⁹⁴ The Harrisonians’ suggestion that Johnson’s meeting was politically motivated lacked merit because he had invited all to attend. There was no ulterior motive; on the contrary his suggestions made practical sense. It was the Harrisonians who used the opportunity to marginalize their political enemies by suggesting that Johnson wanted to cause trouble. In fact, General Washington Johnston used the gathering as a way to reaffirm his relationship with the governor, which Johnston strained during the newspaper debate. Rather than use the gathering to outline a plan of defense for Vincennes, Harrison and his men manipulated the meeting as a way to defend their interests and attack their enemies.

The following week, Stout reported that the Prophet “denied most positively any hostile intention against the United States,” even though he had recently refused an annuity payment of salt.⁹⁵ The Indian agents at Fort Wayne claimed that Tenskwatawa was planning for war.⁹⁶ To learn the intentions of the Indians outside of Prophetstown, Harrison sent Colonel Francis Vigo, a longtime resident of Vincennes, to question the Miami. Upon Vigo’s return, Stout was disappointed in the officer’s findings because Vigo warned him that the British were more involved in local Indian affairs than the Americans had previously considered. Even though the Potawatomie had refrained from an alliance with the Prophet because they feared the destructive outcome of a war, Vigo had learned that a British agent, Matthew Elliot, had established a relationship with the Miami. After delivering goods to Miami settlements, Elliot told them, “my tomahawk is

⁹⁴ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 156; June 24, 1810

⁹⁵ *The Western Sun*, July 7, 1810.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

now raised – keep your eyes fixed on me – but do not strike, until I give you the signal.”⁹⁷ Stout had long been suspicious of the British and this story convinced him that the “formidable banditti,” as he sometimes called the Prophet’s settlement on the Wabash, were under British influence. This information heightened the threat represented by Prophetstown because it suggested that the British were goading the Indians into war that would affect the entire territory. Prophetstown had become something much larger to Stout. It was now the leading edge in a British plot to destroy American independence.⁹⁸

Harrison, however, continued to focus on the threats to his governorship, specifically those residents who were supposedly involved with the Prophet. Harrison’s letter to Eustis in August 1810 reflected Harrison’s suspicions regarding local enemies. Apparently, “[Tecumseh] told Mr. [Joseph] Barron, that it was probable he had been deceived by white people, that he had been informed that the citizens here were equally divided, one half on [Harrison’s] side, and the other on his.”⁹⁹ Half supported Harrison’s land policies and half did not, because, according to Tecumseh, Harrison had “purchased the [Indian] lands against the consent of the Government.”¹⁰⁰ Stout’s personal record of the visit was much the same, concluding that European Americans had told the Indians not to “receive their annuities” so that the “Governor would be displaced, and a good man appointed in his room.”¹⁰¹ It appeared that some Americans had once again placed their interests and those of the Indians above the needs of the “white” community in

⁹⁷ *The Western Sun*, July 21, 1810.

⁹⁸ *The Western Sun*, July 21, 1810.

⁹⁹ Esarey, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 461.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, The government meaning the federal government.

¹⁰¹ Elihu Stout’s record of Tecumseh’s visit, *The Western Sun*, “Negotiations at an Indian Council,” August 12-21.

Vincennes. Harrison used this information against his enemies. He accused William McIntosh of adopting “any measure that would likely do [Harrison] injury,” but then went on to insult the “ignorant french” who supported McIntosh, and named William Wells as the white man to whom Barron referred.¹⁰² Although Harrison accused McIntosh, it appears that he actually thought the white traitor had been Wells. Harrison did not comprehend why some Americans were helping the Indians, a people he felt were inherently predisposed to war. “The mind of a Savage,” Harrison argued, “is so constructed that he cannot be at rest,—he cannot be happy unless it is acted upon by some strong stimulus . . . if he hunts in the winter he must go to war in the summer.”¹⁰³ He believed that his enemies would have no success because the Indians were unable and unwilling to make peace.

Harrison’s attacks appear misguided, for it was unlikely that the McIntosh had any influence among the various Indian communities. His authority rested more with the French, but the governor seemingly connected McIntosh’s power over the French with the Indians. The governor attacked McIntosh because he was an influential leader among the anti-Harrisonian faction. Harrison attacked Wells because he had continually used the opportunities provided by his role as Indian agent to benefit Little Turtle. William Wells’s self-serving attitude had always bothered the governor, and it is possible that Wells had tried to undermine Harrison’s influence in order to strengthen Little Turtle’s, but at the same time Wells needed Harrison to undercut the Prophet whom he perceived as a major threat to Miami hegemony. Even Stout felt that there were more people involved than simply McIntosh and Wells; he suspected a “deep laid scheme of villainy”

¹⁰² Esarey, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 462.

¹⁰³ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, August 28, 1810; Reel 4, 178.

connected to the British rather than simply two rogue Americans trying to hurt the governor.¹⁰⁴ Most likely, Harrison did not know who was responsible. A week after the negotiations, Harrison informed William Eustis that Wells probably had a “close correspondence with the faction here” and that the Weas had named “four persons here, who have advised them to unite with the Prophet and insist upon the late Cession of land being relinquished to them.”¹⁰⁵ Harrison never provided the names of these men nor did he use the information against those responsible for deceiving Tecumseh. The evidence likely did not exist.

The anti-Harrisonians believed that Prophetstown was peaceful and that the Indians were not a threat to Vincennes. The anti-Harrisonians challenged people to be more discerning in their understanding of the Prophet’s intentions because he had “conjured at once a most inveterate habit among his followers, and a no less inveterate prejudice, and had effected more towards civilizing them & thereby seconding the benevolent and philanthropic views of the General Government [U.S. government].”¹⁰⁶ A comparison of Stout’s and Badollet’s thoughts reveal that while the former saw the Prophet as a threat to the United States, the latter saw him as fulfilling the civilizing policies instituted by the American government.¹⁰⁷ The ideological differences between the two were practically insurmountable, and while both sides believed that their actions

¹⁰⁴ Elihu Stout’s record of Tecumseh’s visit, *The Western Sun*, “Negotiations at an Indian Council,” August 12-21.

¹⁰⁵ WHH to Eustis, *William Henry Harrison Papers*, August 28, 1810; Reel 4, 178

¹⁰⁶ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 166. Badollet to Gallatin, September 25, 1810.

¹⁰⁷ Badollet refers to the civilization policies undertaken by the Washington, Adams, and Jefferson administrations wherein they attempted to “lead persons who lived a natural life in the wilderness, relying upon hunting and gathering, to a state of society dependent upon agriculture and domestic arts (spinning and weaving); to this was added instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, and the truths of the Christian religion.” Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 48-49. Badollet actually says “Whoever is conversant with the history of man in his different relations of hunter Shepherd or husbandman, must know that the adoption of agricultural pursuits is no strong indication of premeditated hostilities, no evidence of the existence of a warlike system.” Badollet to Gallatin, September 25, 1810.

were in the best interests of the United States, the Harrisonians accused Badollet's group of treason when they met with Dubois earlier that summer. Badollet remembered that the meeting ended with everyone agreeing that DuBois should visit Prophetstown if the governor deemed it necessary. However, the Harrisonians labeled the meeting as a treasonous affair, "the object of which was to bring the Indians on us."¹⁰⁸ The Harrisonians quickly condemned the conspirators and then spread rumors that "numbers of us [those at the meeting] had a close correspondence with the Prophet and had agreed with him upon signals designating those who were to be sacrificed & those who were to be spared."¹⁰⁹ In order to spread these rumors and to marginalize those leaders who opposed slavery, Harrison convened a grand jury of twelve men to consider the secret meeting the Harrisonians had labeled as treasonous. Three of the "conspirators," including Dubois (a man Harrison referred to as "one of the most respectable Indian traders in this country") were grilled about the meeting and the intentions of the anti-Harrisonians who questioned the Prophet's motives.¹¹⁰ The jury did not agree on an indictment, and thus Harrison's "diabolical" plan, at least in Badollet's eyes, was "at last disappointed."¹¹¹

By the fall of 1810, reports of Harrison's efforts to silence his political enemies had made their way outside of Badollet and Gallatin's personal communication. Gallatin forwarded Badollet's correspondence to someone in the federal government, likely Secretary of War Eustis. Gallatin also wrote a short letter to accompany Badollet's, acknowledging the differences Harrison and Badollet shared over slavery while

¹⁰⁸ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 166. Badollet to Gallatin, September 25, 1810.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Quote from William Henry Harrison to Secretary of War Eustis, *WHH Papers*, April 18, 1809; Reel 3, 392.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

suggesting that a post desired by Harrison not be built until the Indians “be listened to & fully understood.”¹¹² Gallatin, like Badollet, emphasized the importance of paying attention to the Indians, even when Harrison thought otherwise. Gallatin remained steadfast that the federal government prevent the building of a fort north of Vincennes. He did not make his suggestions on a whim. Gallatin’s fear in offering advice to a fellow member of the government was quite apparent when he stated that the letter was “from a friend to his friend, without expectation of its being communicated.”¹¹³ Gallatin worried what Harrison and his supporters might do if they discovered that Gallatin had frustrated Harrison’s Indian policy. Gallatin recognized that the governor could easily turn his anger towards the anti-Harrisonians in Vincennes.

Harrison often viewed the implementation of his policies as a personal referendum. He interpreted opposition as a threat to his governorship, rather than simply a reflection of the democratic political process. When confronted, Harrison usually tried to isolate his enemies rather than to negotiate with them. The territorial assembly repealed an 1805 act that allowed slaves to be indentured when brought into the territory and Harrison went on the attack.¹¹⁴ It was “with a heartfelt pleasure” that Badollet wrote Jennings that “the law about slavery has at length been repealed.” However, this victory for Badollet produced a concomitant reaction from Harrison. In a speech to the assembly, Harrison suggested punishing “those who, by improper interferences, and by circulating falsehoods amongst the Indians, counteract the intentions of the government

¹¹² Badollet, *Correspondence*, 175. Letter to Secretary of War Eustis? December 25, 1810.

¹¹³ Ibid. Gallatin to Eustis, No date Gallatin in all likelihood addressed his letter to Eustis, though this is not known for sure. It does make sense however seeing that Harrison wrote Eustis on October 5, 1810 outlining his plan, which was then disallowed by Eustis and Madison (Eustis to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, October 26, 1810).

¹¹⁴ Philbrick, *The Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809*, 136-138.

and lay the foundation for distrust and enmities which may produce the most serious consequences.”¹¹⁵ John Caldwell challenged the governor, asking him to “lay before the house such documents as were in his possession, proving the existence of a treasonable correspondence between persons of this place and the Indians, & to name such persons.”¹¹⁶ Harrison responded first with confusion, then retraction, and finally by restating his previous conclusions. He offered no proof and actually “gave in writing an errata or correction of his message,” which retracted his statement that residents from Vincennes had associated with the Prophet.¹¹⁷ However, he remained on the offensive and used a less direct method to remind his fellow Americans that they better not challenge his policies. Harrison suggested that the legislature pass a law against such traitorous activity even though there had not been any proof of such behavior. Harrison stated that he was “convinced that much mischief has been done by others, who, actuated by no views that were inimical to their country, have suffered their passions, prejudices, and personal animosities to lead them astray, and to do that which their cooler judgments must condemn. Whilst a penal law would perhaps deter the former, it would be the means as an expression of the public sentiment, of reclaiming the latter to their duty.”¹¹⁸ He hoped, in short, to use the passage of a law to silence those whom he suspected of undermining his authority.¹¹⁹

More rumors of treasonous activity arrived a week later on Christmas Day, although they did not corroborate Harrison’s accusations. Daniel Graham had moved to the territory from Virginia the previous spring and knew only Thomas Randolph in

¹¹⁵ Gayle Thornbrough and Riker, eds., *Journals of the General Assembly of Indiana Territory*, 352-255.

¹¹⁶ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 175. Badollet to Jennings, December 25, 1810.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Thornbrough and Riker, eds., *Journals of the General Assembly*, 352-353, 355.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Vincennes. However, Graham received a letter in the mail “soliciting [him] to join a caucus of traitors . . . to injure the reputation and fame of [the] Chief Magistrate [Harrison].”¹²⁰ Graham opened the letter addressed to “Graham Esqr. Atto at law” because John Johnson had forgotten to include the person’s first name. Another letter arrived for Harrison just four days later, this time from the infamous Daniel Sullivan. He too warned Harrison of the political intrigue within Vincennes, stating that the governor’s enemies were using “every means, however diabolical to affect your removal from office, you may think me your enemy, but find it otherwise.”¹²¹ Both Sullivan and Graham recognized the factional strife within Vincennes even though neither had a stake in it.

The political climate in Vincennes forced the Harrisonians to challenge their critics in order to maintain power. Harrison remained a formidable opponent even though his enemies had gained control of the assembly and negated his pro-slavery policies by skillfully using his authority in Indian affairs to exercise influence within the territory. In March of 1811, Harrison withdrew his recommendation of John Caldwell as a Deputy Surveyor after Caldwell’s actions at December’s General Assembly meeting.¹²² Although Caldwell had done nothing wrong by requesting proof that residents of Vincennes had collaborated with the Indians, Harrison sought to punish him for such behavior. Harrison was aware that intelligence concerning Indian affairs was not subject to debate in the assembly. His political independence in Indian affairs provided a convenient means to punish those men who had undermined his role in civil affairs.

Harrison’s absolute authority in Indian affairs worried several residents. Badollet remained suspicious that Harrison’s rhetoric about Prophetstown was hiding underhanded

¹²⁰ Daniel Graham to WHH, *WHH Letters*, December 25, 1810; Reel 4, 299.

¹²¹ Daniel Sullivan to WHH, *WHH Letters*, December 29, 1810; Reel 4, 303.

¹²² WHH to Jared Mansfield, *WHH Letters*, March 6, 1811; Reel 4, 408.

intentions. The rumors of war and the “parades of the militia” were designed to “pave the way to the treaty, the second to stifle the discontents of the Indians . . . this present panic . . . to induce a belief at Washington that the Prophet . . . is a very designing and dangerous man.”¹²³ William McIntosh accused Harrison of “defrauding the Indians in the Treaties” that he made with them, “making chiefs to answer [his] own particular purposes” by excluding those Indian leaders who might oppose him.¹²⁴ Badollet viewed the Prophet as a peaceful man who had settled along the Wabash in an effort to aid his people. They had “cleared, fenced in and planted in corn,” constructed homes, refrained from alcohol, “[went] regularly to work every morning,” and most importantly, they “appear[ed] to be governed by regular kind of institutions, & rise, go to their meals, and to their rest at stated hours with as much regularity as monks, they seem[ed] to taste the comforts of civilized life.” For Badollet, Prophetstown resembled the civilizing ideal behind Jeffersonian philanthropy. He spoke of a “perfect peace” in the area and of people passing Prophetstown daily, “not only undisturbed but well treated.”¹²⁵

Harrison used racial politics within Vincennes to silence his enemies and prevent debates over Prophetstown. Harrison used Tecumseh’s visit as an opportunity to draw a strict racial line between European Americans and the Indians. Harrison portrayed the Indians as bloodthirsty savages who were searching for a reason to murder the residents of Vincennes. When Tecumseh visited Vincennes during the summer of 1811, Harrison, “clad in a hunting shirt, and addressing [his supporters] by the familiar name of fellow soldiers, drew an animated picture of the meditated bloodshed with such success, that it

¹²³ Badollet’s letters are often very colloquial. In this instance, he refers to Harrison et al. as “head quarters.”

¹²⁴ Esarey, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 509.

¹²⁵ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 185.

was with difficulty, that [his supporters] could be refrained from running to Tecumseh's camp" and slaughtering the inhabitants. Harrison ordered the townsmen to wear hunting shirts during Tecumseh's visit to Vincennes because he believed that the only way to control the "Savage" was by "placing danger before his eyes."¹²⁶ Men, dressed in hunting shirts, lined the street with their weapons, an imposing sight for Tecumseh as he walked towards Grouseland to negotiate with Harrison. The governor then reminded the militia that there were people in Vincennes who were "friends" to Tecumseh, but these comments were nothing new to the anti-Harrisonians. The governor had "conceived an unextinguishable hatred against [Ewing and Badollet], because [they had] assisted in defeating his favorite scheme of introducing slavery."¹²⁷ Harrison could not understand why Americans would be supporting the Indians. While Harrison believed that it was "only by placing the danger before his eyes, that a Savage it to be control'd," he also did his best to direct European American fears of an Indian attack to the Americans who were supposedly aiding the Indians in that endeavor.¹²⁸

Harrison's actions reflected his fears that the anti-Harrisonians might succeed in replacing him as governor. He wrote to Eustis and asked him not to believe that his actions towards the Prophet had been "premature and unfounded."¹²⁹ Harrison reminded Eustis that the President was "too just to censure an officer for an unintentional error or to

¹²⁶ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, August 13, 1811; Reel 4, 713. Harrison writes in his letter, "Heedless of futurity, it is only by placing the danger before his eyes, that a Savage it to be control'd. Even the gallant Tecumseh is not insensible to an argument of this kind. No courtier could be more complaisant, than he was upon his late visit. To have heard him one would have supposed, that he came here for the purpose of complimenting me. This wonderful Metamorphosis in manner, was entirely produced by the gleaming & clanging of arms, & by frowns of a considerable body of hunting Shirt men, which accidentally lined a road, by which he approached to the council House.

¹²⁷ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 188.

¹²⁸ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 188.

¹²⁹ Harrison to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, July 10, 1811; Reel 4, 629.

lend a favourable ear to the calumnies” produced by the governor’s enemies.¹³⁰ The governor also sought out the support of the religious men of Vincennes in order to legitimize policies that had come under attack. He had succeeded at intimidating Tecumseh, but had failed to silence the anti-Harrisonians, which fueled his fear that Madison might “censure” him.¹³¹ The Presbyterian Reverend Samuel T. Scott and the Baptist minister Alexander Devin formed a committee to draft a letter advocating an attack on Prophetstown. The anti-Harrisonians viewed the committee as “too ignorant to be consulted on public matters” because the men had not played any role in policy decisions or diplomatic negotiations.¹³² Harrison supported the committee, of course, but Badollet viewed it “one of the tricks” of the “immaculate governor,” who used these men like “puppets.”¹³³ The committee addressed a letter to President Madison claiming that the governor’s measures against the Prophet had stopped the “destruction of this place, and the massacre of the inhabitants.”¹³⁴ Reverend Scott, Reverend Devin, Luke Decker, Ephraim Jones, Daniel McClure, Walter Wilson, and Francis Vigo all signed the letter. Vigo’s signature, as well as those of Scott, Devin, and McClure added great legitimacy to the note. Three were ministers or associated with missionary work and Vigo had acquired great standing in the town after aiding George Rogers Clark in his campaign against the British. Vigo and Decker were both adamantly pro-slavery and Scott and

¹³⁰ Harrison to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, July 10, 1811; Reel 4, 629.

¹³¹ Earlier that year, Jonathan Jennings had written to someone that he planned to the governor. “The governor is very unpopular here and daily becomes more unpopular – I have received depositions and certificates with charges against Harrison and have shwen [sic] them to several members of Congress and they all tell I am bound to give them their usual cause and declare he ought to be out of office – His political career is ended. I shall lay the groundwork of an impeachment before ten days. The above is confidence until I see you.” Jonathan Jennings and Dorothy Lois Riker. *Unedited Letters of Jonathan Jennings* (Indiana Historical Society publications, v. 10, no. 4. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society, 1932), Jonathan Jennings to unnamed, January 22, 1811.

¹³² Badollet, *Correspondence*, 189.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *The Western Sun*, August 3, 1811.

Devin, accompanied by McClure, may have hoped to court Harrison's favor in order to access federal funds for their missionary work.¹³⁵ Most of these men had a vested interest in seeing Harrison and his policies succeed. Harrison recognized this and used their support to remind Eustis that his policies towards Prophetstown were well founded.

While Harrison and his supporters tried to influence politicians in Washington, they also did their best to send one of their own as territorial representative. Jonathan Jennings suffered because of the Harrisonians during his bid for re-election as territorial representative in 1811. Thomas Randolph went throughout the territory claiming that Nathaniel Ewing and John Badollet, two of Jennings's loyal supporters, wanted "to prevent the Memorial of our Legislature praying for an extension of credit to the purchasers of public lands &c from Succeeding."¹³⁶ Randolph hoped that this would convince the residents, many of whom needed an extension of credit, to oppose Jennings. The Harrisonians went even further by creating election ballots with three columns for voting, the first for Jennings, the second for Randolph, and the last for a "Jenni." Forty-six people voted for Jenni when in fact they almost certainly meant to vote for Jennings. This occurred largely among the French, but Jennings nonetheless survived and won re-election to Congress. Several residents petitioned Congress in reaction to the Harrisonian attempts to defraud Jennings, claiming that even Harrison had interfered in the election "by haranguing the electors at the Polls by riding through the country, and by writing and Sending into [many], if not all the Counties in the Territory violent electioneering

¹³⁵ Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 133.

¹³⁶ Badollet, *Corresponce*, 191.

letters.”¹³⁷ It was to no avail. The Harrisonians lost the election even though they had done everything possible to throw it to Randolph.

Frustrated by yet another political defeat, Harrison turned toward preparing the militia for a violent confrontation with the Prophet. However, he encountered problems mobilizing an effective fighting force, which, by October of 1811, was not nearly as large as he had hoped. Numbering less than 800 men, or just over half of what he expected, Harrison attributed this problem to his personal enemies who had “united with the British agents” and argued that the “expedition was entirely useless, and the Prophet as one of the best and most pacific of mortals.”¹³⁸ Harrison’s excuse may have been another example of him using Indian affairs to hide the events that transpired at Fort Harrison. In October 1811, he marched a force of 1600 regulars and militia eighty miles north of Vincennes to construct the fort. The Americans constructed the fort as a staging area near present-day Terre Haute, Indiana. It was a halfway point for Harrison’s men to prepare, if need be, for an assault on Prophetstown. While laying the foundation for the fort, the regulars and militia argued “to such a pitch that both parties were ready to fall on each other but by the interference of the officers” whose efforts stymied “their mutinous conduct.”¹³⁹ A full-scale fight had nearly erupted within the ranks of Harrison’s army, which likely convinced many militiamen to go back to their farms. Rather than admit his failure to unite the militia, Harrison blamed the intra-community factionalism in Vincennes.

The anti-Harrisonians believed that Harrison’s march toward Prophetstown was a reaction to his failed policies. The only option he had left was to destroy the Indian town

¹³⁷ Badollet, *Corresponce*, 192.

¹³⁸ WHH to Governor Scott, *WHH Papers*, December 13, 1811; Reel 5, 146.

¹³⁹ Henry Swearingen letter, OM 0066, Indiana Historical Society, October 7, 1811.

at Tippecanoe with minimal casualties and hope that the corresponding accolades would reinvigorate his leadership. John Badollet used his son Albert to spy in the activities of the militia, who then wrote his father John a few times during their march towards Prophetstown expressing his anxieties. After reminding his son that he was on that mission “involuntarily” and that he possessed pure morals and “conduct unlike that of many of [his] age,” he asked his son to keep a journal. “I beseech you to do it,” he wrote, because “it will be an useful exercise for you, and will afford me a great satisfaction in reading your unsophisticated reflections on the passing events.”¹⁴⁰ More importantly, the elder Badollet requested that Albert “note down *every* occurrence as they take place, such an exercise [would] have the advantage of making time hang less heavily upon [him].”¹⁴¹ John Badollet’s requests to his son may have indeed been part of his larger effort to undermine the governor given his actions during the previous months. The anti-Harrisonians doubted claims that the Prophet and his brother planned a massive attack, which is why they questioned the intelligence behind an article in the *National Intelligencer* reporting Tecumseh’s plan to sack Vincennes.¹⁴² Badollet could not have said it better when he lamented, “All I fear is that such a madman [Harrison] will goad the Indians into some act of despair to make good all what he has got published of their pretended views. Oh God! Oh God!”¹⁴³ Badollet and his supporters were right. Much of the factionalism within Vincennes and the polarization between Indians and European Americans had been caused by the factionalism born out of slavery.

¹⁴⁰ Badollet, *Correspondence*, 194.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Italics added by author for emphasis.

¹⁴² *National Intelligencer*, September 17, 1811; Badollet, *Correspondence*, 194.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

The factional strife began in the newspaper debate over the ways in which slavery would benefit the territory, but ended in a heated fight over the governor's policies towards Prophetstown. Political affairs initially drove the dispute, specifically the election for territorial representative to Congress in 1809. The anti-Harrisonians ran Jonathan Jennings for territorial representative and the Harrisonians supported Thomas Randolph. However, the opposing factions continued to contest each other even though they both wielded power within the territorial political structure. The Harrisonians hoped to silence the anti-slavery faction by accusing them of aiding the nearby militant Indians, an accusation of treason which would force them out of the political structure. The anti-Harrisonians believed that the governor's aggressive policies towards Prophetstown were simply a ruse designed to reinvigorate his leadership that had declined steadily after the Harrisonians lost the territorial election in 1809. The defining issue for both of these groups had been slavery, but using Indian affairs to challenge each other provided more opportunities to silence their enemies. Petitioning Congress against the use of slaves proved less effective than accusing your neighbors of treason or of instigating an Indian war to defend one's policies.

The Printer

The Prophet's influence not only fueled political and cultural divisions within Vincennes, Tenskwatawa's power altered the daily lives of individuals. This was nowhere more apparent than in the life of Elihu Stout. The stress of frontier life, often extreme in settlements located near Indian villages, served as a breeding ground for destructive rumors and paranoia about Indians waiting to murder American settlers.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Glenda Riley, "The *Specter of a Savage*: Rumors and Alarmism on the Overland Trail." *Western Historical Quarterly* 15: (1984), 433. *The Western Sun*, 1808-1813.

Stout's relationship with Harrison placed the printer in a unique position to inform settlers about the Wabash Indians. However, rather than simply report Indians affairs in an objective fashion as he did other local news, Stout became increasingly obsessed with the Wabash Indians often in direct correlation to Harrison's warnings. Although he never suffered from an Indian attack or watched Vincennes assailed by Indians, Stout's life and identity increasingly revolved around the machinations of various Indian communities along the Wabash. From the early Indian hostilities of 1808 that did little to threaten his safety, to a physical attack initiated by Colonel Jon Boyd after the Battle of Tippecanoe, Elihu Stout's thoughts and actions from 1808 to 1812 focused heavily on Prophetstown and its leader. Deeply involved with the political factionalism over slavery and Indian affairs as a Harrisonian, Stout also found himself engrossed in a personal battle to protect himself and his town. His life and his town changed drastically because of the Prophet.

