

**LOCATION OF  
FORT CREVECOEUR**

---

---

BY  
**DAN R. SHEEN**  
PEORIA, ILL.

**Copyright 1919**  
**by**  
**Dan R. Sheen, Peoria, Ill.**



# *Location of Fort Crevecoeur*

by  
DAN R. SHEEN  
Peoria, Ill.

---

FORT CREVECOEUR (pronounced Cravekur) was the first structure erected by white men in what is now known as the State of Illinois. It was built in the year 1680, by Rene Robert Cavalier, who was ennobled by King Louis the Fourteenth of France as Sieur de LaSalle, aided by thirty-one other Frenchmen who came with him from Fort Frontenac, now at Kingston, in Canada; and, also, by some of that part of the tribe of Illinois Indians that occupied the two villages, on each side of the Illinois River, near a place then called "Peoria", where he landed and built the Fort. He began the work on the fifteenth day of January, 1680, and the fort was practically completed on the twenty-second day of March of the same year, when he left his Lieutenant, Henry de Tonty, in charge of it and, taking with him two canoes and six men, went back to Fort Frontenac (Illinois Historical Collections, Vol. 1, pages 87 and 131). A few days after his departure he sent word back to Tonty to build a fort at Starved Rock, near Ottawa, and Tonty went up there for that purpose with some of his men. Those who remained at the fort, stripped the place of everything valuable, and threw what they could not carry into the river. It is generally believed that they burned the fort; but, the Iroquois Indians on the tenth of September of that year waged war against the Illinois Indians, for whose protection in part LaSalle said, in getting their permission to build the fort, it was to be built; and, it is probable that in the battle between those tribes, at that time, the fort was burned. Tonty tells of the desertion of his men, and says that they left him stripped of everything, but he does not say they burned the fort, something he would have been apt to mention if it had occurred (Vol. 1, Illinois Historical Collections, Pages 80, 81 and 132). During the two hundred and thirty-nine years that have since elapsed, history, conjecture, and tradition, have been so confused that the site of the fort has become lost.

## FIVE ALLEGED SITES EXIST

That the fort was built on the east side of the River at Peoria is no longer questioned. The writings of those who saw Fort Crevecoeur show the following facts.

- First: It was a league from Pimiteoui.
- Second: It was half a league from Omaha's camp.
- Third: It was an hour's ride in a canoe below ice on the river in March, 1680.
- Fourth: It was defended on one side by the river.
- Fifth: It had a marsh in front of it.
- Sixth: The main bank of the river was 200 paces from it.
- Seventh: The river in the rainy season spread to it.
- Eighth: It was near the Indian villages where LaSalle landed.
- Ninth: It was on a "Little Mound" or "Knoll" or "Hillock" or "Eminence."
- Tenth: It was adjoining woods.
- Eleventh: It had wide deep ravines, made by rains, on two sides of it and on part of another side.
- Twelfth: It was near water that did not freeze much in winter.

These facts must all concur to establish the location of the site. All five of the alleged sites are on the east side of the river opposite the City of Peoria. Two of them are on the top of the bluffs about five miles apart. The lower hill site is opposite the lower end of the City of Peoria, and the upper hill site about opposite the dividing line between the City of Peoria and the Village of Averyville. There are three alleged sites in the Valley, all at a lower altitude of at least one hundred and fifty feet, and all close to the river. The first site selected in the Valley was where Wesley City stands. Mr. Charles Ballance, a resident of Peoria from 1831 to his death in 1873, published a history of Peoria County shortly before his death fixing Wesley City as the real site. About the year 1902 the Peoria Chapter of the D. A. R. located the lower hill site at a point a little below Wesley City, and a quarter of a mile or more back from the river. They placed a stone monument, suitably inscribed, upon it. About the same time the Peoria Historical Association established the upper hill site, about half a mile back from the river or lake, and also marked the place with a stone monument suitably inscribed. About the year 1910 in the Village of East Peoria, about equi-distant from the hill sites, the writer selected one of the valley sites. The other valley site was located by Arthur Lagron, a French engineer and surveyor of Peoria, about the year 1913, in a Railroad yard a little above Wesley City. These five sites

we will call respectively, the WESLEY CITY SITE, the LOWER HILL SITE, the UPPER HILL SITE, the EAST PEORIA SITE, and the RAILROAD YARD SITE.

### RELIABLE DATA CONCERNING THE SITE

Father Louis Hennepin was the historian of the LaSalle enterprize. He published two accounts of it; the first at Paris in 1683, entitled "Description de La Louisane"; and, the other in two volumes published in Utrecht in 1697 and 1698 entitled "A NEW DISCOVERY." The first publication was not translated into English until the year 1880. It is found in Volume 1, Illinois Historical Collection, pages 46 to 95 inclusive. The second account is published by Reuben Gold Thwait. Both are in the Peoria Public Library. LaSalle did not publish a connected account of his discoveries. His writings are fragmentary, but are complete for the purpose of locating the site of the fort. Henry de Tonty was LaSalle's lieutenant, and his writings are meagre. They are principally a short memoir, found in said Volume 1, pages 128 to 164 inclusive, covering a period from 1678 to 1693, and include the murder of LaSalle in what is now the State of Texas, in March, 1687, by three of his voyageurs, Duhault (or Duhaut), Lanctot (or Liotot) and Heinz. Father Zenobius Membre was one of the three Catholic Friars who accompanied LaSalle. He was a guest of Chief Omaha, whose camp was half a league from Fort Crevecoeur, while the fort was being built, and made frequent visits to the fort. He wrote somewhat about the fort. Jean Baptiste Louis Franquelin was appointed by the French court to be hydrographer, to furnish a map of LaSalle's discoveries along the Illinois and Mississippi valleys. He made a map in 1684, under the auspices of LaSalle, having commenced it in 1679. It was six feet long and four and one-half feet wide and showed among other things the valley and the river at Peoria, and the hills adjoining, and pictured Fort Crevecoeur as located in the valley upon the river. The original of the map became lost, but a copy of it is to be found in Parkman's "LaSalle and the Great Northwest"; and, also in "Jesuit Relations", Vol. 63; and, also, in Vol. 1 "Chicago and its Builders." These copies are all alike, and we furnish a copy of one of them. Those five persons LaSalle, Hennepin, Tonty, Membre, and Franquelin, are the only ones known to have seen the fort or its ruins who tell us where it was located. They do not contradict each other about it, and need no corroboration. Hearsay, and conjecture, cannot be used to contradict them. A great many writers, most of them born more than a hundred years after the fort was destroyed, have expressed opinions about its location, among whom are Aubry, Bal-

lance, Bancroft, Beckwith, Breese, Brown, Coxe, Charlevoix, Craig, Drown, Davidson and Stuve, Edwards, Falconer, Ferris, Flint, Ford, French, Gayerre, Gale, Gravier, Hosmer, Leclereq, Marest, Mason, Matson, McLaughlin, McCulloch, Margry, Moses, John Moses, Parkman, Peck, Perkins, Reynolds, Rice, Shea, Sparks, Thevenot, Winsor, Zotz, Chicago Tribune, November 15th, 1889, and Chicago Tribune, February 24th, 1895.

