

FORT WAYNE  
THE FRONTIER POST

BY  
BESSIE K. ROBERTS



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Fort Wayne, the frontier  
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Fort Wayne,

The Frontier Post

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Bessie K. Roberts

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The Frontier Post*

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Prepared by the Staff of the  
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photograph by Bill Weber

**Bessie K. Roberts**

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## FOREWORD

Fort Wayne is doubly a memorial to two great 18th Century leaders: Major-General Anthony Wayne and Little Turtle, Chief of the Miami Indians.

The naming of our Fort has given immortality to General Wayne and to the crowning achievement of his career--the establishing of this frontier post on enemy ground.

It commemorates Little Turtle who held to the last his tribal claim to "That Glorious Gate" --the capital of the Miami confederacy.

It was these two--meeting face to face at Greenville--whose peaceful settlement of vexing issues in words brought Fort Wayne into the Union of Fifteen States.

To the tourist Fort Wayne offers a wealth of historic lore. A well-marked trail leads to the most important sites where a brief account of the events connected with this site is given on a marker.

The Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Museum in Swinney Park, which is easily accessible to all, is a good starting-point for the trail.

Bessie K. Roberts



## FORT WAYNE, THE FRONTIER POST

By Bessie K. Roberts

Quiet streams abounding with fish, forests rich in game brought the Indian to this spot on the three rivers where Fort Wayne stands today. The search for a new route to the Mississippi and a king's favor brought the early French explorer this way. The redemption of souls was the pioneer priest's motive. While the trader dreamed of wealth from the furs and pelts of the wilderness. The three rivers lured them all. And when the trail had been blazed and trading posts and missions established, the settler followed with his goods and family.

Fort Wayne, with its rapidly changing skyline, stands on a spot that has been prized by mankind since prehistoric times. The red man believed that he had inherited the place from his father, the Great Spirit. That is why he held it so tenaciously and tried to defend his inheritance against an enemy who proved in time too much for him--his white brother.

For hundreds of years the three rivers have watered a region wooded with forests of beech, oak, poplar and sycamore. The wilderness was rich with coon, mink, muskrat and deer. The pelts meant wealth for the traders. The river highways provided an outlet for this trade.

### The Village

### of Kekionga

The early white traders and settlers found here the Indian village of Kekionga, on the site of the present Lakeside, one of the almost continuous string of villages along the Maumee River. The land in the fork of the St. Joseph and Maumee Rivers had been cultivated by the squaws for years when the white man came this way. Fields of maize and gardens of squash and pumpkin bore evidence of a semi-civilized, semi-nomadic people.

The village of Kekionga situated along the St. Joseph River not far from its junction with the St. Mary's River had been a principle town of the Miami Indians for at least 100 years before the American Revolution. The place had been held by the French before the fall of Canada. At the period of the Revolution it had become a place of much importance in a trading and military way. It is believed to have ranked next to Detroit and Vincennes.

Kekionga is a word signifying a great antiquity. Literally translated from the Miami tongue it means blackberry patch. The land was covered with a luxurious growth of blackberry bushes when the first white settlers came.

**The First French Fort** The first French fort was built about the year 1682 a short distance west of the present Lincoln Highway bridge over the St. Mary's River. The village of Kekionga was established by the Kiskakons, an Ottawa branch of the Miamis, shortly thereafter. Post Miami, as the first French fort was called, was commanded by Jean Baptiste Bissot, Sieur De Vincennes, until it was burned by the Indians. The second French fort was built by M. de Raimond in 1750, and was taken over by the British in 1760 at the close of the French and Indian war.

Four campaigns were waged in this vicinity before the place could be counted a part of the Union. La Balm, a young French general brought to this country among the troops of Lafayette, was the first to meet defeat at the hands of the Miami Indians under Chief Little Turtle. The La Balm massacre occurred near the present site of Columbia City.

**Harmar's Ford** In Josiah Harmar's engagement Chief Little Turtle's strategy of surrounding the enemy and cutting him off from reinforcements caused the defeat of Harmar's troops. The Maumee River ran red with blood at Harmar's Ford, now marked by a boulder erected in memory of Major Wyllys and the other leaders slain there on October 22, 1790.

A special act of Congress fitted out the army under General

St. Clair who was given his instructions by General Washington himself, who warned his general against a surprise attack. St. Clair's troops were cut to pieces in a surprise attack before they reached the Miami village.

Refusing to be conquered by any obstacle, Washington proceeded to have Congress fit out the Army of the Republic under General Anthony Wayne. Wayne was selected because of the peculiar genius for warfare he had exhibited in his Revolutionary exploits.