A resident of Vincennes since 1803, Stout spent the majority of his time raising a family with his wife Lucy, setting up his printing press, and socializing in town. Stout charged two dollars for an annual subscription to his newspaper and he allowed those without access to cash to pay him with food or merchandise. He did well enough in printing to own a slave and donate money to public causes like Jefferson Academy and occasionally played pool at the local taverns. However, he abandoned most of his leisurely activities after the Prophet settled north of Vincennes. Stout initially believed that the Prophet was an "influential Fanatic" who Harrison would use as an "instrument to forward the benevolent views of the Government in introducing amongst the Indians the arts of civilized life."¹⁴⁵ This allowed Stout the time to facilitate the debate over

¹⁴⁵ *The Western Sun*, June 24, 1808.

slavery in his newspaper.¹⁴⁶ In comparison to what was coming, this period of his life was far more relaxed and unburdened, except for family responsibilities. In early January, his wife Lucy gave birth to their son James.¹⁴⁷ No pressing news kept Stout from his home and the joy of his first son, but as the choking winter snows of 1809 melted away, things began to change.¹⁴⁸

Stout's obsession with the Prophet grew steadily during the spring of 1809 due largely to reports that violence had erupted at Prophetstown. The vicious winter had challenged the Prophet's town on the Wabash – too many Indians, too little food, and a heavy blanket of snow assured the quick spread of famine and disease throughout Prophetstown, forcing many Indians to abandon the winter camp. Few Shawnees died, which angered the Ottawas and Ojibwas who had suffered many deaths, which in turn fueled intertribal conflicts, forcing the American government to intervene and settle the disputes.¹⁴⁹ These quarrels, together with news that the Sacs and Winnebago Indians had attacked the newly constructed Fort Belle View, fueled false alarms of an Indian attack at Vincennes. The intertribal conflicts as well as the uprisings farther west frightened Stout. While Harrison told him “the tribes of the Wabash continue firm and unshaken in their attachment to the United States,” the governor also mobilized the militia.¹⁵⁰ Harrison's indecisive behavior confused Stout who was unsure of what to make of the situation.

Stout's growing personal concern about the Prophet overrode the governor's initial reassurances. Accordingly, Stout began to search for information on his own in

¹⁴⁶ *The Western Sun*, June 24, 1808, August 30, 1808 to January, 28, 1809. Auge and fever is the common term for malaria.

¹⁴⁷ Frederic Walker, “Elihu Stout: Proprietor of the Indiana Territory's ‘Fourth Estate.’” M.A. Thesis., Indiana University, 1968. Indiana, *Stout Family Bible Records of Knox County* (1954).

¹⁴⁸ R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 76.

¹⁴⁹ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 78.

¹⁵⁰ *The Western Sun*, April 15, 1809.

order to protect himself. His newspaper no longer reflected a man who simply reprinted articles and reports that he received from the governor. Rather, Stout was becoming a man who sought answers to rumors about the Prophet's intentions. He began waiting on the governor and started interviewing soldiers and post riders when they ventured into town.¹⁵¹ Harrison guaranteed him of "the pacific disposition" of the Wabash Indians and that he did not "apprehend any danger from the more distant tribes."¹⁵² The governor reassured Stout because his spies had yet to return from Prophetstown with news about Tenskwatawa's militancy. Furthermore, the Indian agents at Fort Wayne targeted Wells as the source of frontier animosity, not the Prophet. Nonetheless, Stout remained paranoid about the distant tribes as was evident in his articles. Even when Stout discussed the friendly intentions of the Wabash tribes, he also commented about the hostile Indians farther west.¹⁵³

Stout found himself trapped between the words of his friend the governor and the rumors spreading throughout Vincennes. What was stronger: Harrison's assurances or frontier rumors? It was not as though Stout had abandoned reality and barred himself in his office; rather, he looked to alleviate his fears. During the early spring of 1809, the Prophet and several of his supporters visited Vincennes, promising allegiance to the Americans.¹⁵⁴ Surprisingly, it was the assertions from the Indians and not the earlier professions of his loyal friend and governor months before that convinced Stout that

¹⁵¹ *The Western Sun*, April 29, 1809.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, May 6, 1809.

¹⁵⁴ *The Western Sun*, May 13, 1809.

Vincennes was safe from an Indian attack. The headline of his article that week read “ALL PROSPECTS OF AN INDIAN WAR AT AN END.”¹⁵⁵ Stout communicated that there existed not the smallest probability of hostilities with any of the neighboring tribes.”¹⁵⁶ The Indians denied “very strenuously deny the existence of any intention on their part to attack our settlements, and that their dispersion was attended with some indications of terror and apprehension.”¹⁵⁷ The situation and Stout’s life changed drastically a month later after Harrison’s spies reported that the Prophet secretly planned to attack and destroy Vincennes.¹⁵⁸ Stout’s waffling over the Prophet’s militancy turned into absolute fear that Vincennes might be ruined.

By the spring of 1810, Stout’s paranoia that the Indians would attack his town evolved into an irrational fear that the menace was actually so big as to threaten the United States. After hearing rumors that the Sacs, Foxes, and Kickapoos had visited Prophetstown during the early spring, Stout sought out Governor Harrison for more information about the rumors of Indian mobilization.¹⁵⁹ After several discussions with Harrison, Stout discovered that Vincennes was indeed under immediate danger. Tenskwatawa was not only advocating war against the United States; he had formed a military alliance with the Indian tribes west of the Wabash. Harrison told Stout that an “interpreter maintained by the government amongst the Delawares arrived here, to inform the governor that that tribe had heard of the hostile movements of the Prophet.”¹⁶⁰ It made perfect sense to Stout. The western tribes “had come into [the Prophet’s] schemes,

¹⁵⁵ *The Western Sun*, May 13, 1809.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* If Harrison’s assurances were designed to dispel rumors of conflict then why did he not stop Stout from printing those articles – balanced or not, they possessed information Glenda Riley claims fueled destructive frontier rumors.

¹⁵⁸ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 79.

¹⁵⁹ *The Western Sun*, June 23, 1810.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

and they had agreed with him - that everything that had been done between the white people and Indians, since the Treaty of Greenville, was void and good for nothing, and that they were determined to stop the progress of the white settlements.”¹⁶¹ The threat for Stout was no longer simply against his town. Rather, it was against all of the small American settlements that sat precariously along the American frontier.

The stress arising from the intelligence Harrison provided suggesting that the Prophetstown Indians planned an imminent attack on Vincennes convinced Stout that he needed to be more vigilant. He made a greater effort to gather intelligence about Prophetstown and started publishing his own viewpoints about the Indians in his newspaper. By speaking with the French merchants in town, particularly those who traded at Prophetstown, Stout discovered that the Prophet planned a grand council at Prophetstown. The traders carried news from Michel Brouillet that included an estimate of Prophetstown’s strength at nearly 400 warriors. Stout reported this information in his newspaper while also calling a meeting “at the court house in Vincennes” to “consult upon the best plan of avoiding the threatened war with the Indians” and of course to protect their families.¹⁶² Stout’s paper reflected his desire to mobilize the settlers.

After learning both that the Prophet’s supporters assaulted agents trying to deliver salt to Prophetstown and that the British planned to incite the Indians, Stout allowed his fear to get the best of him. Rather than using the many letters he received at his office to shape the news, Stout let them serve as his news. A man from Kaskaskia wrote Stout about a skirmish between Indians and army officials south of Fort Massac. Though surprised by the Indians, the Americans had killed a few of them. The man feared that

¹⁶¹ *The Western Sun*, June 23, 1810.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

the Indians would retaliate, “for such is the common disposition of this race of human beings, that they never forget to revenge their losses by some act of barbarism.”¹⁶³ Though he did not explicitly endorse the story, Stout included the racial comments. Unlike his other articles that rephrased the intelligence he had received from various sources, Stout allowed this story to stand on its own. The racial commentary likely reflected Stout’s own feelings that were born out of his fear that the Prophetstown Indians might do the same to his town and family.

Indeed, Stout involved himself in the politics of Indian affairs even further. Even though he was a relatively short and meek man, Stout served as one of Harrison’s guards when Tecumseh visited Vincennes that August.¹⁶⁴ He witnessed the great oratorical skills of Tecumseh and heard his voluminous complaints about American diplomacy and treaty negotiations. The meeting took place outside because Tecumseh refused to enter Harrison’s mansion. As the two men argued about policy, the situation grew tense. Harrison was professing his goodwill towards all Indian tribes when Tecumseh jumped up abruptly, as did his entourage.¹⁶⁵ Lieutenant Jennings quickly formed a guard of twelve men to protect Harrison and thwart Tecumseh’s apparently hostile actions. Stout was standing a few feet away from what might be the first battle of a frontier war. Harrison defused the situation by ending the council and returning to his home. The next morning, the council resumed and Stout listened as Tecumseh apologized to Harrison. In a mild manner, Tecumseh explained that “two Americans had paid him a secret visit, one in the course of last winter and one other lately, and had informed them that Governor

¹⁶³ *The Western Sun*, August 11, 1810.

¹⁶⁴ Henry Cauthorn, *A Brief Sketch of the Past, Present and Prospects of Vincennes*. (Vincennes: A.V. Crotts, 1884), 10.

¹⁶⁵ *The Western Sun*, August 25, 1810.

Harrison had purchased the lands without the consent of the government, and that one half of the [American] people were also opposed to the purchase.”¹⁶⁶ The American traitors, William Wells and William McIntosh, claimed that if Tecumseh stopped the Indian tribes from accepting annuity payments then the American government would replace Harrison. In turn, a governor more favorable to the Indians would take his place.¹⁶⁷ While Tecumseh’s confession shocked Stout, he thought it to be true. Stout thought that “the confederacy which has been formed by the Prophet, was the effect of British intrigue” and that “the secret agents of that power, which are known to exist in every part of America, but particularly in the Indian country, gave it all the countenance in their power.”¹⁶⁸ However, Stout could hardly believe “that any American was engaged in this nefarious project – we [Stout] fear, however, that it is but too true.”¹⁶⁹ Angry that his fellow settlers might have actually helped the Indians, Stout did his best to control the emotions boiling inside of him.

Stout’s angry tone lasted weeks after Tecumseh’s visit, culminating in an article in which he expressed his personal feelings about rumors that European Americans had been working with Tecumseh. Overjoyed that the United States government had ratified the Indian treaties of the previous fall, but still bitterly incensed at the treasonous Americans, Stout said that “every lover of his country will estimate correctly the conduct of those, who, by unfounded rumors, have excited discontent among the Indians, and encouraged their opposition to carrying into effect, treaties made with them in the most

¹⁶⁶ *The Western Sun*, August 25, 1810.

¹⁶⁷ Freeman Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe; William Henry Harrison and His Time* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1939), 77.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *The Western Sun*, August 25, 1810. When he editorializes or writes the entire article he always uses the subject “we.”

normal manner, upon just and fair principles.”¹⁷⁰ A week later, Harrison showed Stout a letter from John Johnston, the Indian Agent at Fort Wayne. The letter described a recent council of Indians that had ended prematurely near Fort Wayne because the Indians had not been able to agree upon a time to attack the United States. Johnson also told Harrison “that an attempt was made by a white man, on some of the Miami and Potawatimi [sic] chiefs, to entice them to petition the president to remove Governor Harrison from his office.” However, many of the Indians refused to do so. Other citizens had also pressed the Indians to reject the treaties.¹⁷¹ Stout questioned the loyalty of these men and expressed his hope that they receive just punishment. For Stout, their treasonous behavior constituted a threat to both Stout’s governor and his patriotic pride.¹⁷²

By the end of summer of 1810, Stout’s life had changed drastically. Not only did his newspaper reflect an angry and worried man who had become far more vocal in print, but Stout had also become deeply involved in the actual events at Prophetstown. Rather than play pool, Stout walked around town and spoke to as many sources as he could find. It was not enough for him simply to report the news because in many ways he had become part of it. Standing guard over Harrison when Tecumseh visited, questioning the French traders who delivered news from Brouillet, or pressing post riders and the governor for information, Stout acted first as a paranoid settler and second as a newspaperman. By the following summer he had grown even more confident, demanding that the government not “submit to so flagrant a violation of their sovereignty” on behalf of the Prophet.¹⁷³ As the protector, rather than simply provider of

¹⁷⁰ *The Western Sun*, September 15, 1810.

¹⁷¹ *The Western Sun*, October 13, 1810.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *The Western Sun*, June 22, 1811.

news, Stout demanded action. He also promised the same, stating that he would “spare no pains to obtain and lay before our readers the earliest possible information” about the Prophet and his actions.¹⁷⁴ He was not simply reporting the news - he was experiencing it. It was personal for Stout – it was his town, his governor, and his family whose lives remained in the balance.¹⁷⁵

Stout’s support for Harrison’s policies towards Prophetstown was as much a product of Stout’s fear for the safety of his family as it was a testament to the political views he and the governor shared. In late July of 1811, a large number of citizens called a meeting at the courthouse to discuss the Indian threat. Stout attended, recorded the discussion, and crafted a letter that the citizens addressed to President James Madison. The group passed a resolution with seven stipulations concerning the Prophet, all aimed at showing that the settlement at Prophetstown was a British scheme and that a military force must break it up.¹⁷⁶ In his newspaper, Stout printed the council minutes, the resolutions adopted, and the letter addressed to President Madison. At the same time, Secretary of War Eustis dispatched the Fourth Infantry Regiment from Pittsburgh to Vincennes, instructing Harrison to construct a fort near Prophetstown and attack Tenskwatawa’s forces “if the prophet should commence or seriously threaten hostilities.”¹⁷⁷ Stout could not help feel that he had played a part in getting Madison and Eustis to order military forces into the area. He hoped that the unity expressed by the resolution would lead to a more unified Vincennes, but Harrison’s mobilization against Prophetstown only provided more opportunities for the anti-Harrisonians to attack the

¹⁷⁴ *The Western Sun*, July 20, 1811.

¹⁷⁵ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 102.

¹⁷⁶ *The Western Sun*, August, 3, 1811.

¹⁷⁷ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 104.

governor. Most anti-Harrisonian's balked at Stout's newspaper anyway. They felt it was just Harrison's mouthpiece.

Unaware that Harrison had encountered stiff resistance from his own men, Stout treated Harrison's march towards Prophetstown like a victory parade. He used letters from Harrison and other soldiers encamped along the Wabash for the content of his articles. He headlined them "Army on the Wabash" and described the interaction of John Connor, an Indian interpreter, and a deputation from the Prophet.¹⁷⁸ The letters proclaimed that the Prophet's "tomahawk was now up and that nothing on earth should induce him to lay it down . . . that they might do as they pleased" and a speech "delivered in great rage" by one of Tenskwatawa's followers. Connor claimed "the speaker" was "stamping & foaming whilst delivering it."¹⁷⁹ Including Connor's characterization of the Indian speaker as a wild animal allowed Stout to justify the governor's actions. The governor could not negotiate with a wild beast. Rather, he had to tame it. By destroying the wild Indians at Prophetstown, Harrison would finally place the territory in a position to prosper and Stout would never have to hear of the Tenskwatawa's "banditti" again.

Stout, like most of the European Americans in Vincennes, believed that his prospects were tied directly to bringing down Prophetstown. The French hoped that Harrison's army would drive the nativist Indians from the region and reinvigorate trade between the French and Indians. Two years of increased violence in the valley, coupled with the Prophet's success in restricting trade between European Americans and Indians, strained the French who were already suffering from oppressive American taxes. Equally challenged in some respects were the Americans who divided over Harrison's policies

¹⁷⁸ *Western Sun*, November 9, 1811.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

toward Prophetstown. The anti-Harrisonians believed that Harrison's march north to Prophetstown was really a final effort to regain influence as governor by ridding the territory of an Indian menace.¹⁸⁰ However, the anti-Harrisonians believed that the governor's Indian menace was nothing more than a rhetorical construct used by the governor to belittle his political enemies and gain admiration from Washington. The governor's supporters adamantly disagreed. Months of failed negotiations between Harrison, the Prophet, and Tecumseh convinced the Harrisonians that the only logical policy towards the nativist Indians was military action. The political factionalism in Vincennes had also persuaded the Harrisonians that they were also battling a treasonous faction from within their own town, which they used to legitimize their actions. The Harrisonians believed that an attack on Prophetstown would justify their governance that had become increasingly unpopular while the anti-Harrisonians believed that the Harrisonian vision of Prophetstown was yet another example of a failed and corrupt policy. Conflicting perceptions of Prophetstown prevented the town of European Americans from uniting racially against Tenskwatawa. Their interests were simply too diverse.

In an ironic twist, Harrison had more in common ideologically with the Shawnee brothers than he did with John Badollet and some of the other Americans living in Vincennes. Despite the heated rhetoric between the two men, Harrison and Tenskwatawa shared a similar goal of uniting their towns in order to promote the best interests of their

¹⁸⁰ Jonathan Jennings was trying to impeach Harrison even before the Battle of Tippecanoe. Such efforts coupled with petitions protesting Harrison's leadership and Badollet's correspondence to Gallatin weighed heavy on Harrison. Serving in the army would be far different than serving as governor of Indiana Territory. The army would allow him to assert his authority unilaterally, without having to negotiate with a territorial legislature and factions that hated him. Even Harrison recognized that his future as governor of Indiana Territory was threatened and likely believed that he needed to position himself to join the army for the impending war with Britain.

communities. Both men agreed that Indians and European Americans should remain separate from each other and that inter-cultural associations had been destructive to both their peoples. However, Harrison found himself trapped between his ideology and his mission, for allowing the Indians to identify collectively meant that he would undermine his own attempts to gain Indian lands. By emphasizing the rights of each Indian polity, Harrison pitted Indian groups against each other and negotiated various lucrative land sessions from them. The governor's goals were based in racial ideology, but his methods were not.

Harrison's language became more centered on racial relationships once he decided to move against Prophetstown. Harrison emphasized the racial differences by warning the Shawnee brothers that "all the white people in this country have been alarmed" at the proceedings at Prophetstown and that attempting to unify "all the tribes to the north and west" of Vincennes amounted to a declaration of war.¹⁸¹ His comment was explicitly racial. "All" the whites were alarmed at the assemblage of unified Indians from the north and west. Such a statement overlooked the divisions within both communities that prevented the people of each settlement from uniting racially. Yet, Harrison's rationale drove frontier policy and his racist views proved practically insurmountable. His loss of popularity, Jennings's movement to impeach him, and the growth of a more democratic government in Indiana Territory forced Harrison to use Prophetstown to protect his career. Although Harrison stated that he would rather negotiate than fight, he had argued in several letters to Secretary of War Eustis that decisive action was necessary against the Prophet or the Americans would never settle

¹⁸¹ WHH to Tecumseh and the Prophet, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4 (581); June 4, 1811.

the lands won in recent treaty councils.¹⁸² His behavior, although outwardly diplomatic, was very personal.

Harrison's march toward Prophetstown was more in line with his ideological views on the racial nature of Indians. It allowed him the opportunity to attack the Indians rather than to meet them in council. Rather than spending more time negotiating with the Indians, the governor finally had an opportunity to use a superior military force to disperse Tenskwatawa's wild and bloodthirsty Indians. At the end of October 1811, Harrison, with a contingent of well-trained militia and a contingent of regulars under the command of Colonel John P. Boyd, left Fort Harrison and began making their way toward Prophetstown. No longer would Harrison have to deal with John Badollet's complaints or confront the inept French traders. The governor was finally in control and could do as he pleased.

¹⁸² Harrison to Secretary of War, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 538-693; June 19, 1811; Harrison to Secretary of War, *WHH Papers*, July 10, 1811; Harrison to Secretary of War, *WHH Papers*, July 20, 1811; Harrison to Secretary of War, *WHH Papers*, August 6, 1811; Harrison to Secretary of War, *WHH Papers*, August 7, 1811.

Chapter Four: The Prophet, His Town, and its Image

Much like the pluralistic settlement at Greenville, Tenskwatawa's village at Tippecanoe Creek was not Shawnee. It, like most settlements in the region, was a contested space. The Prophet's view of his town and the town itself are in fact not the same. The latter was a physical reality, the former only a personal vision. Tenskwatawa's rhetoric overshadowed the varying interests of the people living in the town, much like William Henry Harrison's polarizing language about Prophetstown eclipsed the concerns of settlers at Vincennes. Historians rely on the Prophet's characterization of his town as a unified community because few Indians actually described it in the historical record. Furthermore, other Indian characterizations of the settlement, like those of Little Turtle or William Wells, tend to corroborate the Prophet's descriptions. Yet these descriptions reflect the bias of Indian authors interested in using Prophetstown to their own benefit. Prophetstown was in fact a diverse, fluid, and evolving community that lacked a static identity. The complex nature of the town has led some historians to settle for the more simplistic descriptions given by Tenskwatawa and Wells. Exploring Prophetstown's contested internal and external boundaries enables us to evaluate more completely the motives of its residents. It allows us to understand why such a divided town eventually moved toward conflict with the European Americans.

Although some historians have examined the adversarial relationships between Prophetstown and the Wabash Indians, their categories of analysis have taken the Indians out of their geographic and cultural context. Gregory Dowd's analysis frames the regional factionalism as a product of nativist Indians opposing their accommodationist brethren, and while these categories facilitate greater understanding of Indian-European

American relationships, they tend to frame Indians as reactive. Furthermore, the accommodationist/nativist scheme ignores the vastly different histories that Indian communities had with the European Americans. It structures their behavior primarily as the product of racial identities rather than identifying their varying interests in relation to the Americans and each other. Most historians have interpreted Prophetstown's diversity as a product of Tenskwatawa's nativist ideology that focused on renewing Indian culture. However, this ignores how Indians may have used Prophetstown for their own purposes irrespective of Tenskwatawa's larger agenda. By reorienting these categories of analysis to reflect the cultural politics of the individual Indian communities, it becomes apparent that the Prophet's town was not entirely his.

Rather than abandon the nativist interpretive construct, it should be redefined in terms of varying cultural methods for renewal. Nativism was not simply a reaction to accommodationist Indians and their non-Indian collaborators, nor was it a regressive act. It called for a renewal of ceremony and ritual in an attempt to unite and protect disparate Indian communities. Many Indians believed that their suffering "stemmed from Indian spiritual failure."¹ We need to consider the relative nature of nativism and understand how Indian communities protected their interests and asserted their Indianness in different ways. This is especially important when evaluating Shawnee Indian nativism in relation to what Dowd has labeled "Miami accommodationist behavior."² Both groups sought cultural renewal but in diverse ways. It is essential that we identify Tenskwatawa's nativism as Shawnee, as partially a product of his culture's beliefs and

¹ Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 128.

² Ibid.

traditions. To use a Shawnee cultural construct in order to interpret the behavior of non-Shawnees ignores those Indians's own distinctive tools for revitalization.

Characterizing the Indian inhabitants at Prophetstown as collectively nativist overlooks their unique cultural identities and assumes that they united fully behind the Prophet's vision. Entering the Prophet's town did not make one nativist. Nativism at Prophetstown required that the Indians give up alcohol, support racial unity above that of individual tribal interests, and reject Christianity and the corrupting influences of the missionaries. Supporting racial unity above tribal interests proved to be the most challenging of these precepts. Much like the Miamis, non-Shawnee Indian groups associating with Prophetstown found themselves caught between their ethnic and racial interests during a period of great change. Some Potawatomes and Kickapoos in the Wabash-Maumee Valley supported aspects of Tenskwatawa's nativism, but at the same time they continued to live primarily as Potawatomi and Kickapoo Indians in direct contradiction to the Prophet's directives. The Kickapoos continued to war against the remaining Kaskaskians; the Potawatomes did not stop attacking Osage Indians. Following Tenskwatawa did not mean that the Kickapoos and Potawatomes abandoned their own distinct cultural concerns. Prophetstown did not simply represent a division between those Indians who sought to accommodate the Americans and those who wanted to separate permanently from the European Americans; it was also a community divided over traditional cultural practices and leadership roles between varying Indian polities.

These divisions spurred violence at Tippecanoe and prevented the large-scale unification often attributed to the town. Groups like the Wyandots rejected making themselves subservient to Tecumseh's political dictates. The Ottawas and Ojibwas

agreed to not cede any additional lands while rejecting the Prophet's leadership.³ Both groups maintained their communal and corporate identity rather than identify with the racial unity prescribed by the Shawnee leaders.⁴ Shared animosity among the Indians toward continued American expansion did not mean that an Indian community was nativist, but rejecting some of nativist precepts did not make an Indian group accomodationist either. To a large extent, the majority of Indian communities in the Wabash-Maumee Valley were involved in efforts to protect their lands and culture, but on culturally specific terms. In this case, one should not dismiss the varying Indian identities for larger methodological constructs which generalize about Indian behavior.

By differentiating the Prophet from his town, it is possible to understand the divisions within Prophetstown. The polarizing rhetoric used by Tenskwatawa, Tecumseh, William Wells, and Harrison is remarkable for its racial substance, but this focus on racial divides should not overshadow other pictures of Prophetstown. In many ways, the Prophet represented the antithesis of his town. He was relatively sedentary, identifying first as Indian and secondly as Shawnee, and willing to reject all connections to the polluting aspects of European American culture. At the same time, many of his followers migrated seasonally and maintained traditional tribal identities while they traded with European Americans. The Prophet's racial rhetoric was, in part, a reaction to the divisions in his town and not a reflection of a unified town.

³ William Hull warned the Ottawas and Ojibwas on Lake Michigan to refrain from attacking the Prophet at Tippecanoe. He sent speeches informing the Ottawas and Ojibwas "that the Shawanoese were under the protection of the United States" and that an attack on them would be considered an attack on the United States. Hull to Secretary of War Eustis, *Potawatomie File, GABLA*, June 16, 1809. Timothy Willig concluded that the Ottawas and Ojibwa "might have destroyed Prophetstown" had it not been for "the government's pacific Indian policy begun by the Jefferson administration." Timothy Willig, "Prophetstown on the Wabash," *Michigan Historical Review*, 143.

⁴ Alfred A Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 106-107.

I argue that Prophetstown never fully united behind the Prophet's nativist vision and that it never posed a substantial militant threat to the surrounding European American settlements. First, I look at Tenskwatawa's frustrated efforts to establish a nativist Indian community at Prophetstown. I critique the historical characterization of a militant and unified Prophetstown by examining the interests and actions of its residents, namely the Potawatomies, Kickapoos, Ottawas, and Ho-Chunk Indians. Those divergent factions allow me to consider what life might have been like in Prophetstown, including disagreements between the Prophet and his brother and contentious council house meetings in town. Second, I evaluate the ways in which outside Indians, French traders, and the Americans constructed an idea of a militant Prophetstown. I do so by analyzing the intelligence sources on which Harrison relied, starting with Little Turtle and William Wells. These two men provided biased and false information to Harrison in order to serve the interests of the Miamis. I then expand this analysis into an examination of the French traders who also provided information to Harrison. The intelligence on which Harrison relied largely determined his policies towards Prophetstown, which became increasingly problematic after the 1809 Treaty of Fort Wayne, when the town appeared more militantly opposed to the Americans. The unrest was largely created by the massive land cession agreed upon by various Indian signatories to the treaty, and factions of the Miamis reacted by rejecting American overtures in favor of the British. However, most Americans interpreted the behavior of the pro-British Miami as an indication that the Prophet had gained new converts. Lastly, I frame much of the intelligence regarding the Prophet as a product of Harrison's personal biases and the factionalism within the Miami nation during this period. By re-examining the evidence in the context of a

factionalized Wabash-Maumee Valley, it becomes evident that Prophetstown was more of a contested town than a militant settlement.

The Prophet and His Town

In the spring of 1805, Tenskwatawa slipped into a deep trance in which the Great Spirit revealed a plan that would allow Indians to renew their culture. These visions became the basis for Tenskwatawa's community at Prophetstown. A noted historian states that the Prophet had three major goals: "the revitalization of Native American communal life everywhere through the elimination of practices offensive to the Great Spirit, . . . the establishment of a new, separatist sacred community free of corruption, and the forging of a pan-Indian alliance to preserve Indian lands from further white encroachments."⁵ To that end, Indians were to give up alcohol, have only one wife, refrain from dressing in European American clothing or eating their food, abandon the domestication of animals, and avoid trading with non-Indians at all costs. According to Thomas Forsyth, "Indians were to endeavor to do without buying" European American merchandise.⁶ Instead, Indians should "hunt and kill game as in former days, and live independent of white people."⁷ Tenskwatawa also declared that Indians unite politically and militarily in order to resist the destructive forces of European American culture. Tenskwatawa believed that all of his followers were "determined to practice what [he had] communicated to them, that [had] come immediately from the Great Spirit through [him]."⁸ The Prophet argued that Indians throughout North America needed to consider themselves as "one man" so that they could avoid the destructive forces of European

⁵ Alfred Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 79.