### FIRST, THE FORT A LEAGUE FROM PIMITEOUI

LaSalle, as found in Margry, Vol. 2, page 247, speaking of the width of the Illinois River said, "But at different places as at Pimiteoui, a league east of Crevecoeur, and two or three other places," etc. This gives the distance that the fort was from Pimiteoui, and indicates that the word "Pimiteoui" as here used means a Village. That Pimiteoui was not only a lake which extended from the Narrows above Peoria to near Lacon, in Marshall County, but was also a Village probably located on ten mile creek which empties about mid-way The Narrows, appears by a photo of a map possessed by the writer obtained from the Public Archives of Canada, at Ottawa. The Narrows is a strait connecting the Lake opposite Peoria with the one above it, and is about a mile and a half long. At that point, in early days of modern settlement, there was a place called "Little Detroit," beautifully situated for an Indian village, which we think was formerly the village of Pimiteoui. Sometimes the Village was mentioned by the early writers, and sometimes the Lake. As for instance, LaSalle speaking of his second trip down the River, as stated in Margry, Vol. 2, page 133, says, "On arriving at Pimiteoui or Crevecoeur were found the remains of the destruction of the deserters." Here the fort seems connected with the village, and the Village must be referred to because in the Lake there could be no remains of the destruction of the deserters. Phillip Francis Rehault, director general of the mines of the company of the Indies, and formerly a banker in Paris, obtained several concessions or tracts of land in 1723, one of which was described as: "One league at front at Pimiteau, on the Illinois River facing the east and *adjoining the lake* bearing the name of the *Village*, and on the other side of the banks of the *village* for half a league above it, with a depth of five leagues, the point of the compass following the Illinois River down the same upon one side, and ascending by the river Arcary which forms the middle through the rest of the depth." (History of Peoria City and County (Rice's Vol. 1, page 34). We quote from the same history as follows: "Here we have the fact well authenticated by a grant of land based thereon that in 1723 there existed at Pimiteoui a village

bearing the same name as the lake upon which it was situated. Whether or not this is the same village mentioned by Marquette, St. Cosme, and Greviere, does not appear. But that it was a French village can scarcely be doubted. This grant of land made June 14th, 1723, was considered in Congress, and is a matter of record there, and is part of the registry of lands entered in Edwardsville, in 1820, by Edward Coles, register. He made report to congress that year stating among other things that Charlotte Troge, nee St. Francois, laid claim to a lot containing two arpents situated two miles above Fort Clark, near "OLD FORT PEORIA." This claim was under what was known as "Ancient Grants," which preceded all recorded title and was also recognized by Congress."

LaSalle wrote to one of his friends, as found in Margry, 2nd Vol. of date September 29, 1680, as follows: "We went four days towards the quarter south of the southwest of the river and arrived the fifth day of January at a *place* called by the natives "Pimiteoui." They wanted us to settle among them but we answered we could not on account of the Iroquois who were subjects of the King, but asked for permission to build a fort to help them to defend their rights in case the Iroquois would attack them. To this they agreed, and after some discussion we decided to build the fort." The word "Pimiteoui" means a place of "fat beasts," and would not apply to a body of water, without the word lake attached. When therefore, LaSalle says, "As at Pimiteoui a league east of Crevecoeur, he evidently referred to the village of Pimiteoui and not to the lake of that name. The river Arcary above mentioned, was the Kickapoo Creek, and as the distance from the land claimed by Charlotte Troge was situated two miles above Fort Clark, and as the River Arcary was the "middle through the rest of the depth" and the depth was five leagues, extending one league above Pimiteoui on one side and half a league on the other side of the river, it would follow that there would be about two leagues between Pimiteoui and the Kickapoo Creek. Two leagues would be six miles, and that is the distance from the lower end of the lake above Peoria to the Kickapoo Creek; and from the supposed Village on Ten Mile Creek, to the Kickapoo Creek. This would place the lower end of Lake Pimiteoui, and the Village of Pimiteoui, at the upper end of the Narrows; and, a league west of that point would be where the East Peoria site of the Fort is located. But, assuming, as has been generally done, that *Lake* Pimiteoui, and not the *Village* Pimiteoui, was meant, the result will be the same; for, Lake Pimiteoui as described by LaSalle, in Margry, Second Volume, is as follows:

"After passing the Chassagaogh River, which is ten leagues or



twenty-four and four-fifths miles from Fort St. Louis, at the right side of the river going down about seventeen miles below, is Lake Pimiteoui, which is eighteen to nineteen miles long and about three miles wide at the widest point. Lake Pimiteoui is formed by three Lakes which have communication with each other by as many straits. The first lake is bordered at the west by nice fields, and at the east by timber the base of which is in water. These timbers extend to the bottom of the hills. All along the three lakes, the river is bordered with real heavy timbers, on the east and southeast. The smallest lake, or center lake, extends more to the west side shore which shore is formed by pretty tall hills also covered with timber. From the third lake some fields can be seen. From there the river gets smaller and narrower until it reaches another small lake between two chains of hills. These hills are sometimes further away from, and at other times nearer to the river bank, leaving between them and the river, a long space covered with timbers intersected by swamps. These swamps are flooded over whenever the water gets higher on account of heavy rain. At about two miles and a half below the Lake Pimiteoui on the left side going down, the bank of the river is all covered by timber, and the shore is gradually sloping down towards the bank of the river, until it reaches the foot of the hill.”