In October, 1793, General Wayne began his march toward the western frontier. The troops built winter quarters at Fort Greenville, where they drilled all winter. In July they began their march on the Indian villages along the Maumee. On August 18 they began the battle of Fallen Timbers, where Little Turtle's braves lay concealed among the prostrated trees of the forest. Here Wayne's troops remained for three days, destroying all houses and corn for considerable distance.

## Wayne's

General Wayne arrived at Kekionga on September 17, 1794. Work on the garrison was begun on September 24 and completed on October 22.

## Fort

The post was christened Fort Wayne and fifteen volleys of cannon were fired in salute to the stars and stripes "as it floated over this stockade fort in the heart of a boundless and lonely forest region."

General Wayne left the post bearing his name less than a week after the completion of the garrison and took up his march for Fort Greenville, leaving Colonel Hamtramck in charge. The establishment of this post is said to have signalled "the birth of the imperial west." Thus was the continental policy of Washington established forever.

## Wayne's

## Monument

A bronze equestrian statue to Gen. Wayne was executed by George E. Ganiere, of Chicago, and placed in Hayden Park facing the Lincoln Highway east (Maumee avenue). A replica of

a primitive well with wooden bucket and well-sweep has been placed near the original location of the well of the Old Fort at the corner of Main and Clay Streets by the Mary Penrose Wayne Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

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The American fort built by Wayne continued to serve as a military outpost for a number of years. Just twenty years after its construction a peace was concluded on July 22, 1814, at Greenville, Ohio, with a number of friendly tribes of Indians. The garrison had been in charge of several commanders including Major Hamtramck, Col. Thomas Hunt, Major Zebulon Pike, Captain John Whipple, Captain Nathan Heald, Captain James Rhea (whose resignation was demanded following the siege of 1812), Captain Hugh Moore, Major Joseph Jenkinson, Major John Whistler, 1814, Major Josiah H. Vose, 1815-1819. Major Whistler was the grandfather of the artist, James MacNeill Whistler.

Wayne's fort was rebuilt in 1816 by Major Whistler. In April, 1819, the troops withdrew, leaving a little band of citizens extremely lonesome and unprotected. Fort Wayne, remote from the settlements, had continued for 25 years to exist as an object of especial interest to the nation as a frontier post. From then on peace, not war, was to reign about the historic confluence of the St. Mary's and St. Joseph Rivers.

**The Second American Fort**      The second American fort stood on the site of the corner of Main and Clay streets, and was built by Col. Thomas Hunt in 1800, one block north of Gen. Wayne's fort. For a time there were two forts standing 300 feet apart. The second fort served as a government land office in 1823.

**First Indian Council House**      The first Indian Council House built after Gen. Wayne's campaign stood where No. 1 Fire Station stands now. The building was burned in the siege of 1812. School was held in the building up to 1856.



**Pirogue**      The old pirogue landing near the foot of Columbia Street and the St. Mary's River at the junction recalls the old river days. Fort Wayne was on a trade route for the transportation of immense cargoes of furs including beaver, bear, otter, deer and coon which were collected on the Wabash and Illinois Rivers. Furs were the principal staple of the country and among the traders were the only currency. By means of this currency dry goods, boots, hardware, firearms and tools were sold at high prices to the Indians.

The pelts were brought into the trading post in the spring and traded in exchange for blankets, supplies of food and clothing. To transport their cargoes the traders built rafts out of great poplar trees fifty or sixty feet long. The furs were packed tightly and sent down to Lake Erie in this contrivance. The men along the lake to whom this fur was consigned would wade into the rivers and swamps for their cargo.

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Pirogues and keel-boats were used successively in the river trade. Pirogues were hollowed-out poplar logs that measured two or three feet across and were tree length. The keel-boats were propelled by man-power. Three or four men holding long poles set in heavy iron sockets shoved the boats up the river.

**Captain**      During one of the raids of the Miami Indians in Kentucky under Chief Little Turtle, a plucky boy of twelve was taken prisoner. He was adopted by the tribe and reared as the foster son of the chief, Little Turtle. The boy was William Wells, a figure that looms large in the early records of the Northwest Territory. He was the supreme hero in the Fort Dearborn massacre where he met his death at the hands of treacherous Potawatomi Indians.

Captain Wells was Indian agent at Fort Wayne during the years of peace following the first treaty of Greenville in 1795. This peace was to be broken by Tecumseh who attempted to unite the Indians of the northwest into a great confederacy for the purpose of giving back to the Indians the land that had been taken away from them. The year 1812 saw the climax of the hostilities in the Fort

Dearborn massacre and the siege of Fort Wayne. Captain Wells' home stood in what is now Spy Run on a spot indicated by a marker on Spy Run Avenue near Wagner Street.