⁶ Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, December 23, 1812, in Blair, *Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley*, 2:274-79.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 66-69.

American trade goods like whiskey. However, such unity proved elusive at Prophetstown because factionalism continued to undermine Tenskwatawa's nativist ideals.

Prophetstown's success depended as much on the willingness of the Indians to abide by the Prophet's teachings as it did on Tenskwatawa's leadership. In addition for the chance to trade and rest, as well as the region's spiritual significance, opportunities to hear Tenskwatawa's teachings attracted hundreds of Indians to the area. The core group of Indians at Prophetstown consisted of Ho-Chunk, Kickapoos, Potawatomes, and to a lesser extent Shawnee Indians. The Shawnees numbered less than forty Indians while the Ho-Chunk numbered between two and three hundred and the Kickapoos and Potawatomes near two hundred each. While many of these Indians migrated to Prophetstown in order to hear Tenskwatawa's teachings, they did not arrive as nativists nor did they necessarily adopt and abide by all of his teachings. Indians who visited and lived at Prophetstown did so as much for their own benefit as they did because they supported Tenskwatawa's efforts to unite the heterogeneous Indians throughout the area. Residents of Prophetstown continued to trade with European Americans, ignore the Prophet's teachings in favor of their own traditions, and even domesticate animals.

Despite these problems, the Prophet and his followers constructed a vibrant and fluid town at the confluence of the Tippecanoe and Wabash rivers. At its height, the Indian residents cultivated between 100 and 200 acres of corn in order to feed the seasonal migrations of Indians to the town. The Indians also maintained a small herd of domesticated cattle for that same purpose. Tenskwatawa led many of his followers to

work daily in the “immense field . . . beautifully fenced in” by the Indians.⁹ There were some lodges near the crops that lined the Wabash River, but the center of Prophetstown developed up the hill from the river’s edge where Tenskwatawa constructed the meeting house and storage facilities. A few Frenchmen built their trading houses near the outskirts of Prophetstown, but the Prophet prohibited any trading or consumption of alcohol in or near his town. For the most part, Prophetstown was an Indian community void of outside interference from European Americans.

However, Prophetstown’s isolation did not prevent the Shawnee brothers from establishing a relationship with the Americans at Vincennes. The practical necessities of supporting several hundred Indians at Prophetstown challenged Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh during their first few months in the valley. Although they were busy planting crops during the late summer of 1808, the Shawnee brothers did not have enough harvested food to support their followers and Harrison offered them assistance in order to alleviate their suffering.¹⁰ The governor did so because the local Indians initially assured Harrison that the Prophet intended to live peacefully with his fellow Indians and the European American communities nearby. One of these men claimed that he had never heard the Prophet “give any but good advice . . . he tells us not to lie to steal or to drink whiskey not to go to war but to live in peace with all mankind, he tells us also to work

⁹ John Louis Badollet, Albert Gallatin, and Gayle Thornbrough, *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1963), 159, 166. Badollet to Gallatin, September 25, 1810.

¹⁰ Harrison to Dearborn, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 302. Harrison states, “The part of the Shawanoe Tribe which is attached to the Shawnee Prophet having removed last Summer to the Wabash and being almost in a starving condition applied to me for relief - - this I did not think it proper to afford them to the extent required but as the Annuities for their tribe have been generally engrossed by the Blackhoofs band I offered to advance them provisions to the Amount of one hundred dollars to be deducted out of their next years Annuity.”

and make corn.”¹¹ Residents of Prophetstown were industrious. They shared similar values with European Americans who also emphasized the importance of agriculture. Indian women at Prophetstown cared for the fields of crops while the men hunted for game. The initial discussions between Tenskwatawa and Harrison about farming, worshipping a higher power, and constructing a peaceful settlement were promising in that they reflected shared values and visions that transcended racial divisions.

Despite the initial goodwill between the Prophet and Harrison, Tenskwatawa’s message helped to polarize Indian and European American relations. The Prophet advocated that Indians live completely independent from European Americans by returning to traditional forms of hunting and never trading with non-Indians.¹² In turn, the Great Spirit would return the land to the Indians. European Americans interpreted the growing community of Indians and their efforts to abstain from trading with non-Indians as a threat because Indians were becoming increasingly resistant to European Americans. They feared that his religious mission was a guise for Indian militancy. Tenskwatawa had dealt with the paranoia of European American settlers before at Greenville and did his best to counter their fears. The Prophet told Harrison that he “was spoken badly of by the white people, who reproached [him] with misleading the Indians.”¹³ The Prophet wanted his followers to separate from European American communities in order to foster spiritual growth, but few European Americans saw Indian unity as peaceful.

Tenskwatawa also hoped to convince his own people to respect his authority and teachings. However, the Prophet’s own dictates made governing Prophetstown increasingly challenging. His efforts at centralizing authority by undermining village

¹¹ Harrison to Dearborn, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 302.

¹² Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 66-69.

¹³ Speech of the Shawnee Prophet, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 224.

chiefs in order to make Indian warriors more responsive to his dictates left him solely responsible for their behavior. Furthermore, by marginalizing the village chiefs, Tenskwatawa lost many influential allies who might have helped him control the younger warriors. But even the Prophet's teachings served to undermine his authority. By supporting a much more patriarchal community, he effectively abandoned the council of Shawnee women leaders who traditionally played an important part in diplomatic negotiations.¹⁴ In the end, he could rely only on his own authority. The lack of village chiefs and Shawnee women proved disastrous when he could not control the competing interests within his town.

Various people came to the area to trade just as they always had and the Prophet recognized that he could not necessarily control who ventured into his town. The town was multi-layered in that people from several different cultures lived there, each with their own histories and attachments to the land. The French had traded at Ouiatenon for almost a century when the Prophet settled along the Wabash, and there was little reason for them to leave the area since they profited from the Indian trade. For them, more Indians meant more money. The Miami-speaking Indians had much the same relationship with the area around Ouiatenon and the village at Kethtippecanunk. Settlement patterns had shifted throughout the area for centuries and Prophetstown represented yet another shift in Indian populations along the Wabash. Preaching at Prophetstown gained some converts, but it also proved to be a frustrating endeavor as various Indians and European American traders lived in or near his town and undermined

¹⁴ Alfred Cave, regarding Tenskwatawa's emphasis on a more patriarchal order, states that the Prophet "condemned sexual promiscuity and ordered single men to marry. He declared that husbands should discipline their wives with a rod if they failed 'to pay proper attention' to their work. Women who were so punished were not to bear a grudge." Cave, *Prophets*, 67.

his authority. Speaking to Harrison and forcing him to stop making treaties and allowing traders to sell liquor was a more pragmatic approach. Dealing with the multi-layered history at Prophetstown was far more difficult than negotiating with the American governor who appeared to have total control over his people.

The Prophet was not always capable of supporting the large numbers of Indians who lived at his town. The population of Prophetstown averaged around 1000 Indians, but this number varied regularly depending upon seasonal migrations and disagreements within the town. Although the Prophet's visions attracted new Indian settlers to the area, the physical limitations of the town convinced many that they were better off on their own. The drawbacks to Prophetstown's size were especially apparent during the winter of 1808 and 1809. The heavy snows forced most to live off the stores of agricultural goods rather than to hunt for game. Starvation and disease struck the town, forcing many to eat their horses and dogs. Most of the Shawnees and Kickapoos survived, but the Ottawas and Ojibwas suffered. The agony of starvation convinced many residents that the Prophet lacked the powers he claimed to possess, but it also showed how the Shawnees and Kickapoos reserved food for their own families and communities at the expense of the recent immigrant Indians. This caused great consternation among the residents of Prophetstown. In fact, two subordinate Indian traders who resided at the Potawatomi villages south of Prophetstown reported that the various Indian communities associated with the Prophet, except the Kickapoos, had turned against Tenskwatawa that winter. The lack of food and the self-interested behavior of some of the Prophetstown Indians undermined Tenskwatawa's pan-Indian mission. Some who visited his town left disgusted, discouraged, and dying.

Utilizing Prophetstown for the betterment of one's Indian community at the expense of the other Indians in town was not out of the ordinary. Indians traveled to the town for a variety of reasons. Main Poc settled along the Wabash because of the region's spiritual significance, but Main Poc's religious connection to the region was not the product of Prophetstown. The region near the St. Joseph's River, which they called Sahg-wah-se-pe (Mystery River), was sacred to the Potawatomies. Other lakes and waterways in the valley were important as well, including Manitou Lake.¹⁵ The Kickapoos too shared a spiritual connection with the region before the arrival of the Shawnee brothers. The Wea and Miamis valued the area because it played an important part in the migration story of Miami-speaking Indians down the Wabash River. The Miamis spoke of the first immigrant to the area named Quyoukeetonwee born near the St. Joseph's. He founded a village there that became the traditional homeland for the Wea Indians.¹⁶ Wea leader Lapoussier commented that the "Great Spirit has placed them [Prophetstown] on the choicest spot of ground" which suggests that the area remained spiritually important for the Wea.¹⁷ Associating with the Prophet was as much a sign of individual Indian communities protecting their interests as it was a product of Indians unifying behind the Prophet's ideological mission.

By mid-1809, the settlement at Prophetstown had grown from the initial wave of sixty followers who accompanied Tenskwatawa in the spring of 1808.¹⁸ Hundreds of Indians now lived there, but only a minority did so out of an ideological affinity for the

¹⁵ Timothy D. Willig, "Prophetstown on the Wabash: The Native Spiritual Defense of the Old Northwest," *Michigan Historical Review* 23 (Fall 1997): 125.

¹⁶ Vernon Kinietz, ed., "*Meearmear Traditions*" by C.C. Trowbridge (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938), 4.

¹⁷ Speeches of Miami, Et Al Chiefs, *WHH Papers*, September 4, 1811; Reel 4, 756.

¹⁸ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 67.

Prophet's teachings. The small French trading posts just outside the town and the fertile agricultural lands provided ample opportunities for Indians to trade and live comfortably. While these trading posts challenged the Prophet's requirement that his followers abandon any material and ideological association with European Americans, they also brought potential converts into Prophetstown. Other Indians, like the followers of Miami leader Pacanne, willingly ate, traded, and slept at Prophetstown because it was their traditional territory and because they could access trade there. Tenskwatawa walked by their wigwams that dotted his town, well aware that he could never truly trust many of the Indians living in his town, in particular the Kickapoos, the Potawatomies, and the Miamis. The Potawatomies were especially problematic because they had invited the Shawnee brothers to the region yet they remained relatively independent. From 1806 to 1813, Main Poc challenged Tecumseh's demands for intertribal cooperation by attacking American communities in southern Illinois and Osage villages in western Illinois, even though the Prophet had forbid such action.¹⁹

Main Poc wanted Tenskwatawa to settle at Tippecanoe to bolster his Potawatomi efforts to oppose the Americans. He accomplished two things: Main Poc gathered larger numbers of Indians who opposed the Americans and the Potawatomies gained more support in case the Americans attempted to stop him. Increasing the number of anti-American Indians was especially important in a region dominated by Miamis. Main Poc understood his status as a rogue Indian leader. By convincing other marginalized Indians to come into the region, he effectively leveled the playing field between his community and those who opposed him.

¹⁹ James A Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 194-195.

Although Main Poc forged a relationship with the Prophet at Greenville and Tippecanoe, Main Poc was not necessarily a nativist. He clearly objected to several of Tenskwatawa's teachings, particularly those requiring Indians to refrain from trading with European Americans and to place community interests above individual ones. Main Poc remained independent from the Prophet's control in an effort to protect Potawatomi interests. Main Poc feared losing his religious power if he abandoned his assault on their traditional enemies the Osage.²⁰ Therefore, he forged an alliance with the Prophet in order to gain provisions and support for his efforts, but not necessarily to subject Potawatomi interests to the direction of the Prophet. For example, Main Poc continued to trade for and use alcohol. As one historian noted, he refused to abandon his "much-rewarded personal identity."²¹ The Potawatomies who followed Main Poc frustrated the Prophet because they were unreliable allies who associated with and lived at Prophetstown without wholly aligning themselves with the Prophet. Potawatomies could find shelter, food, and build social connections with fellow displaced Indians at Prophetstown, but not sacrifice their identity and tribal interests.

The Shawnee brothers needed Main Poc's support even though it proved to be detrimental to their nativist mission. Main Poc possessed great influence and represented a key ally for the Shawnee leaders at Prophetstown. If they could persuade the Potawatomi leader to follow the Prophet's teachings, the Shawnee brothers hoped to gain the support of the various communities of Potawatomies nearby. They failed to convince Main Poc. The Potawatomies at Prophetstown maintained their independence from the

²⁰ Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 98. Cave states that Main Poc "rejected as well the call to Indian unity and brotherhood, "insisting that he would become weak and lose his medicine power if he were to give up warfare against the Osage and other enemies."

²¹ Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 194.

Prophet's dictates largely because Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh were so desperate for their support. It frustrated the Prophet when Indian agents William Wells and John Conner marched into their town demanding compensation for horses stolen during the summer of 1808. Well aware that he had little control over the Potawatomes, the Prophet confessed that Main Poc's followers had stolen the horses from Bosseron, a small settlement north of Vincennes.²² Their behavior undermined the Prophet's goals. Unwittingly, Main Poc's assaults on the Osage Indians and other settlements in southern Illinois convinced many Americans that the Prophet was indeed a militant leader. Many of the Americans felt that it was only a matter of time before Main Poc attacked European American settlements in the same manner he did the Osages.²³ The Potawatomi, like the Miamis, added to the pluralistic but not necessarily united society along the Tippecanoe.

Evaluating the loyalty of the Kickapoos was especially difficult for the Prophet because they resided near Ouiatenon before the founding of Prophetstown. An American identified several Kickapoo towns and sugar camps along the Wabash River near the mouth of the Tippecanoe in the late 1780s.²⁴ In 1808, the Prophet and his followers settled adjacent to the Kickapoo village of nearly 160 cabins. Thus, the Kickapoos were in a unique position to associate with, yet not necessarily support, Tenskwatawa. They welcomed the trading opportunities created by the increased numbers of Indians migrating throughout the region, but they had also pre-established relationships with the Miami-speaking Wea Indians. They enjoyed the best of both worlds, although they did

²² John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (Macmillan Press, 1999), 217.

²³ Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit*, 116.

²⁴ William Biggs, *Narrative of the Captivity of William Biggs Among the Kickapoo Indians in Illinois in 1788* (Metuchen, N.J.: Printed for C. F. Heartman, 1922). Alexander Davidson and Bernard Stuve, *A Complete History of Illinois from 1673 to 1873* (Springfield: Illinois Journal Company, 1877), 222.

experience increased pressure from the Americans who hoped that the Kickapoos would cede their lands. The Kickapoos resisted the pressure, which Harrison attributed to the Kickapoos being “very much under the influence of the Prophet.”²⁵ Harrison’s comments ignored the fact that the Kickapoos had interests in the area near Prophetstown that had nothing to do with Tenskwatawa.

There is some evidence that the Kickapoos associated with Prophetstown because of their affinity for Tecumseh with whom the Kickapoo had familial connections. A Kickapoo informant claimed that he had “often heard Tecumseh describe the leading events of his life . . . that he was born of Kickapoo parents and lived among them until he was eight or nine years old, when he accompanied a War party against the Creeks and was taken prisoner by them, but was well treated by an Aunt who had married in that nation.”²⁶ Tecumseh joined the Shawnees when he was nearly thirty years old, eventually settling at Tippecanoe after his brother the Prophet established a town there. Tecumseh “frequently counseled with the Kickapoos & expressed his desire to form an extensive village, which should embody the surrounding nations.”²⁷ Although the Kickapoos admired Tecumseh for his bold efforts, they also believed “that he was led astray from time to time by his brother the Prophet” whom they called “Paamaunawaashikau or sounding tongue, because they say he cannot command that member, but is constantly talking, and must of course invent many stories to suit the credulity of his heaven.”²⁸ Not only did the Kickapoos make a direct familial connection between themselves and Tecumseh, but they did so while characterizing the Prophet as a

²⁵ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 632

²⁶ C.C. Trowbridge, “Native American material” Box 1 (Keekarpo Indians – 2 versions) Bentley Historical Library

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

liar. Their story suggests that some people may have associated with Prophetstown because of Tecumseh but not his brother. The familial connections, although proven false by historians, likely reflected how the Kickapoos viewed the efforts of the Shawnee brothers during the War of 1812. Possibly, the Kickapoos created a fictive relationship with Tecumseh as a way to express their respect for his efforts during the war as well as their distaste for the Prophet. The Kickapoos certainly did not benefit from associating themselves with a militant Indian leader.

The Kickapoos' story also suggests that there were ideological differences between the Shawnee brothers. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa disagreed as to the relationship their followers should have with outsiders. When describing the goals behind Tecumseh's quest to unify the Indian nations, the Kickapoo informant claimed that Tecumseh supported Indians associating with European Americans in order to access farming implements.²⁹ A noted historian suggests that Tecumseh accepted French traders and gunsmiths at Prophetstown because they provided tools necessary for uniting various Indian communities.³⁰ Such associations would have undermined the Prophet's nativist vision that required Indians to separate ideologically and materially from European Americans. It is also likely that the Kickapoos had established trading connections with Miami-speaking Indians in the period before the Prophet's arrival, which would have complicated their relationship with Prophetstown. The Kickapoos enjoyed the best of both worlds, which meant that Prophetstown would not enjoy the ideological unity Tenskwatawa preferred.³¹ The Prophet found himself trapped between his desire to force

²⁹ C.C. Trowbridge, "Native American material" Box 1 (Keekarpo Indians – 2 versions) Bentley Historical Library.

³⁰ John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1998) 188.

³¹ *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 676.

the residents at Prophetstown to conform to his teachings and the reality that they were surrounded by circumstances outside his control.

Self-interested behavior by Indians at Prophetstown must have made the meetings at the Prophet's council house contentious. The meetings would have included various Kickapoos, Miamis, Potawatomes, and other Indians, and while the Prophet and Tecumseh would have appreciated such an audience, they knew that many Indians were causing problems for the community. Main Poc's Potawatomes ventured in and out of the town, using its resources for their expeditions against the Osage and American settlements farther west and they likely convinced many of the other Indians to join them. Outraged that he could not control Main Poc, the Prophet accused the Potawatomes of undermining his efforts. The Shawnee brothers recognized that Main Poc's behavior convinced American settlers that the Prophet was as militant. Tenskwatawa likely distrusted many of the Miamis in his town because he could not distinguish between those who were loyal to him and those who spied for the Americans. Much the same applied to the Kickapoos as well. Rather than ostracize those Indians whom he suspected, the Prophet probably held secretive meetings that only his trusted advisors could attend. Ironically, as the Prophet welcomed more Indians into his town, he likely had to segregate himself from certain townspeople in order to protect his nativist agenda. The multi-layered identity of Prophetstown proved remarkably problematic for the Shawnee leader who found himself distrusting members of his own settlement at a time when he desperately needed their support.

At times, the town was so divided that the Prophet could not even silence his detractors when non-Indians visited. An Indian agent, Joseph Barron, reported in August

of 1810 that the “Kickapoos & other Indians” were greatly “displeased” with the Prophet because they feared violence between themselves and the Americans.³² While there, Barron witnessed a Potawatomi leader and some Kickapoos confront the Prophet over the death of three Kickapoos. Tenskwatawa accused the Potawatomies of lying and stated that no one had died in the town. The deaths presented a challenge to the Prophet’s medicine because Tenskwatawa had promised “that no man should die in his town.”³³ Furthermore, that argument occurred in the presence of Barron, a man the Indians knew to be in Harrison’s employ. Rather than conceal their disagreements for a later time, the Indians argued in public for outsiders to witness. Their personal disputes trumped the corporate good. Even though the Prophet had won new supporters among the Ho-Chunk nation, it appeared that other, long time residents were not as supportive of the Shawnee leader.

Prophetstown remained factionalized because Indians were unwilling to set aside their customary practices and traditional forms of social organization. Village chiefs disagreed with the Prophet’s attempt to centralize power and their efforts to reclaim influence spurred open disagreements at Prophetstown. An Iowa, after speaking to a relative among the Ho-Chunk Indians at Prophetstown, reported to Harrison that “all the village Chiefs had been divested of their authority,--and that every thing was managed by the warriors, who breathed nothing but war against the U. States.”³⁴ The Iowa Indian did not perceive any immediate danger to Vincennes, even though several Indian nations had recently returned a “great belt which had been sent round to all the Tribes for the purpose

³² WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 668; August 6, 1810.

³³ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 668; August 6, 1810.

³⁴ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 178; August 28, 1810.

of uniting them” by the Prophet.³⁵ Of the Indians residing at Prophetstown, the Ho-Chunk supported Tenskwatawa to a far greater degree than any other Indian group besides the Shawnee, but that did not mean that the Ho-Chunk were immune to factionalism. For example, a Ho-Chunk leader at Prophetstown wept openly after a lengthy debate because his warriors wanted to attack European American settlements.³⁶ These open arguments likely heightened emotions between the residents and their villages in the surrounding hinterland. In fact, some members of the Ho-Chunks “murdered some of the Kickapoos and Sacs” and the Kickapoo were determined to avenge such atrocities.³⁷ Even Harrison, a man predisposed to see Prophetstown as militant and united, commented that there were “other causes of jealousy between the Prophet’s followers” which he hoped would further the divisions at Prophetstown.³⁸ While outsiders believed this was just another example of jealousies among Tenskwatawa’s followers, the violence was actually the result of legitimate cultural and political disagreements between Indian groups. Many Indians at Prophetstown continued to favor their cultural, rather than nativist, interests.

Factional strife undermined the Prophet’s vision throughout 1810 and well into 1811. A large contingent of Sac and Fox, Ottawas, and even some Potawatomes departed from the town in protest to the Prophet’s bad medicine. Main Poc and his Potawatomi followers continued to raid European American settlements, which had quickly turned the Americans against the Shawnee brothers. The Kickapoos balanced

³⁵ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 178; August 28, 1810.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ WHH to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 218; October 5, 1810.

³⁸ *Ibid.* In his letter to Eustis, Harrison undermines much of the case he made to displace the Prophet. Regarding rumors about the Prophet’s impending attack on Vincennes, Harrison stated that “If the Prophet really has such an intention, he has adopted it as a desperate last resort, to keep together his force which he sees upon the point of being dissolved by the causes I have mentioned—The plunging them into a war with us might perhaps have this effect; but I think it a stroke of policy rather too deep for his talents.”

their desire to associate with Tecumseh, even though they distrusted the Prophet, and their hope to remain independent. While Prophetstown was not the Kickapoos's enemy, it altered the dynamics of the region and placed them in a delicate position. Oppose the Prophet and they would draw his ire, but support him entirely and the Americans and outside Indian groups might quickly turn on them. Unlike the Sac and Fox Indians, the Kickapoos could not simply go home.

Rather than return to their traditional homelands, most Indians refashioned Prophetstown to fit their needs. Hundreds of Indians gathered near the Prophet's lodge anxiously anticipating his spiritual message, while many others tended to the acres of corn lining the Wabash River. In their free time, Indians traded furs and other items for goods from the French traders who had trading posts near the town. Most of the inhabitants of Prophetstown enjoyed relative comfort, but few could call the town home. This was largely due to the conflict arising from Tenskwatawa's efforts to forge a new racial Indian identity that would supersede the ethnic interests of his followers. Few Indians were willing to subvert their ethnic identity to the extent that Tenskwatawa desired. Prophetstown was partially their town. While they were willing to support the Prophet, they also believed that the town was theirs to shape.

The Prophet's Challenges

Tenskwatawa's challenges at Prophetstown were two-fold. Not only did he have to address his town's internal divisions, but the Shawnee leader also had to confront the militant image of Prophetstown promoted by the Miamis, their French counterparts, and William Henry Harrison. Perceptions of Prophetstown were as important as the actual realities because descriptions provided to the Americans often dictated Harrison's

policies towards the Indians. Moreover, while Harrison recognized some of the problems inherent in using the French and Miamis for intelligence, his personal bias often helped him dismiss any inconsistencies present. He believed that relying on William Wells, Little Turtle, and the French traders might prove problematic because of their ulterior motives but that those problems would not be detrimental to his governance. In order to negate the conflicts of interest, Harrison handled diplomacy in the region by framing Indian behavior as either for the Americans or for the Prophet. There was no middle ground. Harrison's mentality challenged Tenskwatawa's efforts, especially as it affected the French and Miami residents of the region.

One of the Prophet's first diplomatic challenges was Wells. Wells's position as Fort Wayne Indian agent allowed him to influence Harrison by manipulating Tenskwatawa's general comments about Indians and European Americans for his own political purposes. When Tenskwatawa resettled his community, the Miamis grew so angry that Wells wrote Harrison that the Shawnee leader "should be the first object of our resentment."³⁹ Wells knew that the Americans would be far more likely to act out against Prophetstown if they thought their capital at Vincennes was threatened. The Prophet realized Wells's motives and sought out Harrison's acceptance. Tenskwatawa needed to find common ground in order to lessen any anger created by his movement to the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Realizing his predicament and Wells's influence with the governor, the Prophet reassured Harrison by discussing their similarities. He emphasized their common ground concerning agriculture, worshipping a higher power, constructing a peaceful community and by emphasizing their shared racial heritage. Tenskwatawa claimed that the same being created European Americans and Indians even though the

³⁹ William Wells to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, Reel 2, 900; August 20, 1807.

two differed “a little in colour.”⁴⁰ Tenskwatawa’s hope, at least in public, was to “live in peace and friendship” with his American brothers.⁴¹

Emphasizing the racial affinity between the two groups was only part of this process. After meeting John Conner and learning of the “bad reports” from Wells in late June of 1808, the Prophet sent several lesser chiefs and a letter to Harrison.⁴²

Tenskwatawa assured the governor that his intentions were peaceful, and offered proof of his supposed sincerity by reminding Harrison that he would do nothing “to risk the safety of our children.”⁴³ By discussing similarities between himself and Harrison, the Prophet reoriented the discussion from one of European Americans versus Indians to one of two communities both concerned with the safety of their neighbors. He effectively changed the topic of discussion while also asking, and eventually receiving, aid from Harrison.