LaSalle has here described the three lakes so accurately that there can be no mistake in saying that the island at Chillicothe, which is a mile and a half long, creates two of the straits that connect the upper two lakes. To leave out that island there could be only two straits between the three connected lakes. From the island upwards the statement describes the first or northerly lake as now found, allowing for the fill of two hundred and thirty-nine years. From the island down the description of the middle lake is accurate. Then from a point near Rome down to the Narrows is a good description of the fine fields that border the third lake or the one just above the Narrows north of Peoria. This arrangement puts a small lake in the center. Having said that from Fort St. Louis to Lake Pimiteoui is twenty-four and four-fifths miles plus seventeen miles, or practically forty-two miles, we must commence at the latter point for the head of the lake. The Federal Government in 1902 made measurements of, and borings in the Illinois River which show that Fort St. Louis, which was at Starved Rock is two hundred and thirty-one miles above the mouth of the Illinois River. Deducting the forty-two miles mentioned, would bring us to a point one hundred and eighty-nine miles above the mouth of the river. Lacon and Sparland are opposite each other on different sides of the river, and the last mentioned point would be between them. Lake Pimiteoui being



eighteen or nineteen miles long, its lower end, measured as nineteen miles, would be at a point one hundred and seventy miles above the mouth of the river or about two miles above the lower end of the lake above the Narrows. This difference of two miles can be accounted for in whole or in part by the fact that the government measurements follow the thread of the river which is somewhat tortuous, and the distance measured would be, in that way, longer than measured in a straight line or even as run according to canoe travel, two hundred and thirty-nine years ago. Lake Pimiteoui can not be stretched so as to reach the lower lake opposite Peoria, nor so as to make of it four lakes instead of three. The Narrows being one mile and one-half long, and the lake opposite Peoria two and one-half miles long, the inclusion of these four miles would make Lake Pimiteoui that distance too long, and preclude the finding of a bank of the river two and one-half miles below it on the left hand side going down, covered by timber, and the shore gradually sloping toward the bank of the river from the foot of the hills. Two and one-half miles below the lake opposite Peoria on the left hand side going down are found steep hills adjoining the river while the gradual slope mentioned is two and a half miles below the lake above Peoria. The borings by the government, as shown by the sheets of survey in the offices at the county seat along the river prove that at Lacon the fill in the river is four feet of mud, twelve feet of sand and two feet of gravel. From the island at Chillicothe up the river, for the eight or ten miles to Lacon, natural streams of water flow into the river such as Senatchwine, McLaughlin and Gimlet creeks from the west and Crow creek and Strawn creek from the east which for the past two hundred and thirty-nine years have been carrying detritus into the river. Along that line are ponds and byons not yet filled, in the valley called "Swan Lake," Big Meadow Lake, Mud Lake, Gar Lake, Goose Pond, Whitmans Lake, Bab's Slough, Sawyer's Slough, Horshon Slough, Douglas Slough, McQueen Pond, Rice Pond, Round Pond, etc., which are evidently the remains of a lake that extended from Lacon to Chillicothe in 1680, and from Lacon upward prior to that time. Treating Lake Pimiteoui as ending above the Narrows at Peoria, measuring one league below, will nearly reach the East Peoria site of Crevecoeur. But, we would have to go about a league further down the river to reach any of the three sites at and near Wesley City. We therefore contend that whether we measure a league from the *Village* of Pimiteoui, or from the *Lake* Pimiteoui, the East Peoria site will fit the record, and that this is not true, of any of the other sites. The upper hill site would not be half a league from the probable location of the *Village* of Pimiteoui nor from the *Lake* of that name.

## SECOND, THE FORT HALF A LEAGUE FROM OMAHA'S CAMP

Hennepin, in his first publication, as found in Volume 1, Illinois Historical Collections, pages 77 to 91, after describing the fort, says: "Father Zenobel (Membre), who had desired to have the great mission of the Illinois, composed of about seven or eight thousand souls, began to weary of it. We spoke about it to Sieur de LaSalle who made a present of three axes to the Father's Host by name "Omaha", that is to say the wolf, who was Chief of a family or tribe in order that he might take care to maintain the father whom this father called his son, and who lodged him and considered him as one of his children. This father, who was *only half a league from the fort*, came to explain to us the subject of his troubles."

## THIRD, AN HOUR'S RIDE IN A CANOE TO ICE IN MARCH, 1680

LaSalle in Margry, Vol. 2, page 55, says: "I embarked with six Frenchmen in two canoes, the river being open in front of the fort. But *we had not gone an hour until we had found ice*. I believe the lack of the current and the place was the cause of the ice remaining so long, and did not want to quit my canoes. We made two sleds and dragged our equipment and canoes upon them and *drew them to the end of the lake* which is seven or eight leagues long." The distance from the Wesley City sites to the lower end of the lake opposite Peoria by way of the river, is about three miles, and it has been assumed by the advocates of those sites that it was in the lake opposite Peoria where LaSalle found the ice. This cannot be true because he could not draw his canoes from the lower end of the lake opposite Peoria to the upper lake above the Narrows as the Narrows has never been known to freeze over, and, the current there was certainly swifter at that time than it is now. The east shore of the lake opposite Peoria, on account of Spring Water that flows there, would certainly be free from ice at that time, and hence there would be no need to drag the sleds there. Colonel James M. Rice, author of the first ten chapters of a late publication, known as "Peoria County and City" in Chapter 5 on page 28, speaking of this fact, says, "The numerous springs coming into the river would keep it (the river) open and free from ice a much greater part of the year, than it would be a little further up." Treating the current at the Narrows as being swift enough to carry the eight canoes of LaSalle and his company to the shore, as stated by LaSalle and Hennepin, and considering the fact that the spring water along the east shore has been carried in artificial channels, toward the lake, instead of being allowed to follow the natural course that it would take before the two hundred and thirty-nine years of fill have deflected it,

and it is reasonably certain that the swift current of the Narrows met the spring water along the east side of the lake opposite Peoria, and thus, the lake opposite Peoria, or the point from Pimiteoui whether lake or village, downward, was open for canoe travel. Canoes paddled up stream would make only about three miles an hour, and from the East Peoria site to the upper end of the Narrows would be about that distance; while, from Wesley City the distance would be about six miles. The Indians were traveling in their canoes up that side of the lake to their camp that winter which is conceded to have been just below the Narrows, as Hennepin says (Illinois Historical Collection, Vol. 1, pages 91 and 95). LaSalle's statement, that, "We had not gone an hour until we had found ice," makes the time *less* than an hour, and from Wesley City would require the canoe speed through a strong current at the mouth of the lake opposite Peoria, and also at the Narrows to be at the rate of about six miles an hour. There is no reason for the assumption that the east side of the lake was impassable for canoe travel on March 22nd opposite the present City of Peoria where it was free for the young warrior that Hennepin says paddled past the fort that winter, and for the hunting party that Hennepin tells about meeting on the last day of February on his way down to the Mississippi.