Grave of "Little Turtle," which means "painted Terra-pin" in the Miami tongue, was called by Washington the greatest Indian of all time. He was the son of a Mohican father and a Miami mother. He came to the attention of the civilized world at the age of thirty-one on the occasion of the La Balm massacre.

This powerful chieftain was influential in the treaty held at Greenville, Ohio, July 15, 1795, when he gave voice to an eloquent plea for the region lying where the three rivers meet. He was the last to sign and declared he would be the last to break this treaty.

Although a fighting savage, he finally became the leader of his people in the ways of peace. Many distinguished Europeans came to know him in his later years. He visited New York, Philadelphia, and Washington on missions for his people. His portrait was painted by the artist Gilbert Stewart. Count Kosciusko became his friend and gave him rich gifts--a beautiful brace of pistols and an elegant robe of sea otter skin worth several hundred dollars. President Washington presented him with an engraved sword and a medal bearing his likeness.

Little Turtle labored to train his people to forsake liquor, to learn agriculture. He met with indifferent success because of the nature of the savage. At last he developed gout, which he was proud to claim as a gentleman's disease. He made his home in his lodge at Little Turtle Village, Eel River, near Fort Wayne, frequently coming to the fort surgeon for treatment. He died July 4, 1812, while resting in the yard of his son-in-law, Captain William Wells.

The great chief was buried with the full honors of a military hero in an old Indian burying ground in Spy Run. The grave was identified just one hundred years later while excavating for a building. The sword and medal of Washington buried with the chief

served to identify the spot. The grave is marked with a stone slab bearing the words "Little Turtle, 1751-1812" in the rear of the lot at 634 Lawton Place.

The lot which marks the site of an old Indian burial ground has been converted into a park where a handsome boulder was erected in 1959 to commemorate Little Turtle, Chief of the Miami Indians.

**Last  
French Fort** The second and last French fort stood on the St. Joseph River near what is now Delaware Avenue. It was built by Capt. Raimond in 1750 and surrendered to the British under Lieutenant Butler in 1760. Ensign Richard Holmes and the British garrison were massacred by the Miami Indians in 1763 on this site. The massacre was accomplished according to popular belief by the treachery of an Indian maiden in whom Holmes had great confidence. The hardest engagement of the battle between General Josiah Harmar and the Miamis under Little Turtle was fought here October 22, 1790.

Major Fontaine, in command of Harmar's light cavalry, was cut off from the main army and killed on the same engagement at a spot not far from the site of the French fort.

**Indian  
Torture Ground** Not far from the Columbia Street bridge in Lakeside is a spot where captives taken by the Shawnees in southern Ohio, Kentucky and Pennsylvania were subjected to torture. This practice continued until a late day.

**Hugh  
McCulloch** The Hon. Hugh McCulloch, first comptroller of the treasury and secretary of the treasury under Lincoln, Johnson and Arthur, came to Fort Wayne as a young man of twenty-four in June, 1833. He entered into the practice of law immediately. He built his home on Water Street, now Superior, in 1838. Mr. McCulloch was a close friend of Lincoln during the distressing days of the Civil War and was among those present at his bedside when he

passed away. His home now is used as a club house by the Fort Wayne Turnverein.

**Jenkinson** Near the McCulloch home is the site of the  
**Massacre** Jenkinson Massacre, a surprise attack by the  
Indians on the detachment of Major Joseph Jenkinson and his Kentucky militia in 1813. The soldiers, bringing a flatboat loaded with supplies, were scalped by the savages.

**Lincoln Monument** The Statue, "Lincoln the Youth," stands  
**and Museum** in the rotunda of the Lincoln National Life  
Insurance Company as a tribute to the Great Emancipator who spent his formative boyhood years in the southern part of this state. The heroic bronze is the work of Paul Manship, noted sculptor. The museum on the fourth floor of the building contains the largest collection of material about one man in the world. The museum is open to the public during the office hours of the company.

**Governor** Governor Bigger, governor of Indiana, came  
**Bigger** to Fort Wayne in 1843 to practice law and died here in 1846. His grave, in McCulloch Park, is the last of an old burying ground. A slab of Dayton stone bears this inscription: "Samuel Bigger, late governor of this state, died September 9, 1846, in the forty-fifth year of his age--a patriot and a Christian, he died in the full hope of glorious immortality."