The Prophet’s success at settling a community at Tippecanoe provided ample motivation for Wells to use his relationship with the Americans to rid the region of Prophetstown. In the spring of 1809, Wells warned Harrison that many Ojibwas, Ottawas, and Pottawatomi Indians fled Prophetstown because Tenskwatawa “has told them to receive the Tomahawk from him and destroy all the white people at Vincennes.”⁴⁴ He then added that he did not “believe that any harm is intended, or will be attempted by the Prophet or any other Indians against the White people.”⁴⁵ Wells’s conflicting advice hid deep-seated emotions about the Prophet’s community. He intended his letters to appear impartial while sowing doubt and insecurity. It also seems

⁴⁰ Message from the Shawnee Prophet, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 173; June 24, 1808.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ William Wells to WHH, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 380; April 8, 1809.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

that Wells had goals beyond turning the Americans against the Prophet. After warning Harrison that the Prophet “only wanted power [supporters] to make him dangerous,” Wells described the starving Indians who were leaving Prophetstown.⁴⁶ Wells felt that humanity compelled him to “give them some provision,” but he was probably using the opportunity to expand his influence among the Indians in order to check Tenskwatawa’s growing popularity.⁴⁷ By convincing Harrison that the Prophet wanted to murder the Americans, Wells made his gift-giving seem a necessary step to keep Indians away from Prophetstown. In doing so, Wells used Prophetstown to empower his Miami polity.⁴⁸ Even though Harrison recognized Wells’s duplicity and “disposition for intrigue & for the accumulation of property,” he continued to rely on the Indian agent to distribute annuity payments to the Indians from Fort Wayne.⁴⁹

French traders only compounded Tenskwatawa’s efforts to combat Wells by spreading biased intelligence corroborating Wells’s accusations. Their estimates of the number of Indians at Prophetstown falsely amplified its militant character. The French created a racial entity for Harrison to consume. By associating non-Prophetstown Indians with the Prophet’s followers, the French intelligence created a racial association among all of the Indians. The French then contrasted the Indians with the “whites” which were also constructed at the same time. Two French traders, Peter Lafontaine and Toussaint Dubois, estimated that the Prophet had nearly 500 supporters “within the distance of 40 or 50 miles of his Village.”⁵⁰ Such an approximation ignored the historical factionalism

⁴⁶ William Wells to WHH, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 380; April 8, 1809.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Harvey Lewis Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle: First Sagamore of the Wabash* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

⁴⁹ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 668; December 3, 1809.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 394. Harrison states to Eustis that “In the year 1805 in Conjunction of the Little Turtle he Commenced an Intrigue against Me which was discovered and exposed by General [Henry] Dearborn & his

in the region. Groups of Miami and Potawatomi who opposed the Prophet lived within the twenty-five mile radius around Prophetstown but had little or no connection with the settlement.⁵¹ Lafontaine then warned Harrison that the Prophet “and his followers had determined to commence hostilities as soon as they could be prepared & to ‘sweep all the white people from the Wabash and white River’ after which they intended to attack the Miami.”⁵² Lafontaine had received the information from two Miami. Eventually Harrison received information from his other information sources, including Indian agent John Johnston, which helped him see beyond the biased Frenchmen.

The large amount of misinformation about Prophetstown forced Tenskwatawa to confront the Miami and French. Tenskwatawa recognized that building a vibrant community at Prophetstown was as much about controlling the perceptions of his town as it was about attracting new Indians to it. In May of 1809, he traveled to Fort Wayne to speak with John Johnston, the Indian agent. Tenskwatawa begged Johnston to recognize Little Turtle’s “personal and private motives” for protecting his small community of followers and tried to reinterpret Wells’s statements.⁵³ Challenging Wells’s statements was increasingly difficult for Tenskwatawa because Black Hoof, a Shawnee leader, who was friendly with the Americans, had recently expressed his fondness and friendship for Wells. The factionalism among the Shawnees undermined Tenskwatawa’s complaints because it showed that some Shawnees did support Wells.

dismissal would have been the consequence if I had not solicited his pardon—this I did from a belief that his promises of future good conduct would be observed and from a persuasion also that the qualifications he possessed for the appointment of Indian Agent could not be found in any other individual.

⁵¹ Benjamin Stickney mentions a Potawatomi town six miles north of Prophetstown in a letter to Secretary of War Eustis in 1812. United States, Gayle Thornbrough, John Johnston, and Benjamin Franklin Stickney. *Letter Book of the Indian Agency at Fort Wayne, 1809-1815*. Indiana Historical Society publications, v. 21. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1961.

⁵² Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 409; May 3, 1809.

⁵³ Johnston to the Prophet, May 3, 1809, in Thornbrough, *Letterbook*, 49-52. Johnston to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, May 16, 1809.

Johnston believed Tenskwatawa. He accepted the Prophet's professions of peace because he hated Wells, who Harrison had recently dismissed as Indian agent for misusing his office for personal benefit.

Harrison, however, was not so forgiving. Rather than accept Johnston's assessment, the governor sent two spies to Prophetstown to see if the Prophet had been truthful. They witnessed what Harrison described as anti-American activity. In early June, Tenskwatawa and several of his supporters visited Vincennes to defend their actions, but Harrison remained convinced that the Prophet hated the Americans.⁵⁴ While Harrison distrusted the Prophet, he believed that the Shawnee leader would eventually abandon his mission. Intimidated by the large numbers of European American settlers, many of the Prophet's followers would defect from Prophetstown. In turn, Harrison hoped that the increased pressures brought on the Prophet would convince other Indian communities to cede more lands to the Americans. Harrison began organizing a council in Fort Wayne to that very end.

Tenskwatawa believed that any further attempts by Harrison to gain Indian lands would backfire and compel more Indians to accept his nativist agenda. Federal agents recognized this, as well, and warned Harrison that summer not to negotiate any more land cessions without making sure that the legitimate Indian leaders were present.⁵⁵ William Eustis feared that Harrison's overzealous behavior might cause unrest in the region. However, the governor disregarded Eustis's warning and negotiated the Treaty of Fort Wayne only with representatives of the Miami, Delaware, and Potawatomi communities

⁵⁴ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 446. Harrison to Johnston, July 8, 1809, Jones Collection, Cincinnati Historical Society.

⁵⁵ Robert Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 200. The legitimate leaders were those who had historical claims to the lands in question.

who appeared responsive to American needs. The council itself proved highly volatile. A large contingent of Potawatomies tried to bully the Miamis into signing the treaty. The Potawatomies “urged an immediate compliance to the proposal of the United States,” however, the “Miamis from Mississinway took the lead in the debate & declared that they would never consent to sell any more lands that they had been advised by the Father the British never to sell another foot.”⁵⁶ In retaliation, the Potawatomies “poured upon [the Miamis] a torrent of abuse & declared that they would no longer consider them as Brothers but that they would loose the chain which had united them with the Tomahawk & setting up a shout of Defiance which was echoed by all the warriors.”⁵⁷ Like the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768 that allowed the Iroquois to cede vast stretches of Shawnee and Delaware lands, the Treaty of Fort Wayne enabled various factions of Indians to cede three million acres in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. The Shawnees refused to attend the negotiations while the Kickapoos signed a supplementary treaty shortly thereafter. Not only did this make the Prophet and his brother more resistant toward the Americans, it further divided the Indian communities within the region. His actions produced the negative effects that Eustis feared. The Treaty of Fort Wayne galvanized the community at Prophetstown because it forced a faction of the Miamis and the Shawnee brothers to take action. The treaty amounted to a declaration of war for many of the communities in the region; it showed blatant disregard for the interests of the Miami nation and the nativist Indians at Prophetstown.

⁵⁶ Henry Jones, ed., *Journal of the Proceedings: Indian Treaty, Fort Wayne, September 30th, 1809* (Connersville, IN.: Knights of Columbus Council No. 861, 1910), 16.

⁵⁷ Henry Jones, ed., *Journal of the Proceedings: Indian Treaty, Fort Wayne, September 30th, 1809* (Connersville, IN.: Knights of Columbus Council No. 861, 1910), 16.

However, while the treaty angered many Indians in the valley, it did not strengthen the Prophet's town to the extent that he had hoped. Various Indian communities sought greater stability after the treaty because so much land had been ceded to the Americans. For instance, Miami leader Pacanne signed the treaty in order to assert his identity as an influential leader in an effort to challenge the abuses of fellow co-signer Little Turtle. Pacanne's Miamis, while protesting the treaty, remained opposed to subverting their desires in favor of the Prophet's nativist goals. It also compelled other groups like the Potawatomies and Kickapoos to forge relationships with Prophetstown when they realized that Harrison would no longer recognize their hegemony in the region. Pacanne's behavior, like that of the Kickapoos and Potawatomies, appeared to favor militancy when in fact it represented frustration over another failed treaty. Indians forged relationships with Prophetstown even though they did not agree entirely with the Prophet's message because doing so forced Harrison to recognize their presence in the region. Most European Americans interpreted the actions of Pacanne's Miamis, the Potawatomies, and Kickapoos as another example of Tenskwatawa's growing influence and not a result of the fallout from the Fort Wayne treaty.



Figure 4.1, The Treaty of Fort Wayne

Taken from Harry D. Tunnell IV., *To Compel with Armed Force: A Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Tippecanoe* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Published by Army Command and General Staff College, 1998).

While the Prophet had little to do with the factional strife among the Miamis, he suffered because he could not stop European Americans from connecting Miami factionalism to Prophetstown's militancy. Pacanne's behavior frightened Little Turtle, the French, and the Americans, who saw it as a reflection of Tenskwatawa's negative influence. The intelligence Little Turtle, Wells, and their French counterparts provided usually failed to address the ethnic differences within the Wabash Indian community, most notably with the Miamis. It was typical for intelligence gatherers to frame the

information they received through the Prophetstown/Vincennes dichotomy. Francis Vigo, longtime trader in Vincennes, reported to Harrison that at least one Miami leader “had entered into all the views of the Prophet and even that of murdering all those who stand in opposition to his measures.”⁵⁸ The report also mentioned that an important but unnamed Miami leader visited Malden and received gifts in order to renew his community’s relationship with the British. The disaffected Miami leader used both the Prophet and the British to protect his community’s interests and did not intend to place himself and his people entirely at the Prophet’s bidding.⁵⁹ Vigo, Harrison, and even Johnston failed to comprehend how the Miami used the British, Americans, and even the Prophet to maintain their interests.

The Miamis used the Treaty of Fort Wayne as they did Prophetstown. It was a instrument for them to fight intra-community disputes. Pacanne signed it in order to gain recognition as one of the head Miami leaders and to displace Little Turtle, whom many Miamis felt had too much power. Before the treaty, some Miamis from the main villages at Mississinewa removed east to the Wabash-Maumee portage; this was probably a symbolic statement against the more progressive Miamis who had been more willing to cede lands.⁶⁰ Negotiations during the Fort Wayne treaty only exacerbated these divisions. Little Turtle’s faction continued to argue with those Indians who supported Pacanne. All the while, Richardville remained at the Mississinway due to sickness, although some questioned if he was just trying to avoid the contentious meeting. Little Turtle’s Miamis supported the treaty but “were intimidated by the vehemence of the

⁵⁸ Logan Esarey, *Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 446.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Robert Mann, “The Silenced Miami: Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Evidence for Miami-British Relations, 1795-1812,” *Ethnohistory*, 46 (Summer 1999), 408.

Chiefs of the Mississinway Village & remained silent . . . parties of young men of the Miami Tribe were constantly arriving [sic] loaded with goods from the British Agents at Malden.”⁶¹ The Miamis used the treaty, like they did Prophetstown, but non-Indians continued to interpret the divisions within Miami society as created by outside forces like the Prophet rather than because of internal divisions.

Prophetstown was not nearly as unified as the Americans feared. After the treaty, Tenskwatawa’s town grew in population, but not in unity. Many of the groups that lived at Tippecanoe used Prophetstown as a tool in intra-tribal disagreements like that between Pacanne and Little Turtle. The different Indian groups at Prophetstown were trapped between the Prophet’s more progressive ideology centered on a singular Indian identity and their more traditional ethnic identities fashioned over the previous decades. Indians also hoped to force the Americans to identify the diversity of Indian interests in the period after the Treaty of Fort Wayne when the Americans only recognized Little Turtle’s Miamis as the legitimate Indian polity in the region.

Evaluating Indian behavior as either in favor of the Prophet or in favor of acculturation overshadows the more complicated reasons underlying Indian behavior in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Factions of Miamis, Kickapoos, and Potawatomi Indians used the opportunities provided by the diplomatic dispute between Vincennes and Prophetstown as a means to survive. Categories such as “accommodationist” and “nativist” do not work well when analyzing the behavior of the various Indian communities during this period. Robert Mann in his work on Pacanne’s Miamis identifies the factions among the Miamis as either progressive or conservative and characterizes the conservative

⁶¹ Henry Jones, ed., *Journal of the Proceedings: Indian Treaty, Fort Wayne, September 30th, 1809* (Connersville, IN.: Knights of Columbus Council No. 861, 1910), 16.

Miamis as “bound by their adherence to an ethnic ideology” based on Miami traditions. He concludes correctly that like the Prophet’s ideology, conservative Miami beliefs were not necessarily looking backwards or geared towards restoring a golden age. Rather, the Miamis hoped to renew and protect their ethnic identity during a period of great change.

Pacanne’s efforts to protect Miami culture resembled the Prophet’s actions all too closely. Few non-Indians separated Pacanne’s efforts to revitalize the Miamis from the Prophet’s militancy. Although he signed the treaty, Pacanne rejected all annuity payments, which appeared to rebuff the Americans for the Prophet. Yet, rather than turn his support towards the Prophet, Pacanne traveled to Malden in order to re-establish relationships with the British.⁶² Malden was the same place where the Prophet and his brother traveled in order to purchase trade goods and ammunition.⁶³ Most Americans believed that Pacanne’s actions reflected his support of Prophetstown and Tenskwatawa’s nativist agenda. However, while Pacanne and Tenskwatawa used the British resources at Malden to defend their interests, they differed ideologically. One hoped to use the materials to protect all Indians while the other did so in an effort to renew Miami power and ethnic identity. To the Americans, the Prophet’s vision represented more of a threat because it required the unification of many more Indians. Most Americans failed to differentiate between the two leaders. For them, seeking the support of the British and advocating unity among the North American Indian community was the same thing. They both threatened American interests.

⁶² Robert Mann, *The Silenced Miami*, 411.

⁶³ Robert Mann argues that the Miami trips to Fort Malden were not an aberration, but rather a key part of the traditionalist Miami effort to renew their ethnic identity. Mann makes two points regarding the visits to Malden. First, the visits became an annual event “in response to British invitations to renew the chain of friendship beginning in late 1807. Second, that at least a portion of the Miami had responded favorably to British overtures and renewed their social bonds with the British.” *Ibid.*, 410.

It was easier for the Americans to lump Pacanne in with the Prophet than it was for the Americans to understand the complex dispute between Pacanne and Little Turtle. For Pacanne, Little Turtle's relationship with the Americans, much like the Prophet's settlement on the Tippecanoe, undermined traditional Miami culture and regional hegemony because it silenced other Miami leaders and communities important to trade and diplomacy. Little Turtle hurt the Miamis by willingly ceding Miami lands in order to gain annuity payments. The Prophet angered Pacanne by settling on, and ignoring the spiritual significance of, the Miami lands. For Miami traditionalists, Prophetstown posed as big a threat as did the Americans and British, and they used each group to protect their own interests.⁶⁴ They associated with the Prophet to threaten Little Turtle, traded with the British in order to maintain a degree of independence from the Americans, and then provided information to the Americans to marginalize Prophetstown. There is no doubt that some Miamis associated with the Prophet, but it is also imperative that we question the motives for these associations and not simply assume that those Miamis were nativist. If Pacanne willingly associated with the Americans and signed a treaty that he abhorred in order to challenge Little Turtle's authority, then why would he not do the same by associating with the Prophet? Pacanne and his Miami community used the treaty and Prophetstown to serve their cultural interests. However, the French and Americans concluded that Indians like Pacanne were secretly supporting the Prophet if they did not directly support the Americans.

The Kickapoos found themselves in a position similar to that of the Miami, which only exacerbated negative perceptions of Prophetstown. Even though the Kickapoos eventually ceded the lands northwest of the Wabash in compliance with Harrison's

⁶⁴ Mann, *The Silenced Miami*, 408-412.

wishes, the governor continued to question their motives. He viewed them as allies of Prophetstown and promoters of a greater Indian conspiracy against Anglo-Americans. In the spring of 1810, the governor reported that the population of Prophetstown had increased because “nearly all the Kickapoos” had joined with the Prophet.⁶⁵ Fearing that the Prophet was planning an attack on Vincennes, Harrison instructed Toussaint Dubois to visit Prophetstown. There he could speak to several of his Kickapoo friends about Tenskwatawa’s plot. Dubois’ “old friends” among the Kickapoos said “they had long known that War was [Tenskwatawa’s] intention but they were never informed whether he designed to attack the United States or the Osage nation.”⁶⁶

The Kickapoos’ uncertainty is telling. The Kickapoos did not know what the Prophet planned to do even though they lived adjacent to his town. Although Harrison claimed that “nearly all the Kickapoos” had joined the Prophet, in reality, they associated with him at a distance. Furthermore, if the Miamis knew that the Prophet was hostile to Vincennes then why would the Kickapoos have been so oblivious to it? It was unlikely that they lied to Dubois, considering that they were old friends and that Dubois left the meeting convinced that the Prophet was not nearly as threatening as others had suggested. DuBois had an established history with the Miamis who facilitated the trading network and depended upon the local exchange economy for his livelihood. He recognized that the Prophet had kicked out all of the French traders from Prophetstown, which had negatively affected trade.⁶⁷ Yet, Dubois remained adamant that not all of the Kickapoos supported Tenskwatawa.

⁶⁵ William Henry Harrison to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 016; May 15, 1810.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Reel 4, 079; July 4, 1810.

⁶⁷ William Henry Harrison to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 827; April 25, 1810. *Ibid.*, Reel 4, 001; May 2, 1810.

Balancing the problems within his town with maintaining a diplomatic edge over its negative perceptions challenged Tenskwatawa daily. During the spring of 1810, Wyandot, Iowa, Sac and Fox, and Ho-Chunk traveled to meet the Prophet. The reaction from the Miamis was remarkable. Gros Bled, an aged Piankashaw leader visited Harrison personally and requested “to remove over the Mississippi alledging [sic] that he heard amongst the Indians nothing but the News of War.”⁶⁸ Gros Bled told Harrison that the Prophet planned to destroy Vincennes, stating that the Prophet intended “to come [to Vincennes] with a large body of men that 4 or 5 would be assigned to each House and himself with 12 or 15 would enter [Grouseland] and having destroyed [the governor] a signal would be given by a person posted for that purpose to commence the Massacre in the Town –This fellow [the Prophet] has boasted that he would follow the footsteps of the Great Pontiac.”⁶⁹ Gros Bled’s story, coupled with Michel Brouillet’s estimate that Prophetstown’s population was near 3,000 people seemed reasonable to the Americans. It also heightened fears that the Prophet was indeed planning an attack. However, when Harrison questioned Brouillet further, the French trader admitted that the Prophet had estimated the population of Prophetstown at 3,000 when in fact it only contained about 650 warriors.⁷⁰ Brouillet’s estimate, like Gros Bled’s story, reflected their efforts to rid the region of a problematic Indian rather than legitimate intelligence concerning life at Prophetstown.

The Prophet had no way of limiting the extent to which Americans like Harrison depended upon the Miamis for information. Americans relied on the Miamis and French so heavily that it predisposed the Americans to thinking that Tenskwatawa was militant.

⁶⁸ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 040.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Deposition of Michel Brouillet, 083.

Harrison and many of the Americans believed that the fate of the territory depended upon the loyalty of the Miamis because they were more numerous and enjoyed a great degree of influence among the Wabash Indians. However, he and his agents failed to recognize the degree to which the Miamis had divided internally due to both American policies and Prophetstown's nativism. Many Americans viewed Indians in simplistic terms and failed to understand their diversity within Indian society. American agents also failed to recognize how some Miamis used Prophetstown as a way to protest rogue leaders like Little Turtle. Americans mistakenly concluded that the Miamis who opposed Little Turtle in turn supported the Prophet, which amplified negative perceptions that the Prophet had won many Miami converts. John Johnston, the Indian agent at Fort Wayne, noted the Massasinway Miamis "reluctance" to council with the Americans.⁷¹ Johnston feared "that there was mischief going on among them" and he tried in vain to "remove the existing bad impressions" they had of the Americans. In council, Miami leader Pacanne condemned the Fort Wayne Treaty and the belligerent Americans who forced the Miamis to cede lands. Pacanne remained adamant that "they would not agree to the treaty, that it must be broke, that for their part they would not receive any part of the annuity."⁷² Johnston believed that the Miamis were a "band of the Prophet's followers" because "every sentiment they uttered was in unison with those of the Prophet."⁷³ This was not the case. Pacanne hoped to protect Miami interests and believed that the best course of action was to renew their relationship with the British.

Tenskwatawa played no part in Pacanne's decision to take thirty of his men and visit British headquarters near Detroit. If anything, the Prophet wanted Pacanne to

⁷¹ John Johnston to WHH, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 231, October 14, 1810.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

remain in the valley so that he would exacerbate the problems already present, but he could not control the Miami leader. Johnston concluded that Pacanne's Miami had been "corrupted by the Prophet's Council & wished to follow the example of the Weeas [sic] in refusing their goods."⁷⁴ Sadly, Johnston's conclusions echoed Harrison's; neither recognized the extent to which the Miami-speaking Indians had separated themselves from both the Prophet and the Americans. More surprising was Johnston's conclusion that the Prophet had won over Pacanne when the exact opposite had occurred. In fact, Pacanne rejected the Prophet's influence just as he had rejected the Americans. Americans did not want to distinguish Miami factionalism from Prophetstown militancy; they assumed that these dynamics were one and the same because both seemed to express anti-American intent. Miami leader The Owl reminded Johnston that "all the mischief that is going among" the Miamis "has sprung from Wells & the [Little] Turtle" but that mattered little to the Americans who had grown obsessed with Prophetstown.⁷⁵

Competition between factions was the larger threat to regional stability than the nativism at Prophetstown. The more Pacanne resisted, the more convinced Harrison became of the Prophet's growing power. Pacanne had proven his antipathy towards the Americans during the previous two years, not his support for the Prophet. Pacanne's Miami, united in their opposition to the Americans and Little Turtle's faction, visited the British at Malden where they received goods and weapons. Pacanne's group had separated themselves from Little Turtle's faction while rejecting American policies, in particular the Treaty of Fort Wayne, and re-established relations with the British. Yet, few Americans identified Pacanne's group as a threat like Prophetstown, even though his

⁷⁴ John Johnston to WHH, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 231, October 14, 1810.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

supporters mirrored much of the behavior at Prophetstown that the Americans identified as hostile. They believed that the Prophet was the root of the problem and that Pacanne was only acting in accordance with Tenskwatawa's wishes. By stopping the Shawnee brothers, the governor hoped to force the Miami factions to accept American terms. What the Americans never fully realized is that the competition between the Miami factions convinced some leaders like Wells and Little Turtle to spread misinformation that exaggerated Prophetstown's militancy. The factionalism also forced leaders like Pacanne to associate with the Prophet even though he did not agree with the Shawnee leader's larger ideological goals. In the end, the Americans tended to believe the intelligence provided by the Miamis while thinking that Pacanne's relationship with the Prophet reflected Tenskwatawa's powerful influence among Wabash Indian communities.

However, Pacanne's resistance did not necessarily reflect a powerful Prophetstown. French spies confirmed reports of internal divisions at Prophetstown when they returned from a fact-finding mission in early October of 1810. Brouillet's estimates of the town's population proved entirely inaccurate and unreliable. Harrison claimed that the Prophet could collect nearly 1300 men in a day, but his spies discovered that it was no more than 500. The Ho-Chunk, Tenskwatawa's base support, numbered less than one hundred; conversely, the larger contingent of Potawatomies continued to reject Tenskwatawa's authority and wanted "to go to war" against Tenskwatawa rather "than with the Americans."⁷⁶ It appeared that many, if not most, of the Indian nations in the Wabash-Maumee Valley in the fall of 1810 were at odds with Prophetstown. The Prophet understood that he was fighting a losing battle. His efforts to control his own

⁷⁶ *The Western Sun*, "Extra" October 18, 1810.

followers proved challenging enough, but controlling the Miamis and their French brethren was next to impossible. Indeed, even if Tenskwatawa somehow managed to steady his followers and counteract the propaganda spread by Wells and the French, he still would have had to deal with Harrison's polarizing rhetoric and policies. The Miamis and French could complain about Prophetstown all they wanted, but it was Harrison who had the resources to move against it.

Harrison Polarizes the Valley

Harrison's misguided perceptions of Prophetstown were the product of both his biased intelligence sources and his personal animosity toward Tenskwatawa. Harrison failed to change policy because he did not separate his disgust for the Prophet from Indian affairs outside of Prophetstown. It mattered little that Prophetstown was actually a village of diverse and competing interests. The threat was the Prophet. To maintain peace, Harrison needed to silence Tenskwatawa.⁷⁷ His efforts to do so increasingly reflected a deep bitterness toward Tenskwatawa as well as an entrenched fear that President James Madison might replace him as governor. In his effort to maintain stability in the Wabash-Maumee Valley, Harrison polarized relationships by claiming that Indians were either friends of the Americans or supporters of the Prophet. The more the Indians opposed him, the more Harrison thought that Tenskwatawa represented a legitimate threat against his town and his leadership. While the rebellious Miamis were not necessarily part of Prophetstown, Harrison rationalized their behavior as a direct reflection of the Prophet's influence.

⁷⁷ Eustis recognized Harrison's bias against the Prophet and instructed him to capture Tenskwatawa. William Eustis to WHH, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 252; October 26, 1810.

Harrison reacted to Shawnee brothers by taking a territorial crisis and refashioning it into a personal threat. Harrison's hatred for the Prophet lessened the likelihood that he would question the faulty intelligence provided by his French and Miami allies. Furthermore, Harrison firmly believed that his fellow Americans were out to undermine his authority as well. In a letter to Eustis, Harrison complained that "the poison" that had been "infused" into the minds of Tecumseh and Pacanne's Miami Indians was part of a larger scheme to ruin him. At a recent negotiation, Tecumseh described in detail how a European American man visited Prophetstown shortly after the Treaty of Fort Wayne as "an agent of a large party of white people" who supported the Shawnee brothers.⁷⁸ The agent promised to inform Tecumseh of everything that "the Governor at Vincennes is doing against you," but to succeed, "the Shawnee chief needed to observe great secrecy" and not tell anyone.⁷⁹ The agent stated that Harrison never intended to respect his agreements and that the Indians should "take nothing" from the Americans until the President replaced him.

As he had done previously, Harrison suspected his opponents of manipulating information about Prophetstown as a ruse to get rid of him. Harrison believed that "the scheme originated with a Scotch tory," William McIntosh, who lived in Vincennes and with whom Harrison had a very hostile relationship.⁸⁰ Initially the two men had been friends, but land speculation had pitted them against each other, culminating in a legal decision that awarded Harrison \$4000 in damages for McIntosh's calumnies. The governor concluded that the white men of whom Tecumseh spoke were in fact McIntosh and William Wells. This conclusion was more a product of Harrison's anger over

⁷⁸ Tecumseh's speech to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 156; August 20-21, 1810.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 322; January 15, 1811.

personal affairs than a reflection of concrete intelligence implicating Wells and McIntosh.⁸¹ In reference to Wells and his treasonous activities, Harrison stated that there really was not any proof that Wells produced “the late disturbances amongst the Indians” even though the circumstances suggested that he was indeed guilty.⁸² Nonetheless, Harrison recommended Wells for “an appointment in the Indian Department if a Suitable Situation Could be found for him.”⁸³ Harrison’s subsequent statement suggests that he believed that Wells and McIntosh were part of a much larger conspiracy. He challenged Eustis to imagine the “villainous intrigues” which were “carried on with the Indians in this country by foreign agents and other disaffected persons” in an effort to explain his accusations against McIntosh and Wells.⁸⁴ The situation in Prophetstown was far more than Harrison trying to protect the territory from militant Indians. Unreliable intelligence, treasonous Americans, and bias made the whole affair deeply personal. Separating personal affairs from governance proved remarkably difficult for Harrison.