#### FOURTH, IT WAS DEFENDED ON ONE SIDE BY THE RIVER

Hennepin in his second account of Fort Crevecoeur, as found in "A New Discovery" by Ruben Gold Thwait, page 170, says, "LaSalle desired me to go *down the river* with him to choose a place to build a fort. We pitched upon an eminence on the bank of the river *defended on one side* by the river." This defense by the river on one side, is not contradicted by any person, or any fact, so far as we know. LaSalle and Hennepin both speak of the fortification on three sides of the fort, but never mention the fortification on the river side.

#### FIFTH, IT HAD A MARSII IN FRONT OF IT

Francis Parkman, author of "LaSalle and the Discovery of the Great West" took several trips to Paris and saw documents there about LaSalle and the fort that are not yet translated into English. On page 159 he says: "In the middle of January a thaw broke up the ice which had closed the river, and he (LaSalle) set out in a canoe with Hennepin to visit the site he had chosen for his projected fort. It was *half a league below the camp* on a low hill or knoll, two hundred yards from the southern bank. On either side was a deep ravine and *in front a marshy tract* overflowed at high water. This marshy tract will be found at the East Peoria site, where it still overflows in high water on the river side of the site.

## SIXTH, THE MAIN BANK OF THE RIVER WAS 200 PACES FROM IT

Hennepin, in both of his accounts of the fort, gives us this distance. We quote from his first account Illinois Historical Collection, Vol 1, page 87, "It was a little mound about two hundred paces distant from the river." This is an apparent contradiction of the statement made in his second account where he says, "The fort was built on the bank of the river, and was defended on that side by the river," but along this part of the river are many arms extending upward which are part of it; and, between which and the river proper are ridges. The fort being on a marsh, it was evidently built on one of these arms, and the statement that the river, "In the season of the rains extends to the foot of it" explains what is meant by the river spreading to the foot of the fort in high water by overflowing the ridge.

## SEVENTH, THE RIVER IN THE RAINY SEASON SPREAD TO IT

Hennepin, in his first account said it did so. Illinois Historical Collection, Vol. 1, page 87. Other proof can be quoted but there is no contradiction of the above. The river covered the ridge and the swamp as it is doing at this writing, March 23, at the East Peoria site.

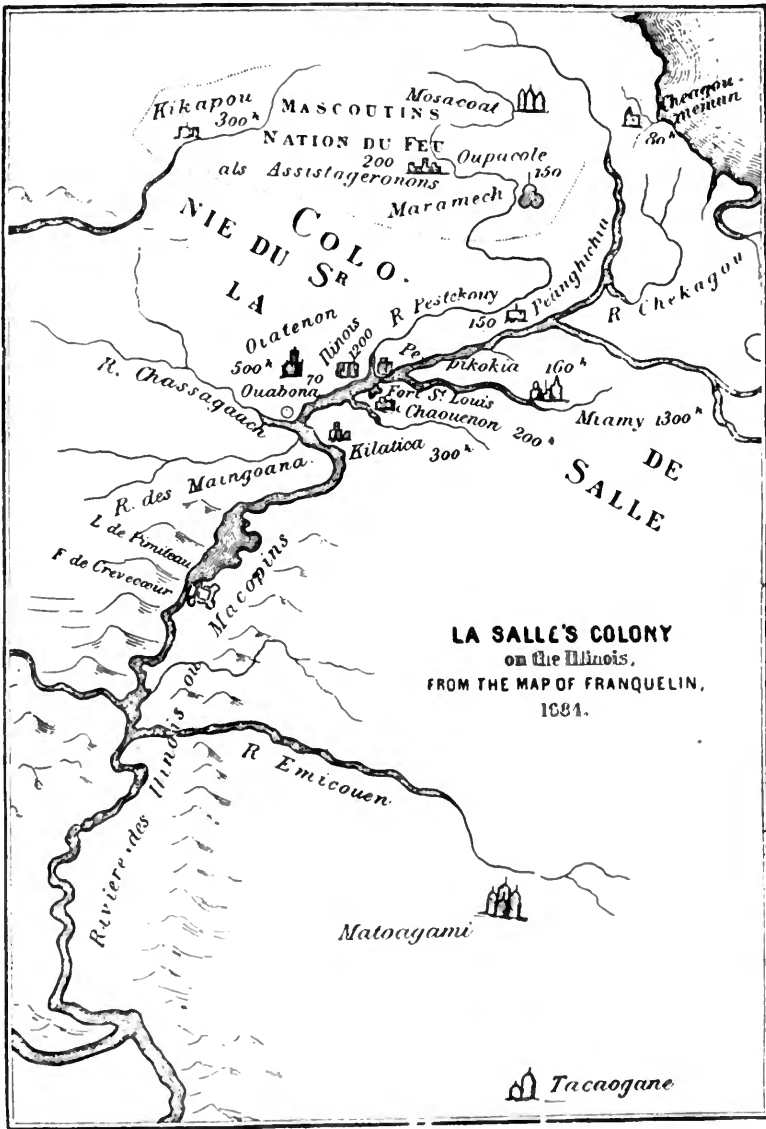
## EIGHTH, THE FORT WAS NEAR THE INDIAN VILLAGE WHERE LA SALLE LANDED

Hennepin says in his first publication that La Salle said that he had found a "post easy of defense \* \* \* *Near the Village*" (Ibid page 87). Its alleged purpose was to "defend them (the Indians) provided they permitted us to build a fort" (Ibid page 81). The Indians "accepted all our proposals and said they "would assist us all they could" (Ibid page 81). To say that any one of the three Wesley City sites is *near* the Village where La Salle landed, or near the village on the opposite side of the river, is unreasonable. The distance would not only be four miles, but between the village and those sites is Farm Creek, which is often a raging river. The creek is twelve miles long, skirted most of the way by steep hills, and would be impassable for fugitive Indians old and young after a heavy rain.

## NINTH, THE FORT WAS BUILT ON A LITTLE MOUND

The fort was not only built on a mound, but the mound was a "little" one, so Hennepin says in his first account. Illinois Historical Collection, Vol. 1, page 87. LaSalle said it was on "a little elevation" or "knoll" (see letter quoted). Hennepin also uses the word "em-

inence" in speaking of it (Ibid 87). He uses the word "hills" repeatedly (Ibid, pages 59, 62, 63). If the fort was built on the hill why did he not use that word instead of saying it was built on a "little mound", an eminence or on what La Salle calls a knoll? The answer is he did not for the same reason that Franquelin pictured the hills, and the valley, and did not place the fort on a hill. We present Franquelin's map showing the hills, the valley, the lake and the fort.



