

# **EARLY TRAVELERS TO FORT WAYNE**

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Early travelers to Fort Wayne by Thomas Scattergood Teas

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**THOMAS SCATTERGOOD TEAS**

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## FOREWORD

The letter written by Captain James Riley in 1819 and the journal kept by Thomas Scattergood Teas in 1821 are among the rather scanty source materials describing the Fort Wayne area on the eve of white settlement. The conditions related began to change immediately thereafter; within a quarter of a century, the land had been settled and the Wabash-Erie Canal completed; much of the timber had been destroyed, and a considerable portion of the arable land cultivated. These eyewitnesses were among the last to see the virgin land. Essentially, their reports are reprinted as published, except that the staff of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County has reconciled grammar, punctuation, and spelling with current practice.





## LETTER FROM CAPTAIN JAMES RILEY

Fort Wayne, Indiana, November 24, 1819

Having concluded my surveys for this season, I wished to view the country between the St. Mary's and the Miami [Maumee] rivers, in order to examine for myself the practicability of uniting the Wabash with the Miami so as to render intercourse by water safe and easy between the Ohio and Lake Erie through the channel. I set out yesterday from Shane's Crossing on the St. Mary's and, traveling through a district of good land on or near the right bank of that river for forty miles, reached this place early in the evening; and early this morning I set off to look at the junction of the St. Joseph and the St. Mary's, which two streams form the Miami River.

The St. Joseph River, rising in the Michigan Territory, runs south-westerly about two hundred miles, receiving in its course several tributary streams. The St. Mary's, rising in Shelby County, Ohio, runs north-westerly more than two hundred miles (including its meanderings). Forming a junction from nearly opposite points, the rivers turn suddenly south and assume the name of Miami of the Lakes, or, as pronounced by the French, Maumee. Then, turning gradually round again, these congregated waters flow off in a northeast direction about two hundred miles, following the course of the river to the southwest end of Lake Erie.

Fort Wayne stands on a bluff just below the junction and on the right bank of the Miami. Its situation is admirable and was chosen by a general in whom were united the greatest personal courage and intrepidity. He

possessed the most consummate prudence and skill in conducting and supporting amidst forests and morasses an army, which was separated from the inhabited parts of the country by a dreary, extensive wilderness, and which was surrounded on all sides by hosts of savage enemies, who were flushed by a recent and great victory over the unfortunate General St. Clair.

General Wayne created resources as he went along, baffling the skill and cunning of his enemy with astonishing industry and activity. He cut roads and marched his troops to the important points, which he seized. With an unerring military eye and profound judgment, he selected and fortified only such posts as would inevitably secure his conquests and afford the surest protection to his army and our extensive frontier settlements. At every step in this country's progress, every unprejudiced mind will more and more admire the movements and achievements of the army conducted by this veteran, truly wise, and great general.

By Wayne's occupation of Fort Wayne, communication between Lake Erie and the Ohio River, through the channel of the Maumee and the Wabash (the shortest and most direct water route from Buffalo to the Mississippi River), was cut off or completely commanded.

The Wabash River, rising in Ohio, runs north past Fort Recovery and enters Indiana about ten miles from that post. Continuing its course northwestwardly, it approaches Fort Wayne within eighteen miles. Then it turns more to the southwest, running diagonally across the state of Indiana and receiving in its course numerous important tributary streams, until it reaches the line that separates Indiana from Illinois in latitude 40°