**Historical** The Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Mu-  
**Museum** seum in the old Swinney Homestead at Swinney Park offers to the student of pioneer history and Indian lore a complete and well-classified collection of wide general interest. The museum is open daily.

The monument to Perry Randall was erected by popular subscription immediately after his death February 2, 1916, "in recognition of the high example of civic patriotism his life afforded."

The Colonel D. N. Foster Monument, honoring a long and distinguished life, stands in Swinney Park.

## Camp Allen

Camp Allen stood in the bend of the St. Mary's River during the Civil War in what is now Swinney Park.

The Aqueduct Monument was erected by the boys who used to swim in the aqueduct which spanned the St. Mary's River where the Wabash and Erie Canal crossed the river between the present two Nickel Plate bridges.

## Wabash and Erie Canal

Captain Wells had prophesied that a big ditch would one day be dug from the lake to this locality and that there would be a large town here. But he was not believed. Ground was broken for the canal February 22, 1832, with appropriate ceremonies befitting the patriotic character of the day. The Feeder Canal was finished by the spring 1834 and celebrated on July 4 with a picnic for the entire community.

The great canal celebration of the century was held on the completion of the canal on July 4, 1843. Invitations were extended to President Martin Van Buren, Henry Clay, General Winfield Scott, Daniel Webster and notables from everywhere. General Lewis Cass, who was at the height of his career, ambassador to a foreign power, candidate for president, territorial governor of Michigan, was the guest of honor and speaker on this occasion. The celebration was held in Swinney's Grove.

The canal route followed the present line of the Nickel Plate Railroad, the land for which was obtained in 1880 and the road begun in 1881.

## John Baptiste de Richardville

Among the noble figures in the history of Fort Wayne was Richardville, whose remains were buried in an old burying ground where Library Hall stands today. Pe-Che-Wa or Wild-cat was the son of Joseph Drouet de Richardville, of noble lineage, who

had been engaged as an officer in the French service in Canada and lured into the wilderness by the fur trade. He married Ta-cum-wa.

Richardville was born in 1761 in a hut under the boughs of the historic apple tree which stood for a long time in what is now Lakeside. His succession to the chieftainship of the Miami tribe is supposed to have been earned by an act of courage. Instigated by his mother who had been serving a sort of regency as chiefess for thirty years, he cut the thongs that bound a white man to the stake and saved the victim's life. This act of bravery won for him the rank of chief which he held until his death in 1841.

Richardville accompanied Little Turtle to Washington in 1807. When he built his house on the reservation south of Fort Wayne, he sent to Paris for the furniture. His wealth had been accumulated by his mother from the portage where as much as \$100 a day used to be earned. He died the richest Indian in the United States with a fortune amounting to \$200,000.

Susan, Catherine and La Blonde, the daughters of Richardville, erected a monument to the memory of their father in the Catholic cemetery east of the city. His remains, however, continued to rest in the old burying ground under Library Hall in the Cathedral lot.

**Johnny Appleseed,** The grave of Johnny Appleseed, quaint priest of the wilderness, in the old Archer cemetery north of Fort Wayne, makes Fort Wayne a national shrine. John Chapman, as he was known by a few, was a curious, kind, loving spirit who left a trail of living, blossoming apple trees as his life work.

Johnny Appleseed was born near Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1775. He spent the last fifteen years of his life in and near Fort Wayne. Bibles and seeds were his stock in trade. The Indians treated him with respect and even the wild creatures of the forest let him pass unmolested.

He spent 46 years on his mission of peace and sowing, trav-

eling by foot, horseback and boat. It is believed that the seeds he planted had grown into trees bearing fruit over an area of 100,000 square miles before his death.

He lived in peace with the world and every living thing, beloved by Red Man and settler, a simple primitive Christian. Death came to him gently on a cold, bleak night in March, 1847, after he had spent the evening reading his Bible and praying in the home of a friend north of town. In recent years the grave has become a shrine for many a tourist pilgrim.

A tablet to the pioneer apple grower has been erected in Swinney Park. The grave of Johnny Appleseed near the Parnell bridge is the focal point of a park located on both sides of the St. Joseph River and a bridge over the river. Both park and bridge commemorate the life and work of Johnny Appleseed by bearing his name.

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"THE GLORIOUS GATE," as Little Turtle called this spot, still opens wide its portals. Smooth paved roads instead of Indian trails lead to the three rivers. Steel rails stretch through and beyond this happy hunting ground. Airways trace their invisible paths above it, and the three rivers follow the same quiet course they have followed since the first Red Man threaded his secret trails to this chosen spot.


















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