## TENTH, IT WAS BUILT ADJOINING WOODS

Hennepin speaking of the fort in his first account says: "The forge was set up along the curtain which faced the wood" (Ibid, page 88). There are fine woods on one side of the East Peoria site.

## ELEVENTH, IT ADJOINED WIDE DEEP RAVINES, MADE BY RAINS

Hennepin says in his first report that "two broad deep ravines protected two other sides and part of the fourth" (Ibid, page 87). And in his second account says: The fort was "defended on one side by the river and on two others by two ditches the rains had made very deep by succession of time." These ravines or ditches were made by *rains* and preclude the idea of being wide deep hollows such as adjoin the two hill sites. To have been made by rains the ravines must be upon a lower level so as to be subject to a current of water coming down into them and this would imply a side hill site, or a valley site, and not a site surrounded by natural hollows on a high plateau where no current of rain water could accumulate to make wide and deep ravines.

## TWELFTH, THE FORT WAS ON WATER THAT IN WINTER DID NOT FREEZE MUCH

This is proved by two facts narrated by Hennepin. First, he tells of a young warrior who came to the fort in his canoe and "passed to our ship-yard." "He was returning from the lower part of the river Colbert (Mississippi) in his periagua" (canoe). This must have been in the winter because Hennepin left on February 29th and the building of the fort and boat began the middle of January, Illinois Historical Collection, Vol 1, pages 87, 91 and 95. Second, When Hennepin and his two companions were on their way down the Illinois they met "several parties of the Illinois returning to their village in their periaguas loaded with meat." These Indians tried to persuade them to return and the boatmen with him were disposed to do so but "they would have had to pass by Fort Crevecoeur where our Frenchmen would have stopped them" (Ibid, page 95) and so they pursued their way. Having met these Indian who were going to their village in canoes loaded with meat so close past Fort Crevecoeur that they could be stopped by the men at the Fort, where was the channel that they would traverse in so doing? and where was "their Village?" Is it not plain that the "young warrior" and these parties of Indians were going up in a channel of spring water that flowed close to the Fort? And that the channel was free from ice in the winter?

## DESCRIPTION OF THE FORT

The fort has been so accurately described that if the site on which it was built can be produced its reconstruction would be easy. The channel of spring water that passed by it in the marsh, and the extension of that channel down to the foot of the lake opposite Peoria where it met the strong current of the river at that place, and the extension of that channel up to Omaha's camp, and the connection of it with the strong current of the water from the Narrows that then as now flowed directly toward the camp cannot be reproduced; but all this can be shown by borings that will show the fill of these channels made by 239 years wash from the higher levels. The two ravines can be opened up and the decayed timbers that extended along their inner sides, to hold the madrier in place at the bottom, and the decayed madrier as well as cross pieces extending to the stockade on the outer side of the ravines, with the evidence of the logs between which the bottoms of the stockades were placed, the channel in the fort for the ingress and egress of the eight canoes, and the basin where they were kept, the boat yard where the boat 42 feet keel and twelve broad was built, the locations at the angles of the fort where the barracks were, and where were placed the chapel and blacksmith shop, and LaSalle and Tonty's hut, with the willow drains (not mentioned) to carry off the surface water, can be reproduced, just as described by LaSalle and Hennepin. Their descriptions are alike, except in a few minor details which are not in both. We need only give LaSalle's description to get a complete idea of it. LaSalle in the letter dated September 29th above referred to in Margry, second volume, says:

"On the fifteenth of January a great thaw set in which rendered the river navigable from Pimiteoui to the spot selected to build the fort. It was a little elevation or knoll about six hundred and sixty feet (3 arpents) from the bank, at the foot of which the river extended in the time of heavy rains. Two ravines, deep and large, protected the two sides of the fort and the fourth to about one-half, which we finished as a protection by a ditch that met the two ravines. We fortified the other sides of the ravines with heavy chevaux de frise and made the sides slope down very steeply. With the dirt that we were getting therefrom we built a breastwork on the high place, high enough to cover our men. The whole we covered from the base of the knoll to the top of the breastwork, the base of which was supported by long pieces of wood all around the elevation. The top of the madrier were held fast by other pieces of wood that extended from the thickness at the breastwork. In front of these works we planted all over long, pointed piles twenty-five feet high and one foot in diameter, and three feet deep in



the ground, bolted to the cross pieces of wood that were holding fast the top of the heavy pieces of timber, with a counter-sink of two feet and one-half in length to prevent any surprize from the enemy. We left the summit of the knoll as it was, the form of which was an irregular square. We placed barracks in two of the angles for our men so that they would always be ready in case of an attack. In a third angle facing the woods, we placed the forge. The chapel for the recollects or missionaries on the fourth angle and the hut for Sienr, Tonty and myself in the center of the place.”

Upon none of the sites except the East Peoria site can the fort be reconstructed. If we treat the hollows at the sides of the sites as ravines made by rains, the outer slopes of the hollows must be fortified with *cheveaux de frise* and the inner sides of them cut down steeply and the earth thus obtained thrown up for breastworks and supported by *madrier* (heavy sawed timbers) held in place at their base by long pieces of wood, and at the top by horizontal pieces of timber bolted (pegged) to the palisade or stockade twenty-five feet high that was planted “in front.” These hollows cannot be thus used. The barracks would be useless (at diagonal angles of course) because the hill would shut out from them the view of a great part of the stockade. The blacksmith shop would be in one hollow and the chapel in the other with no place for the ship yard and the hut for La Salle and Tonty would be in the “center of the place,” that is on top of a steep hill. The river would be a quarter of a mile away from the lower hill site and half a mile from the upper hill site. We venture to say that if a contract were made with a competent person to reconstruct Fort Creveceour on either hill site according to the original plan he would throw up both hands and the job, and say that it is impossible and impracticable. This power to reconstruct is we think the acid test of the site for if the fort will not fit the place: and if the place is more or less than a league from Pimiteau; and more or less than half a league from Omaha’s camp; and more than an hours ride in a canoe from obstructing ice in March; and is not defended in any way on one side by the river; and has no marsh in front of it; and the main bank of the river is more or less than 200 paces away, and the river never spreads over to it; and it is not near the Indian villages where LaSalle landed; and it is not a mound (French name *tetre*) but a high hill; and had no ravines on the sides made by rains, these missing essentials should cause one to suspect that probably the fort was built some other place. If the fort could be reconstructed it would be the only French and Indian fort in Illinois, and would be educational as well as an interesting memento. A very full description of such forts is found in Illinois Historical Collection, Vol. 1, page 182.