Harrison continued to explain the Prophet’s behavior in terms of a personal attack upon both himself and American interests. This was nowhere more apparent than when Tenskwatawa reacted violently to salt annuity payments bound for the Miamis in 1810 and 1811. Several Frenchmen including the newly appointed LaPlante (the replacement for the recently-fired Brouillet) paddled up the Wabash in order to deliver some of the

⁸¹ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 322; January 15, 1811.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 255; November 7, 1810. Harrison recounted the events surrounding McIntosh, stating that Harrison “had commenced a suit against a certain Wm McIntosh, a Scotchman residing at this place, for slandering me in relation to my management of the Indian Department—The accusations which he brought against me were of the most serious nature—‘Such as defrauding the Indians in the treaties I have made with them Making chiefs to answer my own particular purposes—Excluding the real Chiefs &c—By this and other conduct producing all the disturbances which have taken place in the Indian Country, & the Alarm produced in this &c’—This suit was tried in the Superior Court of this Territory on the 11 Inst:” WHH to Eustis, Reel 4, 488; April 23, 1811.

salt to Prophetstown and then Fort Wayne. Tecumseh and his men seized the salt upon their arrival but then ordered the traders to take it back when they stopped at Prophetstown on their return trip. They also took the Frenchmen “by the hair and shook them violently asking whether they were Americans” which the governor and several Americans interpreted as an open threat to them.⁸⁵ The Indians likely rejected the salt as a way to express their displeasure at the Miamis further up stream who had welcomed the annuity payment. Yet, Harrison saw the rejection of salt in relation to himself and decided that the Prophet’s actions were personally directed towards Vincennes.⁸⁶

Although the Indians were certainly frustrated with the Americans, they took their frustration out on each other as well. It had been Little Turtle’s Miamis who supported the contentious cession of lands in the Treaty of Fort Wayne in exchange for annuity payments like salt. Tecumseh hoped to stop all shipments to Fort Wayne as punishment for signing the treaty. Harrison believed otherwise. He reminded William Clark that “if our government” would “submit [to] this insolence it will be the means of making all the tribes treat us with conte[mpt.]”⁸⁷ The Prophet continued to punish self-serving Indian communities by seizing their salt, and succeeded in preventing the Miamis from receiving any more salt for almost nine years.⁸⁸ What Harrison interpreted as another attack on American hegemony was in fact an assault on the less traditional Miamis.

⁸⁵ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 38; June 15, 1810.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ William Henry Harrison to William Clark, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 572; June 19, 1811.

⁸⁸ Lewis Cass – Prophet material, Indian Department [446] – Fort Wayne – 9 December 1819 “Your Excellency will find enclosed an extract from Mr. Johnstons opinion to me relative to the annual amount of salt due the Miami Tribe of Indians under the Treaty of 1803. ‘During my Agency at Fort Wayne the Indians received no Salt taken later than the year 1810, in the year the Prophet’s party seized the salt ascending the Wabash, and prevented it reaching the Agents hands. I cannot say whether Mr. Stickney during his Agency received any salt or not, the impression on my mind is that he did not receive any, if I am correct, the Miamis has the salt of 9 years due them which at the rate of 30 bushels a year would be 270 bushels.’” Harrison to Secretary of War, June 19, 1811, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, 1:518.

Harrison's paranoia and anger toward the Indians and European Americans who opposed him led the governor to demand obedience from the Wabash Indians. Harrison believed that recent reports suggested that the Prophet had instigated several murders in the Illinois country to divert attention from his town. Also, Tecumseh boasted that a "considerable number of the Wyandots" and "some of the Six Nations" planned on joining the Shawnee brothers that fall.⁸⁹ Fearful that an attack was near, Harrison wrote several Miami communities to determine their loyalties.

I now speak plainly to you—What is that great Collection of people at the mouth of the Tipecanoe [sic] intended for? I am not blind my Children. I can easily See what their object is, these people have boasted that they will find me asleep, but they will be deceived. My children, do not suppose that I will be foolish enough to suffer them to go on with their preparations until they are ready to Strike my people . . . I now inform you that I consider all those who join the Prophet & his party as hostile . . . those who keep me by the hand must keep on one side of it and those that adhere to the Prophet on the other.⁹⁰

For Harrison, the Miamis either supported American interests or stood against them.

Harrison had a very difficult time understanding how Indians could oppose both Vincennes and Prophetstown. The last statement ignored the difficult situation in which many of the Miamis found themselves. The governor continued to trap them in the Vincennes/Prophetstown dichotomy. Harrison's polarizing statement placed the Miamis in a problematic position; if they followed his dictates, they would undermine their own interests. Harrison forced the Miamis to take sides even when he questioned the Prophet's militancy. Privately he stated that his top priority was to "find out what is the real object of the Prophet and his friends and if . . . he is really disposed for war."⁹¹

Identifying Tenskwatawa's intentions proved quite difficult because the governor

⁸⁹ WHH to William Hull, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 726; August 20, 1811.

⁹⁰ WHH to the Miami, et al., *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 731; August 21, 1811.

⁹¹ WHH to John Johnston, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 737; August 23, 1811.

associated Indians resistant to an allegiance with the Americans as pro-Prophetstown. Harrison may have wanted to understand the situation better, but his policies prevented him from doing so.

Many Indian leaders reacted negatively to Harrison's demands that they take sides. By the fall of 1811, a sizeable contingent of Americans believed that the Prophet had convinced large numbers of the Miamis to join him because they refused to support Harrison's policies. Various Indian leaders felt that Harrison exaggerated the situation for the Americans' benefit and ignored the real motives of the Miamis, Potawatomes, and Delaware leaders. Some Indians did their best to maintain their distance from both Americans and Prophetstown by meeting in council during the fall of 1811. Lapoussier, a Wea leader, reminded Harrison that it was a mistake to think the Wea were "of his [the Prophet's] party."⁹² In fact, Lapoussier held the governor and "the Shawanoe [The Prophet] both by the hand."⁹³ Frustrated with Harrison's suspicions, Lapoussier said, "we have not let you go; we yet hold you by the hand: nor do we hold the hand of the Prophet with a view to injure you. I therefore tell you, that you are not correct when you supposed we joined hands with the Prophet to injure you."⁹⁴ Lapoussier's expression reflected the ways in which most of the Wabash Indians functioned during this period. Lapoussier accepted parts from both groups, rather than to ally fully with one or the other because he understood that neither had Wea interests at heart. Lapoussier informed the governor "no information from any quarter has reached our ears" that asked them "to injure any of your people [the Americans], except from your self."⁹⁵ Lapoussier

⁹² Speeches of Miami, ET AL. Chiefs, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 756; September 4, 1811.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

recognized the extent to which Harrison's fears had fueled the rumors of war, but also that the Prophet had played a part in fermenting hostilities. Lapoussier closed with a declaration: "We have our eyes on our lands on the Wabash [River], with a strong determination to defend our rights, let them be invaded from what quarter they may. When our best interests are invaded, we will defend them to a man."⁹⁶ An alliance with the Americans or the nativists threatened the Wea's "best interests" but Harrison continued to fear that the Wea were secretly in league with Tenskwatawa.⁹⁷ The Wea, like the Massassinway, continued to protect their village interests and did not want to associate with the Americans or the Prophet.

As the council ended, several Indian leaders stated their desire to remain independent even though they strongly objected to Tenskwatawa's actions. Miami leaders, including Pacanne, Negro-Legs, Osaga, and others signed Lapoussier's speech as a gesture of support. Nonetheless, their efforts were in vain. The Cincinnati newspaper *Liberty Hall* reported that the Miami leaders threatened Little Turtle's life if he were to receive any annuities that fall, but contextualized the news in relation to the machinations of the Prophet. Harrison concluded that the Miamis rejected the annuities because they feared an attack from the Prophet, but this conclusion ignored reliable intelligence that the Prophet's community remained divided. As if Harrison's inability to understand Miami factionalism was not enough to cause trouble, Toussaint DuBois stated that

⁹⁶ Speeches of Miami, ET AL. Chiefs, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 756; September 4, 1811.

⁹⁷ Silver Heels Speech to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 756; September 4, 1811. Other chiefs were as frustrated as Lapoussier. Massassinway (Miami) chief Silver Heels emphasized his opposition to the Prophet but also claimed neutrality because his interests

“almost every Indian” north of Fort Wayne had gone to [Fort] Malden” which convinced many Americans that war was near.⁹⁸

Harrison and his agents failed to interpret Indian behavior outside of the Prophetstown/American dichotomy. Americans continued to misinterpret Indian actions because they compared them with the Indians farther east with whom they had much more experience. Most settlers were acquainted with Pontiac’s Confederacy, the Iroquois Confederacy, and Shawnee militancy during the Revolutionary War, but few understood that Miami hegemony came through trade, not violence. The Shawnees had fought the colonists during Lord Dunmore’s War, the patriots during the Revolutionary War, and the forces under Arthur St. Clair and Hosiab Harmar during the early federal era. The few Shawnees who supported neutrality had removed west, which left the more militant Shawnees under Blue Jacket and then Tenskwatawa and his brother to oppose the European American settlers. Harrison indulged European American memories by referring regularly to Tecumseh’s affinity for the great Pontiac, which directly associated the Shawnee leader with a militant past. The governor wanted the Americans to view the actions of the Shawnee brothers as the continuation of long-established patterns of violence. Harrison’s comments negated Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa’s cultural context for a more familiar one. For the Americans, Prophetstown symbolized their past violent experiences with Indians, rather than a progressive Indian community.

After three years of difficult negotiations with the Prophet, the Miamis, and a host of other Indian communities, Harrison believed that he had no option left but to attack Prophetstown. A large contingent of Miami-speaking Indians refused to support the Americans openly, several traitorous Americans were possibly planning a coup, and

⁹⁸ WHH to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 784; September 17, 1811.

Tenskwatawa refused to negotiate any further or to recognize the right Harrison had to buy Indian lands. Most of all, Harrison had already constructed his own idea of a militant Prophetstown and he believed that Indians, especially the Prophet, were predisposed to war. There was little Tenskwatawa could do except to defend his town.

Conclusion

As Harrison planned for battle in the fall of 1811, the Indians at Prophetstown began defensive preparations in case of an attack. The Indians were well aware that Harrison planned an expedition north to break up Prophetstown. The governor had assembled and trained the Vincennes militia for months; he hoped a show of force would convince the Prophet's followers to disperse for good. In response to the growing military force near Vincennes, the Indians fortified their town. A "breast work of logs . . . encircled the town from the bank of the Wabash," which the Indians hoped would repel or at least impede any attack by the Americans.⁹⁹ What had been a fluid town quickly became an isolated settlement. All of the French traders left the town and Harrison declared that he would stop any new Indian migrations. The Indians at Prophetstown were compelled to confront the Americans or disperse. Either option left Tenskwatawa in a weakened position because attacking the Americans would have justified Harrison's actions while dispersal would have allowed Harrison to destroy Prophetstown's crops. The Prophet decided on a more militant position because a victory over the Americans would have provided an opportunity to attract more followers; most importantly, he sought to protect the town and spiritual center he had taken pains to construct. Tenskwatawa likely knew the history of American military intervention in the region from his association with so many Miamis who had witnessed it first hand. The

⁹⁹ Logan Esarey, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 700.

Americans destroyed the vast Wea crop fields near Ouiatenon in the late 1780s and did the same near Kekionga in the early 1790s. Leaving Prophetstown was the least practical option for the Prophetstown Indians.

Harrison's assumption that Prophetstown housed a thousand if not more unified Indians ignored the events that transpired there from 1808 to the fall of 1811. He was wrong because he did not consider the factionalism present at Prophetstown, the extent to which the French and Miamis influenced his policies, and his own personal frustration with and racial bias toward Tenskwatawa. First, of the many groups Harrison and his agents identified as followers of the Prophet, members from six of them openly disagreed with Tenskwatawa. The Wyandots, Ottawas, Ojibwas, Kickapoos, some Potawatomes, and several Ho-Chunk challenged the Tenskwatawa's nativist rhetoric. These were not minor disagreements but open, heated, and violent reactions to the Prophet's attempt to build a nativist Indian community. Second, Wells used his position as an Indian agent to convince Harrison that the Prophet was more influential and powerful than he was. In doing so, he divided the Miamis by claiming that fellow leaders like Pacanne supported the Prophet in order to protect his Miami faction during treaty negotiations. In turn, Harrison not only viewed Prophetstown as more violent, but also more influential than it really was. The French interpreters who provided intelligence to the Americans only added to this false characterization. Like Little Turtle and Wells, they provided information to Harrison that was often exaggerated, poorly researched, or blatantly false. They hoped that, by turning Harrison against Prophetstown, they would protect their economic and familial interests in the region. Lastly, Harrison's inability to understand Indians on their own terms convinced the governor that the Prophet's town was unified

and preparing for war by the fall of 1811 even though it remained a contested community. His anger towards the Prophet had made his policies towards Prophetstown not only ill-informed but often quite personal. The events at Prophetstown and intelligence surrounding it reflect a community as diverse in ideas as it was in interests. To characterize it as a settlement that enjoyed ideological unity ignores the Indians who resisted it from within and outside of its borders.

Chapter Five: The Battle of Tippecanoe and its Contested Meaning

Few events have been misinterpreted more than the Battle of Tippecanoe.¹ The battle which took place on November 7, 1811, has been characterized as a fight between the European American and Indian races. The clash, however, was closer to a pitched fight brought on by Harrison's aggressive movement towards Prophetstown than the beginning of a frontier race war. The battle did not produce any important diplomatic or military changes for the Indians and the Americans, nor did it facilitate greater ideological unification in either community. Indeed, the divisions within each community prevented the full-scale mobilization that was necessary for either community to strike a decisive blow against the other. In many ways, the *mêlée* at Tippecanoe between the Indians and European Americans was an anomaly in a valley where cultural interests superseded racial identities.

The tendency to see the battle as William Henry Harrison's decisive victory over the Prophet's radical and militant Indians reaches its apotheosis in the work of Benjamin Drake. The myth of the battle was already established by the mid-nineteenth century and subsequent scholars continued to repeat Drake's characterization of the battle. Drake concluded that "peace on the frontiers was one of the happy results of this severe and brilliant action. The tribes which had already joined in the confederacy were dismayed; and those which had remained neutral now decided against it."² Drake even made Harrison into a miraculous figure who survived because of much "coolness and bravery"

¹ Alfred A. Cave states that the recent revisionist historiography concerning the Prophet has "left one major part of the old story untouched: Tenskwatawa's presumed disgrace at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. Both textbooks and specialized histories still generally maintain that the Prophet's blundering and cowardice in that engagement cost him the respect of his followers and the leadership of the movement, which was presumable then taken over by Tecumseh who transformed it from a religious crusade into a pragmatic political alliance." Alfred A. Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Myth-Making," *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter, 2002), 639.

² Benjamin Drake, *The Life of Tecumseh*, 153.

even though a musket “ball [passed] through his stock, slightly bruising his neck; another struck his saddle, and glancing hit his thigh; and a third wounded the horse on which he was riding.”³ A “fanatical” Indian Prophet was no match for the heroic William Henry Harrison. Harrison’s victory, however, has often revolved around the concomitant decline of the Prophet. According to historical myth, “the defeated Indians were greatly exasperated with the Prophet: they reproached him in bitter terms for the calamity he had brought upon them, and accused him of the murder of their friends who had fallen in the action.”⁴ The actual events at Tippecanoe in November of 1811 were often very different in several key details than the historical record reflects, as were the ways in which the battle affected the inhabitants of the valley.

Tenskwatawa had little to do with instigating a fight with Harrison’s men, nor did the defeat at Tippecanoe undermine the Prophet’s influence or the symbolic value of Prophetstown. The battle erupted because of a small skirmish between American sentries and some Indians passing nearby. The initial violence was not part of a larger plan designed by the Prophet to destroy Harrison’s forces. The Prophet attempted to stop his followers from attacking Harrison’s encampment, but had little success because many of his warriors were enraged because two American sentries had assaulted some Ho-Chunk Indians. Years after the battle, Tenskwatawa claimed, “the [Ho-Chunk] struck” Harrison’s forces and that he “was opposed to it but could not stop it.”⁵ John Johnston, the Indian agent at that time, agreed that “the [Ho-Chunk] forced on the battle of

³ Benjamin Drake, *The Life of Tecumseh*, 153.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵ Indian Speeches – Chiefs. Yealabahcah and the Prophet to Lewis Cass, 1816, *Lewis Cass Papers* (William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan). Alfred A. Cave, “The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Mythmaking,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 22, No. 4. (Winter, 2002), 655.

Tippecanoe.”⁶ The Prophet’s inability to control his followers was nothing new. Well aware that Harrison would march on Prophetstown after fending off the Indians, Tenskwatawa abandoned his town in order to avoid capture by the Americans. Abandoning the town, however, did not lead to a loss of influence within the Wabash-Maumee Valley, even though Harrison burned Prophetstown and its food stores to the ground. In fact, Tenskwatawa remained a significant leader in the region and rebuilt his town during the winter of 1811 and 1812.⁷

This chapter argues that the Battle of Tippecanoe was the product of intra-community factionalism and that it did not represent the culmination of racial hatreds smoldering between Vincennes and Prophetstown. Furthermore, despite the violence at Tippecanoe, the battle and resulting violence did not promote racial unity among the Indians at Prophetstown or the European Americans at Vincennes. Historians have incorrectly identified this battle as the symbolic fight between the European American and Indian races when in fact it was an anomaly in a region where behavior continued to be defined by factional, rather than racial, relationships. Tecumseh’s pan-Indian confederacy was more a reaction not to the “race” fight at Tippecanoe, but rather to his brother’s inability to unite Indian communities in the period before and after the Battle of Tippecanoe. While nativist rhetoric played an important part in Tecumseh’s missions to disparate Indian communities in the Ohio Valley, he was forced to adopt a more practical approach to unifying Indian communities that were unwilling to sacrifice their ethnic interests. This chapter recontextualizes the Battle of Tippecanoe within the history of the

⁶ Indian Speeches, 1816, *Lewis Cass Papers* (William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan); State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and Lyman Copeland Draper (*Draper Manuscript Collection: Series YY; Tecumseh Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Library, Dept. of Photo-reproduction, 1966): 162.

⁷ Alfred A. Cave, “The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Myth-Making,” *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter, 2002).

Wabash-Maumee Valley in order to understand the ethnic and factional interests that fueled the fighting. Subsequently, this chapter reinterprets the actions of the European Americans at Vincennes, the Prophet's followers, the Wabash Indians, and Tecumseh during the post-battle era along the same lines. Rather than attribute the eventual dissolution of Prophetstown to the Battle of Tippecanoe, this chapter argues that the inter-Indian factionalism that led to its decline was actually a natural progression of the divisions present before the battle.

Historians have wrongly attributed the changes in the Wabash-Maumee Valley to Harrison's victory at Tippecanoe. The violence at Tippecanoe did not swell the ranks of Prophetstown nor did it convince large numbers of new Indians to support his nativist movement. It was, in many ways, a non-event. In fact, some residents of Prophetstown continued to act on their own in direct opposition to Tenskwatawa's teachings. Vincennes remained as divided. The battle provided yet another issue for the factions to use against each other. Harrison hoped to exploit the battle to enter a new career in the military rather than remain as governor of a territory that was becoming adverse to his policies. Important players within the Miami community, William Wells and Little Turtle, continued their attacks on the Prophet, but watched as their influence diminished greatly. The relative insignificance of Prophetstown did not mean that the towns remained the same. By 1813, the relationship between the two towns had changed significantly. Harrison no longer served as the territorial governor and Vincennes was no longer the territorial capital. William Wells and Little Turtle had both died during the war, while the Prophet had abandoned Prophetstown in order to help his brother campaign with the British against the Americans during the War of 1812.

The Battle

It was late October 1811, and large patches of ice hugged the edges of the Wabash River. Most inhabitants in the region busily prepared for the arrival of winter by storing grain for their cattle and horses, organizing their foodstuffs in underground cellars, and splitting the wood that would heat their homes through the bitterly cold months ahead. The Indians at Prophetstown and the Americans at Fort Harrison, however, were preparing for war. In the early days of October, Harrison had marched his forces up to present-day Terre Haute, Indiana, and constructed the fort as a staging area for an expedition to Prophetstown. Many Americans believed that such a fort was necessary to prevent the Prophet from attacking Vincennes. Harrison thought that the location of Prophetstown was perfect for staging an attack on the European Americans because it was “just so far off as to be removed from our immediate observation-and yet so near as to enable him to strike us when the water is high in 24 hours.”⁸ Access to the Wabash River allowed the Prophet’s followers quick movement when needed and the dense thickets, swamps, and small lakes would prevent an attack by the American cavalry and slow any infantry advance.⁹ Harrison planned to march north to Prophetstown. The governor heard reports that Tenskwatawa fortified Prophetstown in case the American militia attacked. Late fall was an ideal time to move against Prophetstown. Harrison believed that “many of the Potawatomies [had] left” Tenskwatawa for good and Harrison remained hopeful that the Kickapoos would abandon Prophetstown as well.¹⁰ Tenskwatawa’s force appeared diminished, which must have comforted Harrison who had hundreds of his own men return to their homes rather than fight.

⁸ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 4, 630; July 10, 1811.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 18; October 28, 2009.

Harrison's force of 742 men was less than half its original size of 1600, but the governor rallied his soldiers and marched them north of Prophetstown.¹¹ Relations soured to such an extent during the building of Fort Harrison that the regulars and militia nearly came to blows.¹² Harrison blamed it on sickness. On October 25, Harrison wrote to Governor Charles Scott of Kentucky and complained about how his fighting force had been "diminished by sickness."¹³ He was too proud to discuss the near-mutiny among his men. He also told Scott that the Weas and Miami had abandoned Prophetstown, still unaware or unwilling to recognize why Miami-speaking Indians had associated with the Prophet in the first place. Despite the defections from Prophetstown, Harrison remained focused on confronting Tenskwatawa. The governor's sources reported that Tenskwatawa had declared to the Delaware that he would "attack the troops under [the governor's] command."¹⁴ Governor Harrison used the Prophet's threat as partial justification to move against Prophetstown, but Tenskwatawa likely made such a declaration as a way to make Harrison initiate an attack on the Indians. Prophetstown lacked the unity Tenskwatawa desired and believed that a small skirmish between Terre Haute and Prophetstown might convince hundreds of Indians to join in support of his nativist ideals. It would also undermine Little Turtle and William Wells who had worked with the Americans in opposition to Prophetstown. However, the actual battle took place within a mile of the town. Picking a fight so close to Prophetstown was not what Tenskwatawa wanted because it would provide ample opportunity and justification for the Americans to destroy Prophetstown.

¹¹ Alfred Pirtle, *The Battle of Tippecanoe* (Louisville, KY: J. P. Morton and Company, 1900), 27.

¹² Henry Swearingen letter, OM 0066, Indiana Historical Society, October 7, 1811.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Harrison's march along the north bank of the Wabash River proved uneventful, largely because the European Americans did not encounter any Indians. The peaceful nature of the march convinced Harrison that it was safe for his force to camp eleven miles northwest of Prophetstown. The next day, several soldiers noticed that there were Indians spying on the Americans as they marched towards Prophetstown, but all attempts by Harrison's Indian agent, Toussaint DuBois, to confront the Indians failed. DuBois, along with the other Frenchmen in Harrison's force, must have taken some minor delight in finally moving against Prophetstown. The intelligence they had provided to the governor was an important reason why Harrison believed that a pre-emptive attack on Prophetstown was needed. Harrison eventually stopped just south of Burnet's Creek where a sodden prairie to the south would prevent any surprise Indian attacks. Harrison wanted to delay an attack until the next day, November 7, because his men were not quite ready, but several of his officers begged him to reconsider and to attack Prophetstown as quickly as possible.¹⁵

¹⁵ Alfred Pirtle, *The Battle of Tippecanoe* (Louisville, KY: J. P. Morton and Company, 1900), 29.

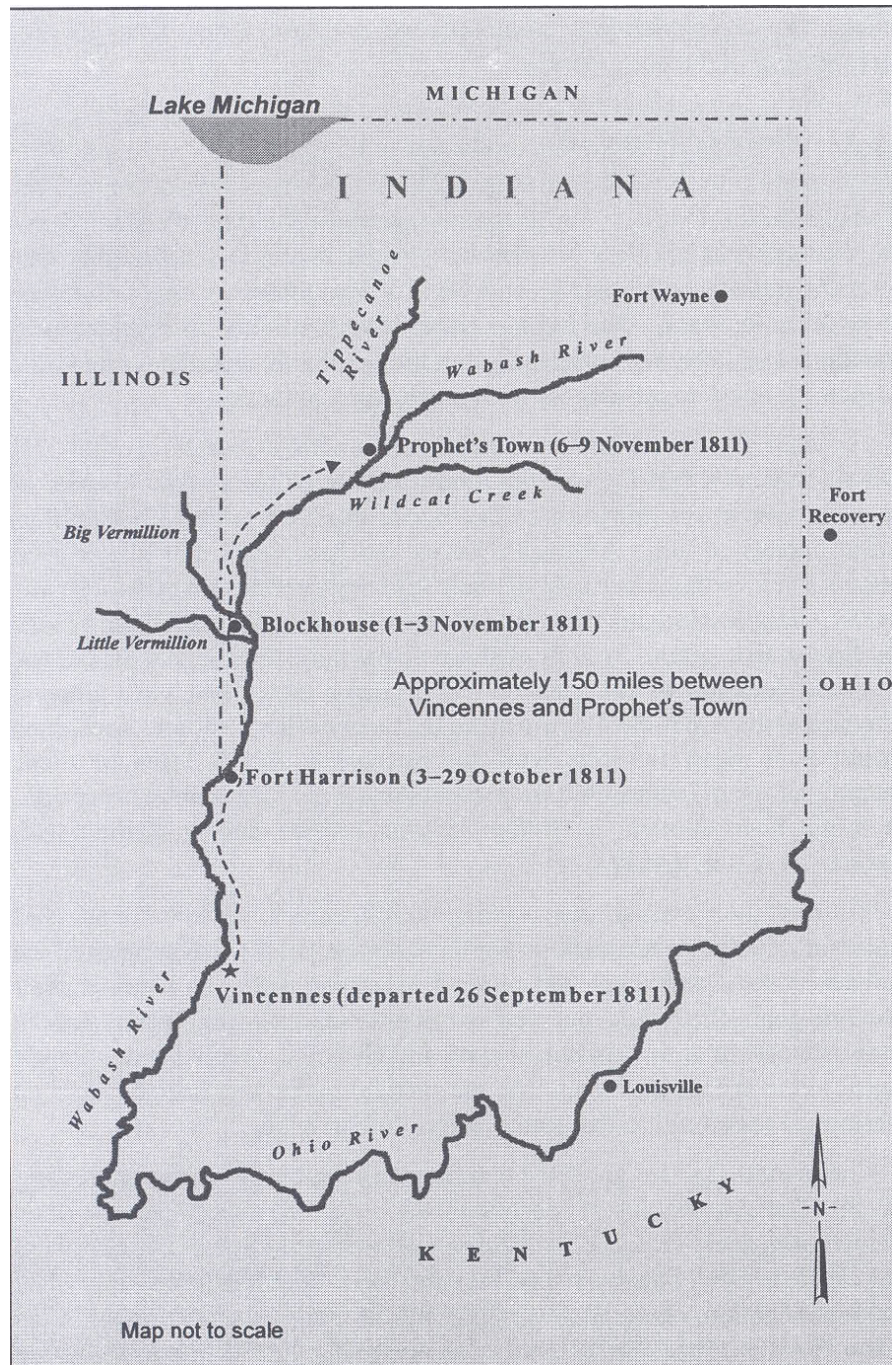


Figure 5.1, Harrison's March to Prophetstown

Taken from Harry D. Tunnel, *To Compel With Armed Force: A Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Tippecanoe* (Published by U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1998).

Meanwhile, the Prophet hoped to confront Harrison's men and state his desire for peace in order to stave off an attack. Tenskwatawa instructed several of his supporters to meet Harrison's men. Apparently, the first deputation of Indians missed the Americans while the second group located the army and inquired as to why they had moved so close to Prophetstown. The Prophet's men expressed their desire that measures be taken to prevent bloodshed, especially so close to Prophetstown. Harrison said that he had no intention of attacking their town, but that he needed to speak with the Prophet the next morning. Harrison vowed that he would not assault Prophetstown unless the Indians rejected his demands.¹⁶ Both Harrison and the Prophet considered the benefits of fighting. Harrison likely wanted a battle to prove to federal authorities that his detractors were wrong and that they should dismiss calls to replace him. Dispersing the Prophet's followers would definitely reinvigorate Harrison's leadership at a time when his support was declining. The Prophet, although hopeful that a skirmish might unite his divided community, recognized that he was outnumbered and that any violence so close to Prophetstown might compel his followers to flee. Both men knew that a victory in battle would strengthen their leadership, but they also recognized that defeat could do exactly the opposite. Prepared to negotiate first and attack second, Harrison decided to camp along Burnet's Creek while the Prophet rested at Prophetstown.

Bloodshed erupted between the two groups despite their efforts to prevent it. The standard narrative places the blame on the Prophet for ordering a surprise attack on Harrison's encampment during the night. However, this characterization reflects interpretations based on Harrison's comments shortly before and during the Battle of Tippecanoe. In fact, the fighting surprised both sides. In the period before dawn on

¹⁶ Pirtle, *The Battle of Tippecanoe*, 41.

November 7, 1811, a fierce battle developed along Burnet's Creek where Harrison's men were camped. The fighting began when two Ho-Chunk Indians passed near some of the American guards who shot and wounded them. As the sentinels approached, the wounded Indians "arose and Tomahawked them," which spurred a reaction among the Indians at Prophetstown who felt that the American soldiers had purposely picked a fight.¹⁷ The Prophet awoke suddenly to hear that two of his Ho-Chunk followers had been wounded by the American sentries. Well aware that a battle so close to his town would prove disastrous, Tenskwatawa pleaded to his people not to rush to judgment in a desperate attempt to prevent further bloodshed. It was to no avail. A couple hundred Indians rushed north to Burnet's Creek to aid their neighbors, while other Indians departed Prophetstown because they were unwilling to suffer the consequences of war. The Miami at Prophetstown did not want the Americans to associate them with any violence arising from Prophetstown because it would allow Harrison to strip their rights to the area, which they were desperate to protect.

Harrison mustered nearly 800 men, but it is unlikely that the Prophet even had half that many men considering the defections of the Potawatomi and groups like the Miami and Wea who saw no benefit in fighting the Americans.¹⁸ The Prophet and his town were simply not as threatening as Harrison said. Not only was it improbable that the Prophet ordered a foolish attack on Harrison's encampment, but Tenskwatawa did not

¹⁷ Elliott to Brock, January 12, 1812, in Esarey, ed., *Messages and Letters*, 1:616-17; Alfred Cave argues against Dave Edmunds' interpretation that the Prophet ordered an attack on Harrison and he concludes that the violence was actually spurred on by the American forces. Alfred A. Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Mythmaking," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 22, No. 4. (Winter, 2002), 653-655.

¹⁸ Colin Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America* (Viking Press, 2008), 144. Calloway states that the Indians were outnumbered "as much as two to one." That places the number of Indian warriors around 400, but Stephen Warren estimates the numbers of Indians as low as 250. Stephen Warren, *The Shawnee and Their Neighbors, 1795-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 40.

have a force equal to the task. The accepted narrative states that Tenskwatawa guaranteed his men a victory because the Master of Life had made them invulnerable to Harrison's men. In fact, a storm was to have ruined the American's gunpowder, which would allow the Indians to spread throughout the American camp, murder Harrison, and then watch as the Long Knives fled into the woods.¹⁹ Despite the lack of planning on both sides, the battle raged for a few hours. Josiah Bacon watched it unfold, horrified as Indians with "their faces painted black" appeared in the darkness as the muskets flashed and lighted up the surrounding areas.²⁰ The battle continued until sunrise with between 30 and 50 Indians and almost 200 Americans dead. Despite losing far fewer men in the battle, the Indians fled the area and left Prophetstown for the Americans to destroy. Harrison ordered the entire town burned, including all of the wigwams, the meetinghouse, and five thousand pounds of stored food.²¹

Historians have used the events of the battle and its aftermath to generalize about the Prophet and his town. They have concluded that the Prophet not only prepared his men for the fight, but that he promised them victory. Their subsequent failure to drive the Americans from their encampment greatly undermined the Prophet's authority and his role in the pan-Indian confederacy centered at Prophetstown. The situation became so contentious that several of the nativist Indians tried to kill Tenskwatawa who was only saved by his brother Tecumseh. Historians use the battle to mark a shift in the balance of power away from the Prophet to his brother, Tecumseh, which they use to explain why the nativist Indians were so willing to forge a relationship with the British. With the

¹⁹ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 110.

²⁰ Lydia B. Bacon, Journal Manuscript November 30, 1811, The New York Historical Society, New York, New York. Lydia B. Bacon's journal, November 30, 1811.

²¹ Alfred A. Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Mythmaking," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 22, No. 4. (Winter, 2002), 656.

Prophet shamed, the Indians willingly turned their allegiance towards Tecumseh.

However, conclusions that the Prophet ordered an attack on Harrison and that the battle destroyed his influence among the Wabash Indians rest on a cursory examination of the sources.

The warriors at Prophetstown attacked the Americans without the Prophet's blessing. In fact, Tenskwatawa likely demanded that they cease fighting but his inability to control the warriors left him helpless. The Prophet had not hand-picked nearly one hundred warriors to participate in the battle, nor had he instructed them to strike before dawn.²² Not only could the battle spread to the town, but Indian militancy legitimized the American presence in the area by forcing the Americans to protect nearby European American settlements. Traditional interpretations tend to ignore an important question. Why did the Prophet wait so long to attack? He would have had a better chance at victory if he had attacked Harrison's force as it marched towards Prophetstown. By delaying any attack, Tenskwatawa allowed Harrison's men to set up a perimeter and to fortify their camp. Furthermore, after the Indians withdrew, Harrison marched his men to Prophetstown the next day and burned the town, including a massive amount of stored food. Harrison's men also desecrated the Indian burial ground at Prophetstown as well. Had the Prophet attacked Harrison's forces as they marched from Fort Harrison, the governor would have been unable to attack Prophetstown on the same day. The distance coupled with the difficulty of marching his men through the tangled underbrush and swamps would have delayed their advance. Such a setback would have allowed Tenskwatawa to call for reinforcements and defend his town. Attacking the governor at

²² Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 111.

Burnet's Creek was the worst possible option available because it involved assaulting the Americans at their strongest.

Tenskwatawa did not order an attack. The Prophet said as much four years later when he spoke to Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan and claimed that he never ordered an assault. He argued that "the Winnebagoes struck" Harrison's encampment and that he "was opposed to it but could not stop it."²³ He questioned Cass, "Who began the war? Did not General Harrison come to my village? . . . If we had come to you, then you might have blam'd us, but you came to my village for this you are angry at me."²⁴

Tenskwatawa's inability to control the residents of his community makes sense given the factionalized nature of Prophetstown.²⁵ The Prophet's language to Cass was entirely defensive and pragmatic. He had not spent three years constructing a community only to throw it all away by attacking Harrison's army camped within two miles of Prophetstown. The problem for the Prophet and Harrison was identifying the Indians who associated with Prophetstown for reasons other than Tenskwatawa's teachings.

Several of the Miami-speaking Indians in the area used the battle for their own purposes. The Americans, and subsequent historians writing about the event, believed Miami descriptions that the battle resulted in the Prophet's ostracization from his town.

One Wea leader, Little Eyes, was central to this process. He participated in the Battle of

²³ Indian Speeches – Chiefs. Yealabahcah and the Prophet to Lewis Cass, 1816, *Lewis Cass Papers* (William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan). Alfred A. Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Mythmaking," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 22, No. 4. (Winter, 2002), 655.

²⁴ Indian Speeches – Chiefs. Yealabahcah and the Prophet to Lewis Cass, 1816, *Lewis Cass Papers* (William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan)

²⁵ Alfred A. Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Myth-Making," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter, 2002). Cave argues that the Prophet probably did not order an attack on Harrison's forces, but he does so to critique historical conclusions that the Prophet lost his religious influence after the battle. I argue that he did not order an attack because he was unable to control his men and that such behavior was in concert with the way Prophetstown had always operated.

Tippecanoe and recounted for the Americans the events that transpired after the violence subsided. While there is no proof, though, it seems likely that Little Eyes' story was a blatant lie designed to calm the Americans.²⁶ Little Eyes described a tense situation in the days after the battle in which Tenskwatawa's followers wanted to kill the Shawnee leader while many others simply abandoned him. He even said that some Ho-Chunk Indians captured Tenskwatawa and tied him up because they were so angry that they had lost the battle. Little Eyes fed the story to the Americans in order to give the Prophet some time to regain his forces, but also to lessen the likelihood of further violence. The area around Prophetstown was traditional Wea territory and violence in the region would only increase the American presence there, further undercutting Wea autonomy. The Miami had everything to gain by playing Prophetstown and Vincennes against each other, just like their French counterparts. Little Eye's motives remained clouded in the records, but it is likely that he operated under a similar philosophy to that of his fellow Miami, Pacanne. Little Eyes had signed the Treaty of Grouseland in 1805 but did not sign the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809. Rather, he signed a supplemental treaty less than one month later. Harrison, as he did with Pacanne, concluded that the Little Eyes was "in the Interest of the Prophet" but it was more likely that Little Eyes played the middle to protect his interests.²⁷ Serving as an informant for Josiah Snelling at Fort Harrison likely

²⁶ Alfred A. Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe," 656. Cave states that Little Eyes "may well have endeavored to mislead the Americans about the Prophet's actual status after Tippecanoe." Cave offers this conclusion based on tenuous reports that Little Eyes was "reputedly an ally of the Prophet," but I argue that it was more likely, given the ways in which the Miami utilized Prophetstown to protect their interests, that Little Eyes was neither an ally of the Prophet or the Americans.

²⁷ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5 (495); April 15, 2009.

earned the Wea leader some extra goods in addition to his community's annuity payment. He had stolen from the Americans before, but this time he used Prophetstown to do it.²⁸

Like Little Eyes, other people manipulated information about the battle as a way to protect their interests. Even though the physical fight lasted only a few hours, the ideological Battle of Tippecanoe was far from over. The Prophet and Tecumseh gathered their followers together in an effort to rebuild Prophetstown and Harrison spent the rest of his life defending his actions during the fight. The battle enhanced intra-community factionalism rather than ending it. Indian groups argued over whether or not the Prophet was responsible while the European Americans said much the same about Harrison. Each community used the battle for their own purposes, but neither Prophetstown nor Vincennes found greater unity after it. Intra-community factionalism prevented racial unity even though the battle convinced many that a large-scale war between Indians and European Americans was only days away. This, however, was not the case. The Wabash-Maumee Valley remained at peace until the spring, when Potawatomi warriors began attacking several American farms in the area. The Battle of Tippecanoe was not a turning point for either side because the battle neither changed the dynamics in either town nor altered the power dynamics in the valley.

²⁸ There are some contradictions regarding the role played by Little Eyes. Cave describes his presence with the Prophetstown Indians shortly after the battle, but John Sugden claims that Little Eyes was an intermediary sent by Snelling at Fort Harrison to negotiate with the Prophet three days before the battle. Sugden in *Tecumseh: A Life* then claims that White Eyes passed Harrison's army on his way back south to Fort Harrison. It seems very unlikely that White Eyes could have been at the Battle of Tippecanoe if Sugden is correct about the Wea chief heading towards Fort Harrison. John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (Macmillan Press 1999), 230. Peter Mancall and James Merrell agree with Cave. Peter Mancall and James Merrell, eds., *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal* (Routledge, 2000), 392.

The Battle of Tippecanoe Comes to Vincennes

The Battle of Tippecanoe was only a minor disruption in a region divided by factional strife. What appeared to be a racial struggle was in fact a far more complicated event built upon factional relationships. As Harrison's force marched back to Vincennes with nearly 130 wounded, they feared an attack from the many Indians who roamed the area. It was one thing for the soldiers to burn Prophetstown to the ground, but desecrating an Indian burial ground was unforgivable. Nonetheless, the Americans returned to Vincennes safely, minus sixty-two soldiers who had died on the field of battle. The death count included Thomas Randolph, who had been Jennings' main challenger for territorial representative to Congress. It was ironic that the violence at Tippecanoe had resulted in Randolph's death. Many anti-Harrisonians believed that the governor's rhetoric about Prophetstown was the result of his frustration in not getting Randolph elected. In a way, Harrison had killed his ally Randolph. Many of the soldiers believed that more would die when the Indians counterattacked, but the attack never came. Many of the neutral Miami had fled the area around Prophetstown, while the other Indian communities withdrew after watching their harvest and homes go up in flames. The Prophet had not organized the first attack, nor would he want to put his community at further risk with another. As Harrison's men marched into Vincennes, they were not greeted by victorious fanfare or congratulatory cheers. Most of the soldiers wondered if they had just ignited a frontier war while others questioned the need to attack Prophetstown in the first place.

While the residents of Vincennes initially mourned their dead, they spent the months following the battle confronting each other. There was a funeral every day,

sometimes two, as injured soldiers died from their wounds. Each day reminded the residents that they had paid a heavier price than the Indians, even though the Americans had burned Prophetstown to the ground. Coffin processions were “followed by a soldier . . . marching to the tune of Roslein Castle beat upon muffled drums.”²⁹ As the shock of the battle passed, people began questioning the governor’s leadership during the late action, and some even wondered if their loved ones had died in vain. Rumors spread throughout the territory that militia had tried to retreat during battle because of Harrison’s ineffective leadership. Almost two months later, reports surfaced that the Indians were resettling Prophetstown. Residents of Vincennes, eyeing the many fresh graves, could not help but wonder just who had benefited from the battle.

Within weeks, the factions began using the battle as a way to attack each other. They had a well-established tradition of using territorial affairs against each other and the Battle of Tippecanoe proved no different. Harrison reported that his “personal enemies” had spread word that “the expedition was entirely useless & the Prophet as one of the best & most pacific of Mortals.”³⁰ Harrison was right. John Badollet felt the “little band of the Prophet and his brother were not a banditti” but “a set of orderly, sober, and industrious men” whom Harrison drove to “despair, in spite of their repeated cries for peace.”³¹ Rumors circulated through town that one of the sentinels who had heard the first shots had actually shot himself by accident or been shot by one of his fellow soldiers. If the stories were true, some people believed that the battle started due to incompetence and not because the soldiers had tried to protect themselves.

²⁹ Lydia B. Bacon, Journal Manuscript November 30, 1811, The New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

³⁰ William Henry Harrison to Charles Scott, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 147; November 19, 1811.

³¹ John Louis Badollet, Albert Gallatin, and Gayle Thornbrough. *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804-1836* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1963), 217. December 30, 1811.

Rumors were also rampant that Harrison was responsible for the death of several soldiers during battle because the governor had panicked. The Harrisonians had to confront this story when they discovered a resolution put forth by several of their old enemies. This document praised Colonel John P. Boyd who served as second in command at the Battle of Tippecanoe. It neglected to mention Harrison's leadership of the militia forces. Several of Boyd's supporters, including James Johnson (Presiding Judge of the Court of Common Pleas), John Caldwell, Nathaniel Ewing, and Badollet met in secret and issued a public statement extolling the conduct of the regular army, while failing to offer any comment about the local militia. The Harrisonians took offense to such blatant libel. In response, Benjamin Parke gathered several militiamen at a Parmenas Beckes's Inn on December 7, 1811 and adopted resolutions that rejected the public appraisals of Boyd.³² They "resolved unanimously" that the address put forth by the anti-Harrisonians was done so to "injure the character of Governor Harrison."³³

Parke's group believed that

the conduct of said individuals [in the Boyd faction] (almost every one of whom are the avowed enemies of the Commander in Chief – and several of whom have uniformly discountenanced and opposed every measure of the government, in respect to the Shawnee Prophet and his party, and none of whom were on the Campaign [sic]) in daring to speak in the name of the Militia, as highly presumptuous and unwarrantable.³⁴

As if to stoke the fire, Stout published these resolutions in his January 4, 1812 edition of *The Western Sun*. It quickly engulfed the town in yet another dispute. For the Harrisonians, the attack on their governor was personal. The Boyd faction challenged

³² Robert S. Lambert, "The Conduct of the Militia at Tippecanoe: Elihu Stout's Controversy with Colonel John P. Boyd, January, 1812," *The Indiana Magazine of History*, September, 1995, 239.

³³ Resolution adopted at a meeting of the Knox County Militia, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 159; December 7, 1811.

³⁴ Lambert, "The Conduct of the Militia at Tippecanoe," 239, 240-241.

Harrison's leadership in regards to the Prophet, a major symbol of Harrisonian politics. American settlers incited the Indians in an effort to end Harrison's governorship; now the Regular Army assaulted the governor. Harrison recognized these problems and tried to control people's perceptions of the battle. John Johnston, the Fort Wayne Indian agent concluded that the Indian force at Prophetstown had been far fewer in number than Harrison's command.

Such a low estimate of Indians would have looked very bad considering the much larger number of Americans who had died. The governor claimed that "it was impossible to believe that there were less than seven hundred Indians in the late action," an estimate that would have made the American and Indian forces relatively equal.³⁵ He questioned Johnston's "false" report and concluded that Johnston's estimate reflected what the Indians had told him which Harrison believed to be unreliable.³⁶ Harrison even claimed that Johnston had failed at his duty and replenished "the powder horns and pouches of many of those Indians whom he knew" to have participated at Prophetstown.³⁷ Johnston was not the only person questioning the governor's efforts at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Residents of Vincennes were mailing out information to national newspapers, including Pennsylvania's *The Reporter*, which claimed that Harrison was to blame for the death of Major Joseph Hamilton Daviess. After hearing that the *New York Commercial Advertiser* published a derogatory letter that a resident of Vincennes sent to Congress, Harrison told Stout that he would pay one hundred dollars for "the names of the Writer, and the person to whom it was addressed."³⁸ Angered by the attacks on the governor,

³⁵ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 273; January 14, 1812.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ WHH to Stout, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 359; February 12, 1812.

several Harrisonians signed their own letter which expressed their opinion that the governor “was calm and deliberate – that his orders were precise and distinct” during the battle and that “victory was obtained by [the governor’s] vigilance and activity.”³⁹ The debates raging in Vincennes, although framed around the meaning of Tippecanoe, fell across the same factional lines that had crystallized during the debate over slavery.

Similarly, some residents of Vincennes continued to use the Prophet as a means to express their feelings by publishing editorials in Stout’s newspaper concerning the battle. In line with his newfound independence, Stout continued the fracas with an editorial of his own. After learning that Colonel Boyd planned to travel east on a furlough (an underserved trip in Stout’s eyes) Stout published an article that mocked Boyd’s leadership and commitment.⁴⁰ Stout closed with a highly inflammatory and sarcastic paragraph:

We cannot withhold from the Colonel [Boyd] our sense of his *merit* and the great *loss* our country will sustain by being deprived of *his* services. Should there be a second expedition against the Indians, the Man, who by his *personal* skill and bravery decided the action of the 7th November, and took with his own hands the *war club* of their great warrior, the *magic cup* of the Prophet, and the scalp of a Chief, together with a number of other acts of bravery not necessary here to mention, but which will forever immortalize the Hero.⁴¹

Incensed at the articles and demanding vengeance, Boyd’s party (which consisted of several anti-Harrisonians) insisted that Stout reveal the author of the article. When Stout refused, Boyd marched into his office demanding to know the author’s identity. Angrily Stout shouted, “You may consider me as the author!”⁴² Boyd swung at Stout with his cane, but the nimble printer grabbed Boyd and his stick and then beat him in self-defense.

³⁹ Statement of Harrison’s behavior during the Battle of Tippecanoe, *War of 1812 Material*, when?

⁴⁰ *The Western Sun*, January 18, 1812.

⁴¹ Lambert, “The Conduct of the Militia at Tippecanoe,” 242.

⁴² Lambert, “The Conduct of the Militia at Tippecanoe,” 244

Boyd's orderly, Josiah Bacon, seized Stout and tried to restrain him, but Lieutenant Robert Buntin, a militiaman, yanked Bacon away from the printer and hurled him to the office floor.⁴³ Boyd retreated, leaving Stout to gloat in victory, and gloat he did in that week's newspaper. Stout's article "ANOTHER BATTLE *on the Wabash, or Colonel JOHN P. BOYD'S DEFEAT!!*" read:

does not, or is not everyone ready to cry out shame! That such an *experienced* officer who has so highly boasted of his superior skill and abilities, should be thus ingloriously defeated, by a man who had never seen a "tented field?"- Can such a man be trusted with the defense of our common country? Has he talents adequate to a corporals command? The Printer pronounces he has not!⁴⁴

Even after the governor and the army defeated the Prophet at Tippecanoe, Tenskwatawa remained influential in Vincennes. His presence was inescapable. Physically the Prophet was always an outsider, but as a tool for the factions in Vincennes, he became central to their political identities. The people of Vincennes went through years of palpable fear that the Indians at Prophetstown would strike Vincennes. Few could have imagined that the only substantive attack in Vincennes would be initiated by one American upon another.

The French

The Battle of Tippecanoe continued a process through which the French used the opportunities provided by Indian affairs to their benefit. The war helped the French residents who had suffered greatly in the period leading up to Tippecanoe. After the violence in Indiana Territory evolved into the War of 1812, the French found their roles as translators and go-betweens replaced by the need to have every able-bodied man bear arms for the American army. This did not mean that the French abandoned their

⁴³ Ibid., 242.

⁴⁴ *The Western Sun*, January 25, 1812.

relationships with the Wabash Indians, but that the opportunities available to them were in military service rather than frontier diplomacy. Reality had set in. The population of Indiana Territory by 1810 had grown to more than 24,000 (compared to just over 5,000 in 1800), while Ohio's population was at 230,000.⁴⁵ The Americans would have reacted swiftly against the French had they refused to participate in the War of 1812 and they most likely looked at the chance to serve in Harrison's militia and the American army as a welcomed opening to earn money and respect.⁴⁶

Many Frenchmen joined Harrison's militia force that marched towards Prophetstown, although the Americans segregated the men into two distinct French and American militia groups.⁴⁷ This must have pleased Toussaint DuBois, Hyacinthe Lasselle and the other French traders who had watched their community suffer during the previous decade. The Americans had not quite succeeded in forcing the French to assimilate, and the necessities of war required that the Americans rely on the French to defend their territory. This had to be especially grating for Harrison who felt that "the French for any Military purpose [were] worth nothing."⁴⁸ Dealing with American bigotries was nothing new for the French who likely appreciated the chance to earn some money. Again, participating in Indian affairs had afforded the French a chance to protect their community and culture. Their membership in the militia demonstrated that the French had maintained their culture enough to where Harrison and his officers found it impractical to mix them in among the Americans.

⁴⁵ Harlow Lindley, *Indiana as seen by early Travelers: A Collection of Reprints from Books of Travel, Letters and Diaries Prior to 1830* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), 32-33.

⁴⁶ Jay Gitlin, *Old Wine in New Bottles: French Merchants and the Emergence of the American Midwest, 1795-1835*, 44-46.

⁴⁷ Charles Franklin, *Indiana: War of 1812 Soldiers* (Indianapolis: Ye Olde Genealogy Shoppe, 1984), 48-49.

⁴⁸ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 827; April 25, 1810.

There must have been a sense of accomplishment within the French community, especially among the French traders who had played such an important role in getting Harrison to attack Prophetstown. The French had successfully navigated the shrinking ground of diplomacy in order to protect their long-standing relationship with the Miamis and trade within the Wabash-Maumee trading network. Trade in the region around Prophetstown had almost stopped in the year leading up to the battle and there were instances in which the French traders were close to getting killed. Not only did the Prophet attempt to limit trade within his town by physically and verbally abusing the French traders, but some of the traders even left Vincennes out of fear that the Prophet might attack them.⁴⁹ Ridding the region of Prophetstown would likely force many of the Indian communities into a greater dependency on the Americans, which provided ample opportunities for the French traders to direct and profit from land cessions.

Prophetstown

The Prophet and many of his followers quickly left Prophetstown before Harrison's men arrived to destroy it. They had no time to take the massive amount of stored food that the Indians needed to survive the winter and Harrison burned it all. Days after the battle, a few Indians returned to Prophetstown and discovered more than their burned homes. Harrison's men had dug up and desecrated the Indians' burial ground. This infuriated the Indians, even those who disagreed with the Prophet's teachings. To make matters worse, the burial ground was much older than the town and contained the graves of Miami, Wea, and Piankashaw Indians from decades earlier. This enraged many more Indians than those at Prophetstown. It may have convinced some neutral Indians to

⁴⁹ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 3, 827; April 25, 1810. Harrison states that "The friends of the French Traders amongst the Indians have advised them to separate themselves from the Americans in this town, lest they should suffer in the attack, which they meditate against the latter."

join the Prophet. Even though Harrison gloated that his victory at Tippecanoe was one of the worst defeats ever suffered by the Indians, he warned Secretary of War Eustis that the Prophet remained dangerous. The danger of which Harrison spoke was largely of his own making. The American's vengeful attack pushed Indian communities to wage retaliatory raids on the American settlements, but it did not fuel racial unity among them. In fact, the Indians were caught between their desire to protect themselves and a recognition that Tenskwatawa's message had some benefit.

Temporarily displaced, residents of Prophetstown made their way to other nearby Indian villages, but many eventually returned to Tippecanoe. By January, the Prophet and nearly 600 Kickapoos, Ho-Chunk, and Piankashaw Indians had resettled near Prophetstown. However, the Indians returned to the area near Prophetstown for various reasons. They did not settle together and some returned before the Prophet did. Many former residents of Prophetstown resettled near the Tippecanoe and Wabash rivers before the Prophet returned and likely did so to reclaim their lands. In fact, the Kickapoos constructed their own village, the Ho-Chunk settled nearby on Wildcat Creek, and some Shawnees began to rebuild a settlement at Prophetstown.⁵⁰ The physical segregation of the Indian communities likely reflected how Tenskwatawa's revitalization movement remained secondary to cultural interests. Shortly after the attack, a delegation of Kickapoos visited Vincennes in order to stress their desire for peace while also communicating to Harrison that they had refused the Prophet's request to settle near the Kickapoo settlements in the Illinois territory. They also rejected Tenskwatawa's plea to send some of his followers to Vincennes along with the Kickapoos.⁵¹ Their association

⁵⁰ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 130.

⁵¹ Harrison to John Scott, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 99-104; December 2-6, 1811.

with the Prophet appeared tenuous, but this did not discourage Tenskwatawa. He had been in this situation before, during his first winter at Tippecanoe. Lack of food and poor living conditions facilitated the spread of disease throughout the town in 1808, and the living conditions eventually evolved into vocal disputes and the departure of several of the Ottawa and Ojibwa residents. Rebuilding and planting new crops would be difficult, but certainly not impossible. Tenskwatawa believed that Prophetstown would again attract vast numbers of Indians who wanted to hear his message. Furthermore, the French traders and their goods were gone, making the town more racially homogenous and more receptive to his teachings.