## UPPER HILL SITE

If LaSalle and his flotilla were carried by the force of the current to the shore, at the middle of the village, the upper hill site would be directly above that point on top of the hill and would be only half a mile instead of half a league away. This being so if Hennepin instead of saying as he did that "La Salle desired me to go *down the river* with him to choose a place to build a fort" and "we proceeded with one of our canoes to the place" he had said they proceeded in one of their canoes *up to the top of the hill*, there would be that much to support the claim of the Upper Hill site.

The reasons why neither location on the hill can be accepted as true, are:

First: No one who saw the Fort says it was built on a hill.

Second: The sites on the hill have on each side hollows that are about one hundred fifty feet deep, and about three hundred feet across at the top, and the exterior slopes of these hollows, if they are to be treated as "wide deep ravines" were not formed by rains, and could not have been fortified on their "exterior slopes with *cheveaux de friese*," or have planks doveled from the Madrier to the stockade, or have the stockade so placed as to make the construction of the fort a practicable defense.

Third: There is no place on the hill for a boat yard in which to keep the eight canoes, or to build the ship "42 ft. keel and 12 ft." broad, which was being built while they were building the fort, nor could they be left at a boat yard at the river a quarter of a mile or half a mile from the fort.

Fourth: If the exterior of the slopes of the ravines or hollows, are to be treated as the boundary of the Fort, the barracks could not be placed in two angles thereof, a chapel in the third, and blacksmith shop in the fourth as is shown was done, and be practical.

Fifth: Water for drinking, cooking, washing, etc., could not be carried up for the white men, to say nothing of the Indians who were evidently working at the fort, and be kept from freezing from January 15th, when they commenced building the Fort, until the following Spring. For these and other reasons the sites on the hill must be treated as the sites of fortifications of the Mound Builders, many of which may be found elsewhere also on the tops of the hills in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and other places as shown by the second chapter of "Scribner's History" of the United States, and by various works devoted to Mound Builders.