Americans like Harrison interpreted the resettlement of the Prophetstown area as a resurgence of Tenskwatawa's influence when in fact the actions of the Indians around Prophetstown reflected their desire to assert their autonomy. Even though the Americans had destroyed Prophetstown temporarily, Indians returned to the area for its historical and spiritual significance. This may explain, in part, why the Piankashaw settled near the ruins of Prophetstown. The destruction of Prophetstown provided an opportunity for them to reclaim a sacred place. However, most Americans simply concluded that Indians like the Piankashaw had joined with the Prophet. Harrison hoped to use the Miamis, Potawatomis, and Kickapoos to force the Shawnee leader and all of the other "strange Indians" from the area once and for all.⁵² Some Miamis wanted Harrison to continue on the offensive, and they assured the governor that diplomatic measures were futile. A Wea Indian guaranteed Harrison that "many of [the Wabash Indians] still retained their

⁵² Harrison to John Scott, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 99-104; December 2-6, 1811., Reel 5, 143-144; Dec. 11, 1811,

confidence in the Prophet.”⁵³ Identifying the varying cultural interests of the Indian communities was difficult for Harrison, who continued to emphasize racial identities rather than to try and determine the cultural difference between Indian groups.

Unlike Harrison, the Prophet had no choice but to confront the varying cultural interests influencing his community. He recognized that Indians were receptive to his message but that they were not willing to abide by all of his dictates nor did they want to be attacked by the Americans. Although delighted that Indians resettled the area near Prophetstown after the battle, Tenskwatawa understood that he still faced many of the same issues that had disrupted his community during the previous three years. Little Turtle and William Wells remained actively opposed to the Prophet and many other inhabitants at Tippecanoe opposed the Prophet because he had usurped their cultural homeland. Maintaining allegiance to a community that the Americans had painted as violent proved to be yet another challenge. Few, if any, Indians wanted to encourage another American excursion into the area, but most also had a deep resentment towards Harrison and the Americans at Vincennes for the burning and desecration of Prophetstown.

Indians from Prophetstown began killing European American settlers throughout the region to avenge Harrison’s destruction of Prophetstown.⁵⁴ Tenskwatawa had undermined tribal leaders so that the Indians would be more responsive to his dictates, but this left him in a weakened position. Not only did the rogue warriors ignore him, they ignored their former leader as well. This proved especially difficult when the warriors (namely the Kickapoos and Potawatomes) sought to avenge the American

⁵³ Harrison to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 240; Jan. 7, 1812.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Reel 5, 527-529; April 22, 1812.

desecration of Prophetstown. They committed several murders throughout the region during the spring of 1812, including one “most distressing” that involved the massacre of the Hutson family. The Indians set the Hutson’s house “on fire with the bodies of the woman and children in it” and a young man’s body was “shockingly mangled left in the yard.”⁵⁵ Rather than serve Prophetstown, the warriors continued to upset the Americans and draw the ire, if not the military might, of Harrison’s militia. Some pro-American Indian communities continued to use Harrison’s paranoia about Prophetstown to their advantage by committing crimes against the Americans and then blaming the Prophet.⁵⁶ The frontier violence convinced Harrison that a “war of extirpation” against the Indians was necessary.⁵⁷ Again, he interpreted some isolated events as the product of the Prophet’s efforts to destroy European Americans.

The Shawnee brothers recognized that both the Americans and their fellow Indians threatened Prophetstown. Willing to confront the problematic warriors, Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa joined a council of nearly 600 Indians at the Mississinewa River in early May 1812. They hoped to use the public conference attended by various Indian communities as well as British and American agents to condemn the frontier murders. Several Potawatomi Indians pinned the frontier violence during the previous months on Tenskwatawa during the council, knowing full well that Harrison was likely to believe it, but many of the Indians rejected those accusations. Most Indians at the council realized Main Poc’s role in the whole affair. Main Poc’s followers had raided

⁵⁵ Harrison to William Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 487; April 14, 1812.

⁵⁶ Badollet to Gallatin, December 4, 1811. Badollet wrote to Gallatin that “a Potawatomy tribe extolled by the Governor for their attachment to the U.S. and not the Prophet’s people stole some horses from Bosseron settlement –One Henry Raimaut a boatman in the Contractors employ was killed in the boat by the accidental explosion of his own gun which burnt his coat, and not by the Prophets people, as reported.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

American settlements throughout April and May, in direct contradiction to the Prophet's request. Main Poc had ignored the Prophet's dictates before and Tenskwatawa's settlement proved to be a convenient scapegoat for both the Indians and the European Americans.

Tecumseh used the debate to defend Prophetstown particularly because he was busy trying to unite Indian groups throughout the northern and southern Ohio Valley. His plans included visiting Creek, Osage, and even Choctaw Indian villages.⁵⁸ The last thing Tecumseh wanted was for the Americans to destroy Prophetstown again and drive away potential Indian allies permanently. Tecumseh promised that the Indians would never initiate an attack, but that they would always defend their town to the last man.⁵⁹ The Miami and Kickapoos demanded that the Potawatomi refrain from attacks on Americans, and Tecumseh promised to control the Potawatomi Indians who had caused the violence that spring. Tecumseh's statement was likely an attempt to take responsibility for the frontier violence in exchange for the Potawatomi's loyalty. Although Tecumseh's efforts were geared towards protecting his growing pan-Indian confederacy, Harrison and the Americans believed that Tecumseh's comments hinted towards his long-term goal to destroy the Americans. Tecumseh's rhetoric of self-defense was, as Harrison believed, a convenient justification for militant behavior.

While the Prophet continued to confront disunity in his town, Tecumseh succeeded in uniting various Indian communities. Tecumseh offered the Indians an opportunity to oppose the Americans by entering into a pan-Indian confederacy but not at

⁵⁸ Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (The Johns Hopkins University studies in historical and political science, 109th ser., 4. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 128.

⁵⁹ Speeches of the Indians at the Massassinway, Esarey, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, Reel 5, 577; May 15, 1812.

the expense of their cultural interests. Tecumseh recognized that the Prophet's message, while beneficial, was now damaged by the militant relationships produced by the Battle of Tippecanoe. Indians simply were not willing to risk an open alliance with the Prophet, especially since they did not need his resources or support any longer after the British renewed relationships with many of the confederated Indian communities. One historian, Timothy Willig, has discussed the ways in which some of the Prophet's followers rejected his nativist message while still fighting alongside the British during the War of 1812. He notes that after the Ottawas and Ojibwas left Prophetstown, "only a wartime British alliance could united the nativist faction to the tribes of the northern Lakes."⁶⁰ Tecumseh also recognized that Prophetstown could no longer support large numbers of Indians after Harrison's army destroyed the crops. In order to make their community viable again, the Shawnee brothers and their followers needed to plant vast fields of crops to feed the Indians they hoped to welcome to their community. That mattered little, however, if the Shawnee brothers could not control their followers and maintain peace throughout the Valley. This proved remarkably difficult.

Tecumseh recognized that Prophetstown's symbolic value was more important than its ability to house hundreds of Indians. Prophetstown's significance became especially important after Harrison burned Tippecanoe because attracting large numbers of Indians to Prophetstown would likely have only promoted more violence. As a symbol of the militant and expansionist Americans, the Battle of Tippecanoe provided Tecumseh with a rallying cry for unity among Indian peoples. Although the Indians in

⁶⁰ Timothy Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 236. John Sugden states that even Tecumseh modified his brother's teachings "in the interests of practicality. The Prophet had preached self-sufficiency and independence of the whites, but Tecumseh once applied for a government agency to be established at Prophetstown, and he still recognized the need for gunsmiths and traders." John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 188.

the immediate vicinity of the town continued to distance themselves from the Prophet in order to serve their own interests, new recruits ventured towards the town or agreed to defend it in case of an attack. Rather than respond to its religious significance, Indians likely associated with Prophetstown because it represented Indian efforts against European American aggression. However, the growing support for Prophetstown was not necessarily a product of Tenskwatawa's diplomatic efforts in the region. Rather, Tecumseh succeeded in uniting several Indian nations in a military alliance in the event that the British and Americans went to war. War meant easy access to British trade goods, an important part of their willingness to join Tecumseh's confederacy. Greater access to British goods came at a time when the Prophet had grown increasingly frustrated in his attempt to unify Indian nations through his revitalization movement. Although the Prophet had always hoped to use his town as a means to unite and purify Indian communities, he had encountered opposition.

Indian resistance to Prophetstown was nowhere more apparent than within the Miami community. Some of the more conservative Miami used the diplomatic crisis between the United States and Britain to establish an alliance with the British during the summer of 1812.⁶¹ The Miami never made such an overture with the Prophet.⁶² If the Miami and Potawatomi are examples for why Indian nations associated with Prophetstown, then we can conclude that Indians used the Prophet to protect their community rather than because they supported the nativist vision espoused by Tenskwatawa. The numbers reflect this. While the Prophet struggled to gain large numbers of adherents, Tecumseh won the support of 3,500 warriors living in Indiana,

⁶¹ Rob Mann, "The Silenced Miami: Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Evidence for Miami-British Relations, 1795-1812," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 46, No. 3, (Summer, 1999), 413.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 412.

Illinois, and Wisconsin.⁶³ Tecumseh could promise them an alliance with the British, while the Prophet's teachings advocated separation from the polluting influences of Europeans. Tecumseh's success in constructing such an alliance was largely the product of the Indian communities hoping to use an impending war to protect their interests and not necessarily because they supported the Prophet's nativist ideology. Receiving goods from the British went against the Prophet's teachings, but it also allowed the pan-Indian confederacy to mobilize more effectively than it had under the Prophet.

Tecumseh succeeded in uniting various Indian communities throughout the region largely because of the growing diplomatic crisis between the United States and Britain. They had failed to reach a compromise over free trade and sailor's rights during the spring of 1812, which pushed President James Madison towards declaring war. Madison signed the declaration of war against Great Britain on June 18, 1812, which drastically altered the dynamics in the Wabash-Maumee Valley.⁶⁴ Britain could distribute goods to its Indian allies throughout the Ohio Valley, and many of the Indian communities gladly accepted them. War presented Indian groups with an opportunity to renew their old relationships with the British but also to acquire weapons they could use to defend themselves in a region flooded by American settlers. This was a welcome opportunity

⁶³ Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Myth-Making," *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter, 2002). Alfred A. Cave argues that the Prophet did not lose influence during this period, that "there is no contemporary evidence to support the claim that after Tippecanoe the religion of the Prophet ceased to be an important part of Tecumseh's appeal to prospective allies." He goes on to argue that Tecumseh never repudiated his brother and that in fact Tecumseh continued to abide by his brother's teaching. What Cave misses is that the Prophet had experienced challenges to his revitalization movement from the moment of its inception. Tenskawatawa had faced a great deal of resistance even in his first settlement at Greenville. The key is identifying why certain Indian groups associated with, but did not quite adhere to the Prophet's message. There is no doubt that the Prophet remained influential, but that does not mean that Indians were willing to place the needs of the whole above their community's agendas.

⁶⁴ Paul Gilje, *The Making of the American Republic, 1763-1815*. (Prentice Hall, 2006), 280.

for Indian communities like Pacanne's more conservative Miami, who hoped to renew their historical relationship with the British.

The Prophet recognized the benefits of the war as well. He sent runners throughout the Illinois country and northern Great Lakes region to rally the Indians. He knew that the opportunities provided by war were more persuasive than his nativist rhetoric. The chance to attack American settlements and to receive trade goods from the British was more important than the Prophet's efforts to revitalize Indian peoples. Tenskwatawa was coming to realize that the ability to beat the Americans mattered more than his principles.

The National Trinity

News of war did not reach the Wabash-Maumee Valley until early July of 1812. Tenskwatawa refused to initiate any attacks on nearby American communities because he knew that Harrison would react decisively. Rather than tempt the governor, Tenskwatawa traveled east to Fort Wayne with an assemblage of Kickapoos, Ho-Chunk, and a few Shawnee Indians, where he spoke with Benjamin Stickney, the Indian agent at Fort Wayne. The Prophet wanted to convince Stickney that he too desired peace on the frontier and would accept the stipulations in the Treaty of Fort Wayne of 1809. Such a concession would have marked a drastic shift in his philosophy. The Prophet presented "a large white belt of Wampum with a small spot of purple wampum in the centre, in which [he] said, that the speeches of the three nations were combined . . . the purple spot in the centre represented their Town on the Wabash ; and one end of the belt extended to Vincennes, and the other to Fort Wayne."⁶⁵ It was a belt of "National trinity" that represented the common goals of the Americans, the Indians at Prophetstown, and the

⁶⁵ Stickney to Eustis, *Letterbook of the Indian Agency at Fort Wayne, 1809-1815*, July 19, 1812.

Miami. Such unity, however, proved elusive. The three communities involved not only lacked a regional alliance but they also remained divided internally, and were therefore incapable of functioning as unified entities. The Prophet used his speech to conceal his militant intentions. Maintaining peace would allow the Indians to prepare for the advent of war and attain goods from Britain more readily. However, peace was unlikely considering the interests of the Miami factions and the factionalism within Vincennes.

Wells refused to accept any sort of alliance with the Prophet and discouraged anyone at the council from believing Tenskwatawa's professions of peace. Wells' erratic behavior throughout the council was not simply a product of his distaste for Prophet. The Miami were in a difficult position, trapped between Tecumseh's confederacy, the British, and a highly suspicious and paranoid Harrison. Furthermore, Wells' father-in-law, Little Turtle, had died at his house just a few days before the council convened, undercutting Wells' influence among his Indian community. Wells' frustration with Tenskwatawa was the culmination of several factors, including Little Turtle's death. Wells learned that some of the Miami had joined with the British, and he feared that war might soon destroy all of his efforts to protect his Miami community. The inner politics of the council only added to his anger. During the meeting, some Kickapoos stole two of Wells' horses, which threw Wells into a tirade. Wells directed his frustrations at Tenskwatawa, claiming that the "Prophet directed them to be stolen" and that the Prophet intended "an attack on Vincennes."⁶⁶ Again, Wells used Vincennes to voice his frustrations over diplomatic affairs. Stickney was tired of Wells and dismissed his warnings, but Wells continued to press the issue by writing to Harrison. He also used the letter to mock Stickney, whom he viewed as the Prophet's dupe. The letter likely had an effect,

⁶⁶ Stickney to Governor Harrison, *Letterbook*, July 21, 1812.

considering that Harrison disliked Stickney and had even referred to him as an “ignorant, inexperienced, and outrageously insolent” Indian agent.⁶⁷

Wells also used racial tensions as a way to force Harrison’s hand. By claiming that he knew British strategy for war in the southern states, Wells tried to enlarge Harrison’s fears of an all-out race war. Wells claimed that the “Creeks & all the Southern Indians as well as the Negroes” would soon have all of the “necessary implements of War” and that the Creeks would “raise the Negroes in that Quarter Against the Whites.”⁶⁸ The Creek efforts, coupled with the Prophet’s army, would prove disastrous for the European American settlements in the territory. With Little Turtle dead and the Miami community fractured, Wells’ tremendous efforts to orient the Americans against Prophetstown produced very little. Harrison’s men had burned the town, but this had not helped the Miami. Wells’ letters to Harrison were likely a last ditch effort to force Harrison to attack Prophetstown, even though the town itself no longer mattered. The rhetoric was nothing new. Wells tried to make the Prophet a bigger issue by emphasizing the threat Tenskwatawa presented to Vincennes and then stoking racial fears he knew would sway Harrison. Wells played Harrison as though it was still 1809. He was unable to see that Harrison could not attack Prophetstown without inviting a frontier war with the British. Wells continued to think locally while Harrison thought nationally.

The post-Tippecanoe Prophetstown was quite different from the town Tenskwatawa and some of his supporters constructed in 1808. The Prophet remained an

⁶⁷ Stickney to Governor Harrison, *Letterbook*, July 21, 1812. Stickney to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 703; July 24, 1812. At the end of Stickney’s letter to Harrison, he stated that “you know Wells : and of course, know how much credit to attach to his representations.” Wells wrote to Harrison that Stickney “found no difficulty in swallowing the bait offered him and applauded the prophet for his honest[y].” Wells to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 690; July 22, 1812. *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Wells to Harrison, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 730; July 30, 1812.

important figure in the Indian resistance, but his town could no longer support large numbers of Indians. Furthermore, most Indians did not need to venture to Prophetstown. The declaration of war allowed the Indians to associate with the British who had replaced Prophetstown as the titular head of resistance. Although the fields along the Wabash River were full of corn, many of the Indians who supported Tecumseh's confederacy received goods from the British, which enabled them to remain at their villages. Many Indians ventured to Malden where they could discuss strategy and receive gifts rather than uproot themselves and live at Prophetstown. The Prophet understood that a victory against the Americans would provide greater opportunities for Indian conversions by stemming the tide of American settlement. He likely accepted the changing identity of Prophetstown even though he must have also realized that associating with the British challenged his religious vision. Most Indians participated in the war for practical purposes, which forced them to abandon many of the Prophet's dictates. The last thing the British could do was win over Indian allies by reinforcing the Prophet's nativist agenda. Rather, they offered the Indians guns, European American trade goods, and even alcohol, which brought many Indians into the British camp. The war itself, a cooperative effort between the Indians and European Americans, was at its heart anti-nativist and maintained factionalism. By trading with the British, Indian groups were able to punish the aggressive American government without uniting behind any pan-Indian ideology. For all intents and purposes, it was every Indian group for itself. One historian has noted that the war provided certain Indian communities with an opportunity to fight the Americans who had earlier rejected a nativist alliance with the Prophet. Indian communities "fought the Americans as British allies, not nativists."⁶⁹ These Indians used

⁶⁹ Timothy Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship*, 236.

the war and the opportunities to trade with the British to protect their interests, which prevented them from uniting with other disparate Indian groups near Prophetstown.

The remarkable thing about the changes at Prophetstown was that the residents of Vincennes saw little to no difference between the pre- and post-Tippecanoe eras. People in Vincennes related to Prophetstown through their factionalism and fears and tended to ignore the interests of the Indians. For them, Prophetstown was static. It either represented Harrison's successes or failures. Although the anti-Harrisonians feared an Indian attack, many felt that if such a disaster occurred, it would be the fault of the governor's corrupt diplomacy. The battle at Tippecanoe convinced Albert Badollet that "the object of the Governor was to bring on an Indian war."⁷⁰ Like his son, John Badollet felt that the battle could "be considered in no other light than that of an outrageous aggression on an unoffending & peaceable neighbor, and a wanton waste of treasure and blood."⁷¹ Yet, like the rest of the residents of Vincennes, he abandoned his house for more secure buildings like the church, Harrison's mansion, or Nathaniel Ewing's brick house.

The residents of Vincennes feared the Indians who gathered north of their town "with a view it is said . . . of retaliating upon [Vincennes] the inhuman burning of Prophet's town."⁷² They were right to fear an attack, but they were focused on the wrong enemy. Main Poc's Potawatomis had attacked several American farms throughout the area during the spring of 1812, which most Americans interpreted as a product of the Prophet's teachings. And so the Americans prepared for an attack. Hundreds of settlers had left the area, including Harrison's family, whom he sent to Cincinnati. There was no

⁷⁰ John Badollet, ed., *Correspondence*, 209.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁷² *Ibid.*

patrol or scouts to warn of an Indian approach and most of the settlers refused to venture outside. Badollet hid at Ewing's residence, which was situated "one mile off in very [thick] woods" but posed a problem for making it to his office in town because a mile walk would place him in "danger of an ambush."⁷³ Some residents built pickets around their homes in an effort to remain safe, but the danger they faced appeared, at least to men like Badollet, to be a product of Harrison's abuses of leadership. Harrison had done little to protect the town. He was unsure how to handle the situation, even though he had been so direct in leading his forces against Prophetstown. He described the abandoned farms with unplanted fields and the homes full of "wretched people crowded together in places almost destitute of ever necessary accommodation."⁷⁴ Writing to the Secretary of War, Harrison lamented that he was at a "loss as to the orders proper to be given in the present state of the country."⁷⁵ He did not "conceive" himself "authorized to order out any militia at the expense of the United States," which meant that Vincennes would remain undefended.⁷⁶ The anti-Harrisonians still believed that the Indian war "was the only means that [Governor] possessed of escaping censure & punishment" for his erratic governance and his costly attack on Prophetstown.⁷⁷ The two American factions continued to challenge each other through Indian affairs.

Elihu Stout played an important role in maintaining a militant characterization of Prophetstown during this period. Rather than evaluate the various interests dividing Indian country, he communicated biased reports from Harrison and the French traders

⁷³ John Badollet, ed., *Correspondence*, 229.

⁷⁴ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 546; May 6, 1812.

⁷⁵ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 546; May 6, 1812. Reel 5, 564; May 13, 1812.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Gayle Thornbrough, ed., *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin, 1804 – 1836* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Press, 1963), 236., May 27, 1812.

while also communicating his own fears of an Indian attack. His articles about the Indian council at the Missinewa River neglected to report much about opposing interests apparent in the Indian community. The large meeting of Indians at the Missinewa produced some positive results for the Americans, including a greater understanding of which Indians were actually attacking European American settlements, but Stout failed to report the intricate dynamics evident during the council. There were noticeable disagreements between the various Indian communities in the valley, but Stout's article simply reported that the Indians remained militantly opposed to the Americans. He continued to play politics with Indian affairs. Stout did not print the accusations leveled by the Miami against the Potawatomi. The Miami believed that a pro-American Potawatomi leader Winemak had instigated the murders on the frontier, an important piece of information considering that Harrison had favored Winemak and even invited him into Vincennes. Nor did *The Western Sun* mention anything about the various Indian communities who advocated peace. Such information might have strengthened the anti-Harrisonians' claims that the Prophet did not plan to attack Vincennes because it would invite retaliation against his town. Stout simply concluded that there was no "evidence of the return of the Indians to a friendly disposition."⁷⁸ Like Harrison, Stout grouped the Wabash Indians as one entity, suggesting to his readers that the Indians were acting collectively. This legitimized rumors that Prophetstown was indeed a threat to the countryside.

While Stout refrained to divulge many details about the Indian council, he had no qualms about spreading rumors that Americans were once again aiding the militant Indians. AWea leader, Lapoussier, knew that the governor had detained a Delaware

⁷⁸ *The Western Sun*, May 26, 1812.

Indian and three children at Vincennes. No Indians had visited Vincennes in the period after the arrival of the prisoners, and so, according to Stout, only a European American person could have shared the information with the Wea leader.⁷⁹ Stout concluded that there was “some secret communication between some person here and the Indians, by which the latter are informed of every thing that passes amongst us.”⁸⁰ Suggestions of treason were nothing new for *The Western Sun*, nor were they anything new for Vincennes. However, the likelihood that such a report could create violence had increased ten-fold in the period after the Battle of Tippecanoe. The recent deadly Indian attacks put the residents on edge. In such a situation, a traitor’s life was at stake if the town uncovered his identity. Intentional or not, Stout’s newspaper directed paranoid fears towards European Americans in Vincennes as much as it did Indians in the valley.

Harrison’s efforts to control all facets of Indian affairs added to the contentious atmosphere surrounding the rumors that Americans were colluding with the Indians. The governor challenged one of his Indian agents after it appeared that the agent undermined the governor’s leadership. When Benjamin Stickney reported his intelligence to the Secretary of War without first consulting Harrison, the governor penned a letter accusing the agent of subterfuge. Harrison argued that Stickney had already “produced mischief” by abusing his powers. He told Eustis that a Wea leader had recently informed Captain Zachary Taylor that the governor would “shortly be deprived of office” without any knowledge of who had given the Indian leader that information. Even though Harrison stated that he had “no idea that Mr. Stickney [had] authorized such a report,” the governor was “convinced it had its origin in [Stickney’s] assertion of Independence” as

⁷⁹ *The Western Sun*, May 26, 1812.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Indian agent.⁸¹ Harrison believed that Stickney had operated outside the boundaries of his authority, and the governor questioned Stickney's loyalty to the American government. It was as though Harrison could not conduct territorial business unless he had absolute control and absolute obedience from other territorial officials. The question remains, how much did Harrison's personal ambition influence his handling of Indian affairs?

The rumors spread by Harrison made residents of Vincennes scared that their own neighbors might attack them out of anger. Harrison's slanderous comments convinced nervous settlers that public officials within Vincennes had collaborated with the Wabash Indians in order to undermine Harrison's authority. Coupled with Stout's biased newspaper articles, residents of Vincennes began to fear for their lives. Badollet worried that these rumors would persuade loyal Harrisonians or other people stricken with fear to "deprive us of our lives" while "under the appearance of an Indian."⁸² John Badollet's concern that someone might dress up as an Indian and murder him seems foolish and exaggerated considering his great distaste for Harrison and his supporters. But Badollet's fearful letter about enemies "playing Indian" represents something more than a paranoid remark. Many of the residents had played Indian, including Harrison. They had used Indian affairs and manipulated Indian identities as a means to fight political battles in town. The governor's policies concerning Prophetstown and the Wabash Indians lack credibility because he used Indian affairs as much to punish his enemies as he did to protect the territory.

⁸¹ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 668; July 8, 1812.

⁸² John Badollet, eds., *Correspondence*, 240-241.

Events that occurred during late August and the early fall of 1812 entirely refashioned the connections between the Americans, Prophetstown, and the Miami. The war had altered the relationships so drastically that diplomacy no longer played a part in the valley. Harrison, Tecumseh, and the Prophet no longer gathered together in order to discuss territorial issues. By September 3, 1812, Harrison had resolved to “commence offensive operations against [the Indians] immediately and to make a sweeping blow at them beginning with the Prophet at Tippecanoe & extending it up that river to the villages of the Putawattimies.”⁸³ However, he never followed this course of action, and instead turned his army towards the Miami settlements in northeastern Indiana. Harrison’s commission as a Major General effectively removed him as governor of the territory and gave him free reign to do as he pleased. Also, William Wells’ death during the Battle of Fort Dearborn left Harrison’s forces free to rampage through the Wabash Valley communities without a check. Harrison remained focused on northeastern Indiana even after a group of Indians from Prophetstown had attacked Fort Harrison and nearly taken it. Several Wea and Miamis had warned Zachary Taylor’s command at Fort Harrison of the impending attack, but Harrison disregarded the intelligence. Rather, he instructed Colonel James Simrall’s four troops of Kentucky Dragoons to destroy Little Turtle’s town even though he “had no evidence of the inhabitants of that Town having joined in the hostilities against” the Americans.⁸⁴ Harrison feared that militant Indians might take the food and materials from Little Turtle’s town and use it to feed and arm a prolonged militancy. William Clark, the governor of Illinois Territory, warned that many of the Indian towns would sue for peace and that “protection should be extended towards

⁸³ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 6, 076; September 3, 1812.

⁸⁴ Harrison to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 6, 203; September 21, 1812.

them.”⁸⁵ Harrison, frustrated by the Indian raids on American settlements, abandoned any efforts to negotiate with the Wabash Indians. He likely recognized that war with Britain and its Indian allies provided too great an opportunity to rid the valley of Indians once and for all.

Attacking the British and the Indians served his purposes far more than bickering with his enemies in Vincennes. Harrison had also concluded that it was “impossible to discriminate” between the peaceful and militant Indians.⁸⁶ Although it is understandable that Harrison would want to take decisive steps towards the Wabash Indians as a way to force compliance with his policies, such behavior also reflected the governor’s tendency to interpret Indian behavior through racial terms. It was easier for him to disregard cultural differences because they were less important, in his mind, than racial tendencies.