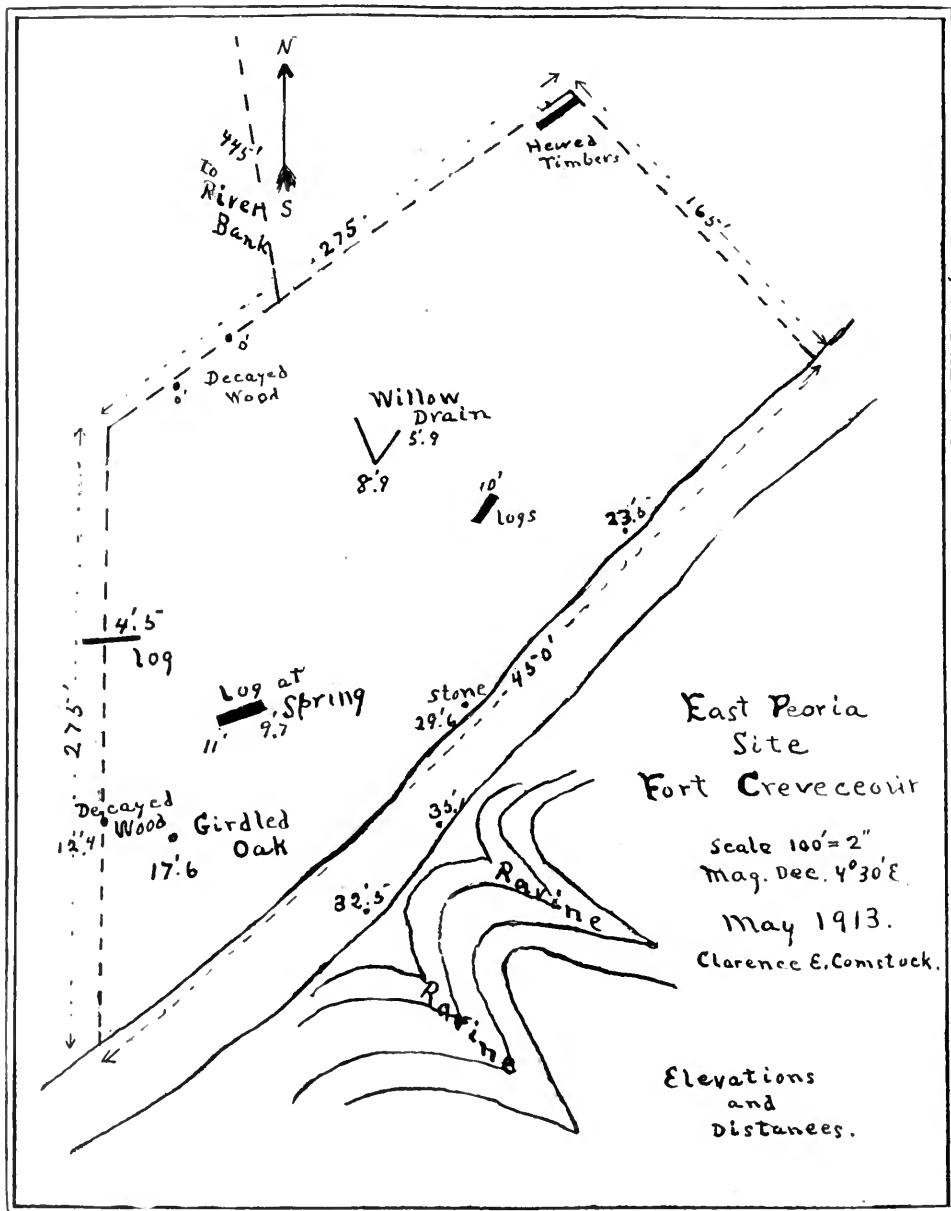
## THE EAST PEORIA SITE

At the end of the lake, exactly at the place where Franquelin marks the location of Fort Crevecoeur, at a point about five hundred feet from the main bank of the river at its high water stage, which was probably the only stage known to Hennepin, and adjoining heavy woods on the hill side, with a deep ravine on one side, and another ravine on part of two sides, in the Village of East Peoria about on a line with Fayette Street in Peoria if extended, is the East Peoria valley site, of Fort Crevecoeur. Within its limits are two springs of clear cold water issuing from a bank of gravel, the perpetual flow of each of which will more than fill a six inch pipe. One spring is surrounded by high banks in the shape of a heart. A large log about two feet wide, hewed on the top, is laid practically on a level, in this spring from one side toward the other, reaching to the center of the depression, the bank of which at its upper end is about ten feet high. The end of this log at the center of the spring is under a willow stump. The upper surface of the log had five notches cut across it, as if used for the water to pour over from a dam, which it made. From the bank of the spring at the end of the log, is a sort of "Dug Way" from the upper level to the log, as if made for persons to come down upon the log, to catch the water in vessels as it flowed through the notches. That this heart shape to the Spring was artificially made is shown by the fact that on the side opposite the log, in cleaning out the Spring, a curved log was found fitted in under the embankment, and back of the log oak boards with saw marks straight across them. The side of the spring where the log extends from the willow stump to the bank, has not been dug out, but the log has been uncovered and is falling into decay very rapidly. Adjoining this curved log under the water, was found a large quantity of what seemed to be saw dust, extending from the curved log to the ends of posts standing upright in the spring water, rotted off to the surface of the water. LaSalle may have tried to give the name to his location, and preserve it, by the shape of the construction of this Spring. The name of the man who uncovered the notched log, and took out the curved log and the supposed saw dust, is Joseph Wade. He lives and has lived in Peoria for over forty years.

At the north-east angle, covered by spring water, has been found, and is now to be seen, the sills of a structure, the exact size of some of which has not yet been determined, because large willow trees are growing over or close to them. The middle sill is about fourteen feet from the outer one, and has planks against its outer side below water line. The outer one of the sills is hewed, and is about thirty feet long, and about twelve inches by eighteen square, and on its side toward the

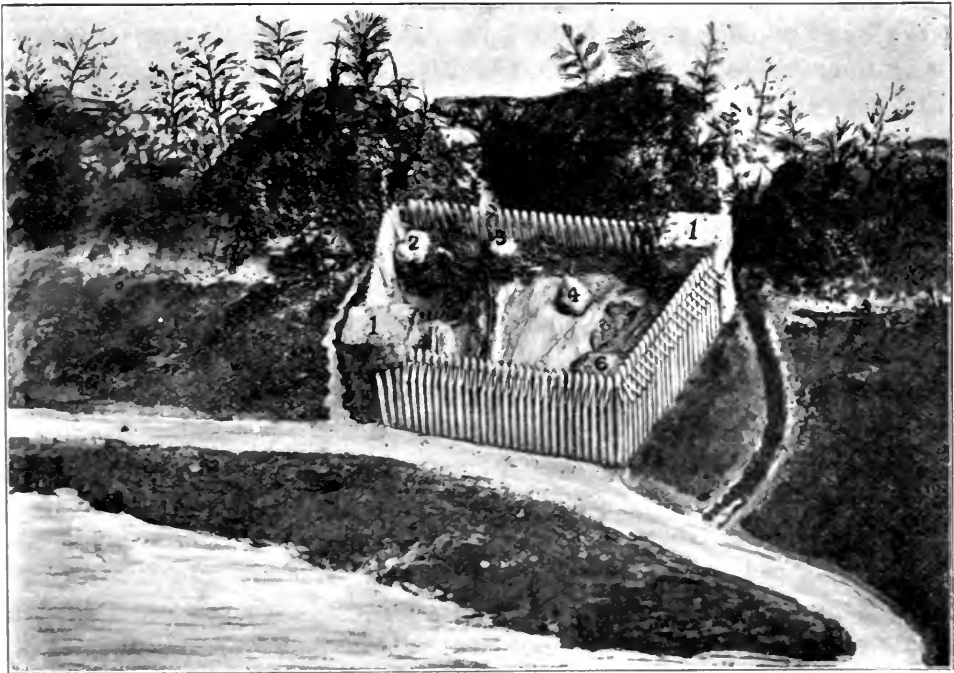
river has a shoulder cut into the side horizontally, about four inches and perpendicularly about six inches extending its full length. On the line about 100 feet west of this sill, at a depth of about eight feet under the surface of the ground, Mr. J. P. Cumming, a well borer, of East Peoria recently found two feet of timber along what was evidently the canoe channel that passed the fort. At the westerly line, between what is supposed to be the site of the chapel and the barracks, are to be found decayed wood the fibre of which shows it to have been laid parallel along the outside of the fort. There is a ridge above this decayed wood upon which good sized trees are growing. The counter-scarp along one of the ravines is well defined, and parts of burned stockades have been taken from the swamp made by the springs. In the diagonal corner from the sills mentioned no decayed wood is found under the surface indicating that barracks had been placed there and that the same served the place of the stockades. One of the timbers supposed to be a stockade was excavated from the swamp by Professors Wyckoff, Comstock, and Evans, of the Bradley Polytechnic School in Peoria, that measured a trifle over twenty-five feet in length and was about a foot in diameter, at the butt end. From it Professor Brewer of Peoria extracted with his pen knife, from what appeared to be a dent made in it by an arrow, a piece of flint that appeared to be part of an arrow. Part of another supposed stockade of red cedar timber, partly burned, was excavated at another place and through one side of it there was what seemed to be a bullet hole. Another of the supposed stockades, was excavated from the channel on the westerly side. It was about twenty feet long, the smaller end having rotted away. Professor Comstock of the Bradley Polytechnic Institute of Peoria made a survey and sketch of the site giving its elevations above high water of the river, and its dimensions, which he kindly furnished us and is here presented on page 18. Upon the sketch Professor Comstock noted what he had found. The writer has found wood at a depth of 8 feet below the surface at the inner side of the channel on the westerly side, with the fibre running parallel to the channel, and decayed wood at the bottom, as if the madrier holding up the embankment on the inner side of that channel had fallen into the channel. Decayed wood can also be found along the river side of the site at about a depth of three feet which the writer has good reason to believe is decomposed logs laid on each side of the base of the stockades, between the buildings in the angles. What is said in reply to these facts by those who claim this is not where the fort was built? Nothing but that a distillery was built there. It is true that a distillery was built across the westerly ravine and channel of water in early days, but

# COMSTOCK SKETCH



Henry T. Baldwin, who recently died in Rockford, Ill., and who was Mayor of Peoria in 1867 wrote the writer a letter a few years ago, which is in existence, saying he saw the distillery about the year 1849 when he was about 13 years old and described it as about 16 feet wide and about 24 feet long. He located it exactly where part of a foundation of a building of about that size is to be found now. It is more than likely that the burned barracks also were utilized in very early days, and that the spring water in the site was used for dairy purposes at the house near the southeast corner and that many charred timbers to be found are modern; but these facts do not tend to explain the timbers under the surface laid in and around an area of more than an acre constituting the site of the fort.