The relationship between the Prophet and Harrison played an important part in instigating conflict between the two communities, but it was not the determining factor. The divisive nature of the region, amplified by the factional nature of the two towns, proved to be the driving strength behind the racial violence at Tippecanoe and during the War of 1812. The Prophet, fighting to keep his town together, confronted several challenges to his authority. They included a Miami Indian community desperate to protect their historic place in the valley by using Prophetstown as a way to challenge their fellow leaders. The Miami used Prophetstown as a tool to express their grievances with each other and with the Americans. The Miamis also manipulated intelligence as a means to compel the Americans into action against the Prophet rather than to risk it themselves. Tenskwatawa’s rhetoric often aided their cause. His polarizing words forced

⁸⁵ William Clark to Eustis, *WHH Papers*, Reel 5, 801; August 10, 1812.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

the Indians and the Americans into a more direct confrontation by convincing many settlers that he was as militant as the rumors suggested. Far fewer Americans questioned the motives of their leader, often accepting Harrison's policies regarding the Prophet and his brother Tecumseh. Had more Americans done so, they might have recognized that the factional nature of Vincennes played an important part in Harrison's diplomacy as well as their own perceptions of Prophetstown. Added to the factionalism among the American community was the bias of the French traders on whom the Americans relied for intelligence about the Wabash Indians. Their motives, much like Harrison's and those of his enemies, were intensely personal.

The National Trinity between the Miami, Americans, and Prophetstown, if there ever was one, collapsed by the fall of 1812. Many of the actors and places that had been so central to the violence in the Wabash-Maumee Valley ceased to exist by 1813. Several of the major local actors were dead, Harrison was no longer the governor of the territory, and Vincennes had become just another frontier town. Tecumseh and his brother effectively abandoned Prophetstown for an alliance with the British, never returning to their town or nativist agenda. The National Trinity had proved as elusive as unity at Prophetstown. It seems that the only person to benefit from the diplomatic crisis between Britain and the United States was William Henry Harrison. He eventually used his wartime experience to become a U.S. Representative and U.S. Senator from Ohio, and then the President of the United States.

Each Indian and European American group in the Wabash-Maumee Valley arrived at the War of 1812 for reasons far outside the international crisis that was so central to President Madison. Most of Harrison's militia joined his ranks because of

threats to their homes and to the capital of the territory - threats created by Harrison and his French sources. Harrison was involved in the war in order to protect his influence in the territory and to avoid censure, but also because he believed the French traders who provided him with damning information regarding the Prophet. The Miamis were there because they were involved in a civil dispute with their own people, few of whom wanted to cement Prophetstown as a fixture in Indiana society. Tenskwatawa and other residents of Prophetstown were there because of the divisions within their community but also because they hoped to find some stability in a rapidly changing environment.

Even after the Battle of Tippecanoe, even after the French traders fled and Harrison attacked the town, neither Vincennes nor Prophetstown united under a banner of racial unity. The Prophet strove to unite his community, but watched as the Potawatomi and Miamis continued to challenge him. Their desire to place local interests above racial and nativist ideals prolonged factionalism within the region. If anything, Prophetstown, like Vincennes, was unable to change the historical dynamics and factional nature of the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Local and cultural interests ruled the region for over a century, and the two “new” towns simply could not overcome the issues fueling factionalism. The Prophet and Harrison believed that they represented the racial interests of Indians and European Americans, respectively. In fact, their interests, like their relationships, overshadowed the complicated relationships connecting Indian histories with European American ones. Although the Prophet and Harrison likely looked at the War of 1812 as the logical result of their peoples’ inability to compromise, their beliefs did not reflect the feelings of their communities at large. Then again, they never had.

Conclusion

In the decade after the War of 1812, Tenskwatawa and William Henry Harrison spent a great deal of their time trying to maintain, if not expand, the influence they enjoyed earlier. Both men found their efforts frustrated. The Prophet no longer had the support of his brother, Tecumseh, who had died at the Battle of the Thames in 1813. Many of the Prophet's supporters had moved back to the Wabash-Maumee Valley, but Tenskwatawa was unable to move back because the federal government had banned him from returning to the United States. Federal Indian agents feared that letting him to return to the Wabash-Maumee Valley would allow him to renew hostilities on American settlements. They considered this a distinct possibility when some of his former supporters, including some Shawnees, Kickapoos, and Sac Indians resettled near the Tippecanoe River in 1816.¹ These people were able to return to the territories they occupied before the war in compliance with the Treaty of Ghent, which stipulated that the United States must "restore to such tribes or nations, respectively, all the possessions, rights, and privileges which they may have enjoyed or been entitled to in one thousand eight hundred and eleven, previous to such hostilities."² As head of the commission charged with negotiating the return of these Indian groups, Harrison must have questioned why he had fought so hard against the Indians only to see so many of them returning to Tippecanoe. While the Prophet endured exile in Canada, Harrison's livelihood suffered as well. After the people of Ohio elected Harrison as a representative to Congress in 1816, he settled for serving in Ohio's state senate in 1819 and

¹ R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 160.

² William MacDonald, *Select Documents Illustrative of the history of the United States, 1776-1861* (Ayer Publishing, 1968), 197.

subsequently lost an election to Congress in 1822. Despite their setbacks, however, both men found ways to use the American political structure to reassert their influence.

During the summer of 1824, Lewis Cass, then Governor of Michigan Territory, sent a letter to the Prophet requesting his presence at Detroit. Cass believed that the Prophet was “restless and discontented” and that the Shawnee leader had little left in life but “disappointment.”³ Yet, Cass hoped that the isolated, aging, and politically weakened Prophet might aid the federal government’s removal efforts of Indians from the Ohio Valley. Aiding Cass’s attempts to remove the Ohio Shawnees provided an excellent opportunity for Tenskwatawa to undercut the influence of an old Shawnee adversary, Black Hoof. To a certain extent, Cass hoped for the same thing because Black Hoof’s Shawnees had proved resistant to removing from Ohio. The Prophet had accepted the fact he would not return to Prophetstown, but he also recognized that aiding the Americans’ removal efforts provided an opportunity for him to reassert his authority within the Shawnee community.⁴ By moving west, he would be separate himself from the problematic Americans, while also being closer to the Kickapoos, Potawatomi, and other Indian communities that had lived with him at Prophetstown. The meeting between Cass and the Prophet proved beneficial. Cass recognized Tenskwatawa’s cooperative nature and stated that the aging Shawnee leader was “radically cured . . . of his Anglo-mania.”⁵ In fact, the Prophet had grown increasingly angry with the British for not compensating him fully for his services during the war. Cass believed that the Prophet would no longer represent a threat to American interests.

³ Cass to Calhoun, November 21, 1819, Cass Papers, Burton Collection, Detroit Public Library; Cass to Calhoun, December 25, 1819, Shawnee File, Great Lakes Indian Archives; Johnson to Cass, November 9, 1816, *ibid.*; Alexander Wolcott to Cass, November 14, 1819, Carter, *Territorial Papers*, 10:855-57.

⁴ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 170-174.

⁵ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 168.

Tenskwatawa had little choice but to pacify Cass in order to survive. The Prophet deftly used Cass to work his way back into the United States. The Prophet led a contingent of Shawnees west to the Kansas River in the late 1820s. In 1828, he set up a village separate from other more influential Shawnee leaders like Cornstalk and Big Snake. However, like at Prophetstown, many of the Indians at Tenskwatawa's Kansas village soon departed because he could not provide them with the supplies necessary to survive. Most traveled east to the Shawnee settlements in Missouri that were more friendly to the Indian agents. Two years later, a large contingent of Shawnee Indians arrived in Kansas from Ohio, but few cared to associate themselves with the Prophet. He resented losing influence among his people so he moved east to present-day Kansas City, Kansas, where he constructed another village.⁶

Like Tenskwatawa, Harrison used his connections to Prophetstown as a means to improve his circumstances. Rather than return to Vincennes after the War of 1812, Harrison hoped to exploit his experiences fighting the Indians and serving as a general during the war to climb the political ladder. After failing to win a Congressional seat in 1822, Harrison won election to the United States Senate in 1824. As a senator from Ohio, Harrison served as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, a post previously held by Andrew Jackson. He became minister to Nueva Granada four years later, and retired from public life in 1829. Frustrated at his lack of wealth, Harrison welcomed James Hall's biography *A Memoir of the Public Services of William Henry Harrison*, from which he derived some profit. In 1836, he ran for president and lost, but won the office in 1840, largely due to the popularization of American politics. The Whig party recognized how Andrew Jackson used his identity as an Indian fighter to propel him

⁶ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 185-188.

into office and party leaders hoped to do the same with Harrison. By 1840, more than twelve biographies portrayed Harrison as a national hero.⁷ The Whig Party continued using this portrayal of Harrison and his famed efforts during the War of 1812 to get him elected to the White House. As had been the case when he was territorial governor of Indiana, Harrison used the power of words to protect his interests and propel him into higher office.

As Tenskwatawa constructed the last physical Prophetstown several hundred miles west of the original, Harrison built a symbolic Prophetstown for political purposes. Harrison capitalized on his connection to Prophetstown by organizing a presidential campaign built upon the myth of his victory at Tippecanoe. National rallies of more than 50,000 Whigs expressed their support for Harrison by singing the eight stanzas of “Tippecanoe and Tyler too.”

What's the cause of this commotion, motion, motion,
Our country through?
It is the ball a-rolling on
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too.
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too.
And with them we'll beat little Van, Van, Van,
Van is a used up man.
And with them we'll beat little Van.⁸

The song, like the campaign slogan, identified William Henry Harrison as “Tippecanoe” in order to remind Americans of Harrison’s “heroic” actions against the

⁷ Isaac Rand Jackson, *A Sketch of the Life and Public Services of William Henry Harrison* (Columbus, Ohio: I. N. Whiting, 1840); S. J. Burr, *The Life and Times of William Henry Harrison* (New York: L.W. Ransom Publishers, 1840); James Hall, *A Memoir of the Public Services of William Henry Harrison of Ohio* (Philadelphia: Key & Biddle Publishers, 1836); Caleb Cushing, *Outlines of the Life and Public Services, Civil and Military, of William Henry Harrison* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Company, 1840); Richard Hildreth, *The People's Presidential Candidate; or The Life of William Henry Harrison of Ohio* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Company, 1839); Captain Miller, “*Hero of Tippecanoe;” or the Story of the Life of William Henry Harrison* (New York: Published by J.P. Giffing, 1840); Jacob Bailey Moore, *The Contrast, Or, Plain Reasons why William Henry Harrison Should be Elected President of the United States: And why Martin Van Burn Should Not be Re-elected* (New York: Published by J.P. Giffing, 1840).

⁸ Robert Vincent Remini, *The Jacksonian Era* (Harlan Davidson, 1997), 78.

Shawnee Prophet's supporters. However, the politicization of the town, river, and event that was Tippecanoe ignored the word's historical context. The nickname Tippecanoe recalled a famous Indian battle but made no mention of the public quarrel in Vincennes that led to it or resulted from it. Tippecanoe was, in fact, the European American name for a small stream that ran perpendicular to the Wabash River. The Prophet established Prophetstown at the confluence of these two rivers. The Potawatomi Indians called it Ke-tap-e-kon and the Miamis named it Ke-tap-kwa-na. EuroAmericans identified the village at the mouth of the Tippecanoe as Ke-tap-e-kon-nong, which they corrupted initially as Keth-tip-pe-can-nunk and eventually as Tippecanoe.⁹ The various spellings reflect the different peoples that lived near these rivers. The word Tippecanoe became synonymous with Harrison and heroism, not Tenskwatawa or the Wabash Indians or even the way in which Harrison provoked the Indians into fighting. For Harrison and his supporters, Tippecanoe was about power, not place. While Harrison's nickname evoked faint memories of his battles against Indians during the War of 1812, by 1840 it largely symbolized national and racial values centered on the continued westward expansion of Anglo-Americans. His supporters recognized that they could use the battle to refashion Harrison into a heroic Indian fighter much like Andrew Jackson. They colonized the word much like they had colonized the Indians' lands.

Several biographies continued to refashion Harrison's image. One of the many biographies characterized Harrison as "the idol of the northwestern army" because "no general had a higher reputation for bravery, skill, and perseverance."¹⁰ In fact, "they knew that if they were sick, they would not be left to suffer. If there was only a crust of

⁹ Jacob P. Dunn, "Indiana Geographical Nomenclature," *Indiana Magazine of History* 7-8 (1911): 113.

¹⁰ Captain Miller, *Hero of Tippecanoe, Or, The Story of the Life of William Henry Harrison* (J.P. Giffing Publishers, 1840), 72.

bread, their general would share it with them.”¹¹ They hailed “the gallant Harrison!, Who often fought and ever won, The glorious wreath of victory.”¹² Whig supporters mythologized Harrison through the Battle of Tippecanoe and the events surrounding it, which reflected more of the socio-political atmosphere of the late 1830s and 1840s than the reality of life in the Wabash-Maumee Valley during the early 1800s. By 1840, the United States government had removed thousands of American Indians west of the Mississippi in order to create separate worlds for the two races.¹³ Harrison addressed Indians only by conjuring up images of the past to aid his political ambitions. In many ways, he used his connection to Prophetstown to make himself into the Whig version of Andrew Jackson.

Like Harrison, historians have neglected to tell the full story of the relationship between the European Americans at Vincennes and Indians at Prophetstown. Many historians have characterized the relationship between the two towns as a product of the Prophet’s “Anglo-mania.”¹⁴ Rather than thoroughly address the competing ethnic interests at Prophetstown and Vincennes, they have framed their analyses around a racial dichotomy embodied by the expansionist-minded Americans whom the confederated Indians opposed. Such interpretive threads have prolonged characterizations that race chiefly shaped the relationship between the French, Americans and American Indians. My dissertation deconstructs the myth of the Prophet’s maniacal behavior and

¹¹ Captain Miller, *Hero of Tippecanoe, Or, The Story of the Life of William Henry Harrison* (J.P. Giffing Publishers, 1840), 72.

¹² William McCarty, *Songs, Odes, & Other Poems, on National Subjects; Compiled from Various Sources* (Published by William McCarty, 1842), 249.

¹³ John P. Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West*. (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 255 – 260. Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (Penguin Books, 2008), 42-69.

¹⁴ Benjamin Drake, *Life of Tecumseh and his Brother the Prophet with a Historical Sketch of the Shawanoe Indians* (Cincinnati, E. Morgan & Co., 1850); R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

emphasizes how intra-community factionalism determined the relationships between these two groups.

The factionalism among Indian communities in the Wabash-Maumee Valley was largely the product of historical circumstances that prevented the full-scale unification of Indians as nations or as a race. While Indian communities identified a common heritage with their brethren elsewhere, they rarely placed ethnic interests above those of their village or community. Indians forged economic and diplomatic relationships with each other and Europeans based upon the needs of their village. The French, British, and Americans prolonged this behavior by operating on the same terms as the Indians, which often meant that different villages of the same ethnic group had relationships with competing imperial powers. It was common to have one Miami town trading with the French while another traded with the English. This pattern persisted throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and did not change drastically until the United States government began identifying Indians as tribes in preparation for their removal.

European Americans experienced similar degrees of factionalism within their own communities. Both France and Britain settled in the valley to access the Indian trade, but by 1800, they had all but vanished from North America as imperial actors. However, the relationships born out of the imperial dynamic continued. French settlers and British agents remained tied to the social bonds constructed under imperial rule and had little reason to change. American immigrants desperately wanted to control and profit from the trading network in the valley, but found the French and their Indian neighbors resistant to change. The French also refused to adapt to American cultural values even when they could not afford to pay their taxes or lost influence within territorial politics.

Despite their common residence in places like Vincennes, the Americans and French remained determined to protect their cultural interests. For most, race simply did not matter in a world where multi-ethnic and multi-racial connections provided greater opportunities for security.

It was in the period after the Revolutionary War that people began accepting and utilizing racial constructs more readily. While nascent ideas of racial difference surfaced throughout the eighteenth century, most people believed that one's environment produced physical and cultural differences. Samuel Stanhope Smith's lectures and *Essay on the Causes of Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species* supported this environmentalist perspective. While lecturing to the American Philosophical Society in 1787, Smith argued that the physical features of a young Indian by the name of George Morgan White Eyes had become more Anglo-American since joining Princeton. White Eyes' environment at college was noticeably less Indian and Stanhope argued that White Eyes' physical characteristics changed accordingly.¹⁵ However, Smith's viewpoint was the exception to the rule. By 1800, more European Americans and many American Indians believed that their differences were tied to their genesis. While Stanhope Smith argued that Indians and European Americans could trace their ancestry to a shared creation, larger numbers of people after 1800 believed that multiple creations produced the various Indian, European, and African races throughout the world. Indians and European Americans had identified themselves differently from one another for

¹⁵ Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 116-117.

centuries, but the shift towards identifying difference as innate was largely the product of nineteenth century circumstances.¹⁶

Indians and European Americans collectively constructed the racial categories reflecting innate differences. Indians in the southeast had historically identified themselves as “Red” in relation to the European Americans for its symbolic value.¹⁷ However, beginning in the nineteenth century these same Indians started explaining their origins and redness as a product of their separate creation from European Americans. European Americans followed a similar path but began differentiating themselves by refashioning what it meant to be Indian and what it meant to be African in order to justify their treatment of slaves and Indians. Rationalizing that both races were inferior to whites allowed European Americans to abuse African labor and take Indian land.

These racial categories most certainly surfaced in Prophetstown and Vincennes.¹⁸ Like many racist European Americans, Tenskwatawa believed that the Creator had created Indians separately from whites and that the intermixing of the two races had greatly undermined Indian culture. The Great Spirit told the Prophet that the “white man was not made by himself but by another spirit who made & governed the whites.”¹⁹ While Tenskwatawa and his brother preached to their fellow Indians not to associate with non-Indians, European Americans did much the same. William Henry Harrison publicly stated his views that Indians were innately predisposed to warfare and that their ability to

¹⁶ Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Oxford University Press, 2004); Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 137-140.

¹⁸ Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 123-147.

¹⁹ C. C. Trowbridge, “Shawnese Traditions,” *Occasional Contributions from the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan* 9 (1939):3.

construct unified societies often collapsed under juvenile jealousies. Harrison believed that it was impossible for Indians and European Americans to live together because Indians would never stop raiding non-Indian settlements.

The racial rhetoric from both groups was mutually complementary. Yet, as racial categories hardened during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, residents of Vincennes and Prophetstown continued to emphasize and defend their ethnic rather than racial interests. Even though racial boundaries became increasingly apparent, few people saw race as the key to constructing their ideal society. Examining these issues on the local level shows that people in both towns used, but were not wedded to, racial ideology. While inhabitants of the valley certainly used race to promote their interests at times, they also found other avenues that were as effective.

The manner in which people used race and the point at which it crystallized in a given area depended upon spatial factors. Historians have begun to address these spatial factors, although in regional, rather than local, terms. Nancy Shoemaker examined the ways in which American Indians in the southeast identified themselves as “Red” in the forty years before the American Revolution.²⁰ Indians used this term not only for its cultural significance, but also to differentiate themselves from African slaves and European colonists. While the southeastern Indians did not initially identify as red to denote their race, it eventually became a signifier of racial difference. Surprisingly, the Indians of the southeast made such color distinctions decades before Indians to the north. Likewise, Patrick Griffin analyzes racial relationships to the north in the Ohio Valley and argues that ideas of innate difference crystallized in that region in the three decades after

²⁰ Nancy Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to be Red,” *The American Historical Review* 102 (June, 1997).

the end of the Seven Years War.²¹ Hardening racial constructs were largely the result of the polarizing effects that the constant violence and warfare had upon the inhabitants of the region. As frontier settlers fought for economic and political independence in a world full of violence and death, they grudgingly recognized their common racial heritage with the revolutionaries further east and decided to sacrifice some of their autonomy in exchange for protection from their newly independent government. Peter Silver seconds much of Griffin's analysis. He states that residents of the middle colonies developed a common racial identity because of their shared victimization from Indian attacks.²² These historians highlight the ways in which Indians and European Americans adopted racial identities during the latter half of the eighteenth century because of varying spatial factors.

While violence along the frontier played an important part in the Wabash-Maumee Valley, it did not necessarily lead to greater racial solidarity. This is not to say that racial identities did not gain greater definition during this period, but that protecting one's racial heritage did not always serve the local interests of the people involved. The French recognized that giving the Americans *carte-blanche* in the region would mean that they would lose any remaining diplomatic influence and economic potential. French traders willingly altered intelligence regarding the Indian threat on Vincennes in order to protect their trading and familial connections with the Miamis. This was as true for Indian inhabitants of the region as well. Despite their shared racial heritage with the nativist Indians at Prophetstown, the Miamis believed that maintaining their ethnic heritage was more important than defending the interests of all Indians. Rather than

²¹ Patrick Griffin, *Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (Hill and Wang, 2007).

²² Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (W. W. Norton & Co., 2007).

cooperate with the Prophet after the Treaty of Fort Wayne, Pacanne marched his supporters to meet with the British. Their historical connection to the British trumped their racial connections with the Indians at Prophetstown. Although the nascent racial ideology of the colonial era gained greater definition during the early republic, it did not necessarily provide the tools and intellectual groundwork for Indians and European Americans to protect their worlds. During an era of such vast change, most communities looked for security rather than risk further displacement. The ideology of race explained “why” Indians and European Americans were in their present situations, but it did not provide the methods for “how” these communities could survive.

Inhabitants of Prophetstown often behaved in direct contradiction to what racial ideology would suggest. While many different groups of Indians arrived at Prophetstown and heard Tenskwatawa’s proclamations about protecting the Indian race, they also grew weary of his message after starving through a winter and confronting other Indians with whom they had historical grievances. The continued problems at Prophetstown convinced many Indians that the racial message shared by the Shawnee brothers was irrelevant for survival in the region. Other Indians simply were not willing to ignore their historic relationships with other native communities. Prophetstown remained divided because there was no clear-cut benefit to ignoring ethnic traditions in favor of racial unity. Indians hoped that racial unity would allow them greater protection, but in the end, they wanted that protection to defend their distinct cultural identities. Unifying at the expense of one’s ethnic identity seemed as destructive as assimilating into European American culture. It was not enough to think racially. In order for people to act on racial ideology, they had to derive some sort of practical advantage from it.

Ethnic interests were not the only reason inhabitants of the Wabash-Maumee Valley resisted racial unification. Residents of Vincennes favored national issues and national identity above racial unity because local issues like the legalization of slavery proved more important than the removal of Indians from the region. The debate over slavery so divided the American community in Vincennes that they openly manipulated issues pertaining to Indian affairs and the security of the town to promote their visions for the territory. Such behavior came at the expense of their fellow citizens, when it would have seemed logical to unify against the Indian menace to their north. Issues surrounding the legalization of slavery in the territory, and not one's racial heritage, determined how Americans dealt with their Indian neighbors. In Vincennes, racial relationships were often contingent upon one's vision for the nation's future.

The tendency of American Indians and European Americans to resist racial and ethnic unification after 1800 was no where more apparent than at Prophetstown and Vincennes. The atmosphere in both towns was heavily racist, but the behavior of the people living in both towns was often not so. One could spend a day at Prophetstown and hear Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh deliver lengthy diatribes about how Indians and European Americans had been created separately and how European American culture was undermining and destroying Indian kind. Yet, after hearing Tenskwatawa's speeches, many of the Indians at Prophetstown ignored his stipulations and acted in a fashion that threatened the racial vision embodied by Prophetstown. The town of Vincennes was quite similar in many respects. Weekly newspaper sermons published by the ever-paranoid Elihu Stout announced the diabolical plans of the nearby Indians who hoped to destroy Vincennes. Governor Harrison paraded the militia around town to

emphasize the threat posed by the Prophet's forces. Nonetheless, residents of Vincennes willingly aided the Indians throughout the region in order to protect their cultural and national identities. It was impossible for anyone to escape the racial dialogues and hatreds present in both towns, but it was relatively easy for both Indians and European Americans to circumvent the issue.

Life in the Wabash-Maumee Valley was too complicated for people to rely on a hard-and-fast system of racial classification. Racial ideology rests on a simplistic notion that humans originated from separate creations, but identities in the Wabash-Maumee Valley were often contingent on a variety of relationships unrelated to racial histories. Few residents thought racial theory would improve their lives. Harrison's and Tenskwatawa's efforts to rework territorial relationships proved impossible because they had to convince their supporters that their racial vision was the best possible means to promote peace, economic development, and political progress. While racial violence did erupt periodically in the valley, it was largely due to the intra-community factionalism at Prophetstown and Vincennes. Most communities were unable to reconcile the racial rhetoric of their leaders with the practical realities of life.

William Henry Harrison and Tenskwatawa simply had different agendas than the majority of people living in their communities. Rather than adjusting to the needs of the people in their towns, the two men often ignored and even undermined their community members in order to maintain power. For Harrison and Tenskwatawa, the relationship between Prophetstown and Vincennes was fundamentally a racial one. Harrison's community represented the expansionist European Americans who continued to swindle and murder the Indians and the Prophet's town symbolized the bloodthirsty savage who

had failed to assimilate into European American culture. Harrison and the Prophet were too engrossed in a rhetorical battle over the rights Indians possessed to consider that most people were not thinking along racial lines. Their stubborn behavior continued even decades after the war. Tenskwatawa removed himself from his fellow Indians who accommodated the American agents and Harrison built a political career based on his false perceptions of the Battle of Tippecanoe. Both refused to understand the problems within their own community and to evaluate those who opposed them.

Few people at Vincennes and Prophetstown shared the same meaning of place, which undercut Harrison and the Prophet's attempts to unite their respective communities ideologically. The construction of place is a process given meaning by the tribulations and experiences of human populations, but few residents at Vincennes and Prophetstown shared the same past experiences.²³ A noted geographer, John Harner states that "place identity is a cultural value shared by the community, a collective understanding about social identity intertwined with place meaning."²⁴ Both towns divided over place identity. The French had been at Vincennes for almost a century and their construction of place depended upon familial and economic relations with the Indians. Such a place was unfathomable for Harrison and his supporters. In similar fashion, the Shawnee at Prophetstown refused to operate on Miami terms and disregarded the extent to which the Miami constructed their identity by incorporating people into the Wabash-Maumee trade network. Harner contends that "place identity arises when the shared beliefs about place

²³ John Harner in "Place Identity and Copper Mining in Sonora, Mexico," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (Dec., 2001), 680 argues that "Place is a process, and it is human experience and struggle that give meaning to place."

²⁴ Ibid.

meaning for the majority match the ideological beliefs of those in power.”²⁵ Such a relationship did not exist at Prophetstown or Vincennes. The Prophet and Harrison never fully understood that their policies and rhetoric were in many ways an assault on how the Kickapoos, Miamis, Potawatomis, and French constructed place and thus constructed their identities. Tenskwatawa and Harrison, thus, were not simply at odds with their followers over the practicality of racial ideology. They divided over the construction of place.

Both Harrison and the Prophet ended their lives in much the same way they had lived while in Indiana Territory. Tenskwatawa remained at his final Prophetstown near the Argentine district of present-day Kansas City, Kansas, until his death in 1836. He isolated himself from the majority of the Shawnees who had begun working with the missionaries and government agents. Few Indians sought his council largely because he did not support any sort of collaboration with the Americans. He spent his last few years in relative obscurity.²⁶ Harrison failed to win the presidency the same month that Tenskwatawa died, but continued his efforts and won the presidential election in 1840. A few months later, Harrison stood on the east portico of the Capitol building where Chief Justice Roger Taney administered the oath of office. Shortly thereafter, Harrison, then sixty-eight years old, delivered an inaugural address that lasted almost two hours. Of the almost 8,500 words Harrison spoke in his speech, only once did he mention “aboriginal” peoples. His imagined nation, like his community at Vincennes, simply had no room for them. Harrison contracted a cold during his first month in office and his condition

²⁵ John Harner in “Place Identity and Copper Mining in Sonora, Mexico,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (Dec., 2001), 680.

²⁶ Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 187.

deteriorated quickly into full-blown pneumonia. He passed away thirty days into his term as president. Like the Prophet, he died never having constructed his ideal community.

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