We have photographed a miniature model of Fort Crevecoeur, viewed from the north side as described by Hennepin and LaSalle based upon conditions now to be found at the East Peoria site and present a copy of the same.



The photograph has numbers which are explained as follows:

The two numbers *One* represent the barracks. Number 2 represents a supposed provision house. Number 3 the blacksmith shop. Number 4 LaSalle and Tonti's tent; Number 5 the eight canoes in a pool that is still perpetually supplied with spring water; Number 6

the Chapel. To the right is a channel, now filled up, extending over cultivated land, where the water from the westerly channel, that came from the Bluff above it that flowed originally along the inside of the westerly line was diverted from its original channel to this artificial channel, so as to keep the floods caused by rains from entering the Fort. This channel so filled is easy to trace.

To the east side of the Fort is the curved channel that comes from the hill. Towards the center of the south side of the site that coursed its way from about the center of that side to the easterly (left) side of the site, and thence along that side to the swamp, or what was then undoubtedly a stream along the river side of the fort. The hill back of the Fort is covered with timber that is now being cut down, but the model shows this poorly. On the northerly or river side of the Fort, and close to it, is illustrated the channel of spring water, that can yet be traced toward the lower end of the lake opposite Peoria. There a strong current of the river keeps the river from freezing in the winter. It is supposed that up and down this channel the Indians on both sides of the upper end of the lake opposite Peoria traversed, with their canoes. Also that above their village the strong current of the river at the Narrows coursed its way to their village thus giving on the east side of the Lake opposite Peoria canoe travel in the winter time close to the fort. In the model, between the channel on the river side of the fort and the river proper, is shown a ridge.

#### WHERE DID LA SALLE LAND

La Salle and Hennepin agree in saying that the eight canoes of the flotilla came through the Narrows side by side, carried by a swift current, and that they were thus carried *to the shore*. The Narrows has two points, either one of which could be "doubled" as Hennepin expresses it, and behind which the eighty cabins full of Indians could be concealed. The one on the East side is where Ten Mile Creek empties into the Narrows, about three quarters of a mile below the upper lake, and about the same distance above the lake opposite Peoria. The point on the West side is a little lower down where a small stream that courses its way down from Springdale Cemetery empties at The Water Works Park into the Narrows. Each point has a hill close by that would serve for the presentation of the calumet mention by Hennepin. The channel of the Narrows is straight and its water runs south and the lake into which its water empties extends southwest and northeast. Water unobstructed will flow in a straight line, and given the strong current mentioned, and the eight canoes side by side carried by the current, and the landing would be on the East side of the river. It



would contradict a natural law to say that the canoes would be carried to the West shore.

### THE RAILROAD SITE

This discovery was made by one who was employed to find the site of the fort near where a sword, supposed to be of French origin, but subsequently discovered to be British, was found, and he selected a site that he says is of pure sand where no timber would grow. But trees of large size, willows in particular, will grow on sand if close to water. The pure sand theory is pure imagination, as no one who saw the fort intimated that it was built on pure sand. Nor do they say there was no timber on the site. The fact is the site selected in a railroad yard was overflow land up to about the year 1870 and Mr. Ballance in his history virtually says so. It would overflow now if it were not for the railroad embankments, and was likely in 1680 swept by Farm Creek. The sketch of it made by its discoverer will fit the East Peoria site by turning it upside down but will not fit the site described for it. *Journal of Illinois Historical Society*, Vol. 5, No. 3, January, 1913. Its discoverer after examining the East Peoria site was asked what he thought of it and replied that there was too much work done there to have been accomplished by LaSalle and his men in the nine weeks between its commencement and LaSalle's departure, on March 22nd (*Illinois Historical Collection*, Vol. 1, page 131). This ignores the promised aid of the Indians (*Ibid*, page 81). There was much of the work the Indians could do, and likely would do, as the fort was being built for their benefit so they were told (*Ibid*, page 81) and they would want to get knives, awls, tobacco, beads, needles, axes, etc. (*Ibid*, pages 95 and 80) which LaSalle had, in exchange for work. The Indians had built many similar forts before LaSalle's arrival. As the opponents of the East Peoria site seem to never tire of mentioning the distillery they may think the work done was about the right amount for a distillery built at such a place in the forties.

### THE WESLEY CITY SITE

This site is on the river bank, but has no marsh in front of it, has no ravines as described by La Salle and Hennepin, is not near the Indian villages, is not within half a league of Omaha's camp, nor within a league of Pimiteoui, and has no spring water or place to keep the boats.

### CONCLUSION

The lost site has not been found because the words "ravines" and "ditches" *made by rains* have been considered hollows made by the

flood that formed all the hills and hollows; and, by adopting the lake opposite Peoria as one of the three lakes composing Lake Pimiteoui instead of treating it as the fourth lake mentioned by LaSalle. There must have been a lake above the island at Chillicothe to create the three straits that La Salle says connected the three lakes and to make the fourth lake that La Salle describes. It will not do to call the lake just above the Narrows the "middle or small lake" because it is larger than both the lake just below Chillicothe and the lake opposite Peoria if the two were combined. It is only by abandoning what is said by those who know, and adopting the fancies of those who do not know, that the site of the fort has been located at four of the sites.

There was introduced by the Hon. Ben L. Smith, of Pekin, Ill., on March 19th, 1919, House Bill No. 381, to our Legislature to "Establish and maintain The Fort Crevecoeur Park in Tazewell County, Illinois." It provides for the procurement by "donation, purchase or otherwise," of "a tract of land in Tazewell County containing not fewer than forty acres in Section one (Township not given), to "be set apart for a State Park and shall be known as "Fort Crevecoeur State Park." The Bill has been printed and referred to the Committee on Appropriations. The only Section One within miles of any of the five sites is Section One in Pekin Township. Wesley City is partly in Groveland township and partly in Pekin Township, the part where the Wesley City site is located being in Pekin township. This being so, the Bill contemplates establishing the site of Fort Crevecoeur at the Lower Hill site. A public road at State and County expense is projected across said Section One, extending from Pekin to East Peoria; and, if a Park bought, improved and maintained at State expense can be established on that road the sponsors of the Bill need not worry as to whether the Fort was built one place or another, or whether it ever existed.

F  
547  
P4  
S54  
1917  
P485  
1/15M





