

**THE COLONIAL HISTORY
OF VINCENNES, UNDER
THE FRENCH, BRITISH, AND
AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS**

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The Colonial History of Vincennes, Under the French, British, and American Governments by
John Law

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JOHN LAW

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THE
Colonial History of Vincennes,

UNDER THE

FRENCH, BRITISH AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS,

**FROM ITS FIRST SETTLEMENT DOWN TO THE TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION
OF GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, BRING AN ADDRESS,
DELIVERED**

BY JUDGE LAW,

BEFORE

THE VINCENNES HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY,

FEBRUARY 22D, 1839.

WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

STANFORD: 1839

**VINCENNES:
HARVEY, MASON & Co.**

1858.

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LETTER OF DEDICATION.

HON. LEWIS CASS:—

Thirty-five years since, in the month of June, 1822, we made our first acquaintance at "THE Post"—you on your exploring expedition to the head waters of the Mississippi—I then a young man, just commencing my professional career in the new State of Indiana.

What changes have been effected since that period, in and along the Valleys, formed by the streams you navigated, and flowing into the "Father of Waters," whose fountain head you were probably the first white man to visit? Leaving Detroit in your *birch canoe*—ascending the Maumee—crossing the portage and descending the Wabash and Ohio, you entered the Mississippi and pushed your frail bark to the sources of that great river. How few were the resources of the immense inland coast, along which you voyaged at the time mentioned? What wealth, population and power, are now to be found along its borders. The most sanguine among us, though we have lived to witness the alteration, would have been deemed insane to have predicted it, or anything like it for a half century past. What it will be in another half century, neither you or I will be permitted to witness. Our fervent prayers should be, that the same Providence that has hitherto watched over and protected us, may continue its guardianship, and preserve us and those who are to come after us, the same prosperous, happy, and above all, *united people*.

Aside from my high regard for you personally, I dedicate this small volume of the incidents connected with the colonial history of "Post Vincennes" to *you*, because you yourself have for the great-

er portion of your long and active life been intimately associated with the rise and progress of the North-Western Territory. To *you*, whose early life and mature years have been devoted to the advancement and prosperity of the "Great West," of which for so many years "The Post" was the centre, and around which, as a nucleus, four of the great States of the Union have clustered.

With great regard,

Your obedient servant,

- JOHN LAW.

Vincennes, Feb. 24, 1858.

PREFACE.

The great interest which has been taken in the Colonial History of "POST VINCENNES" and its intimate connection with the Colonial History of the whole North-Western Territory, in addition to the fact, that the whole edition of the "address" delivered before the "Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society" in 1839, amounting to two thousand copies, has long since been exhausted, has induced the author, at the earnest solicitation of others, to issue another edition with notes and illustrations, which it was impossible to combine with the address—but which are interesting as still further elucidating, the subject matter of the address itself. These memorials of the early settlement of the North-Western Territory, it is due to ourselves and those who come after us, to preserve if possible. The field is a large one, and what is more, rich and productive in incidents of the most interesting character. I have but gleaned a few connected with the early settlement of "THE POST" so called "par excellence," as the rallying point of an Empire, extending from the Lakes to the Ohio, from the Miami to the Mississippi—and now containing within its borders the four great States of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

I know of no portion of our country richer in historical incident. For surely a town which is one of the oldest on the Continent—one for the possession of which, the greatest nations of the earth have contended—France, England, and the United States. One located upon the beautiful stream which flows before it, the "OUABACHE." A river known and noted on the maps of the West long before the Ohio was known in the geography of the Mis-

sippi Valley. A river which for nearly a century bore upon its waters the bateaux of the three great powers above mentioned, bringing their armed warriors to occupy, and if possible, to preserve it. One which has seen within its garrison the Mousquetaire of Louis XV, the grenadier of George the III, the riflemen of Clark, and the regular troops of Harmar, St. Clair, and Harrison—one above which has floated the "Fleur de Lys," the "Cross of St. George" and the glorious "Stars and Stripes" of our beloved country—is surely worthy of at least a passing notice by those who are now reaping the rich fruits of a conquest, made under the most adverse and trying circumstances, and with a skill and bravery not unsurpassed in the most glorious triumphs of the revolution. The reader need not be informed that I refer to the conquest of "Post VINCENNES," and the capture of Hamilton and his troops, on the memorable 24th of February 1779, by General George Rogers Clark. To *him*, in my opinion, considering the results of that conquest, the vast addition of Territory acquired by it, and the incalculable advantages to the people who now occupy it, and to the country at large, the United States are more indebted than to any other General of the Revolution—Washington alone excepted.

In conclusion I would say to you who inhabit the Territory thus acquired, by the valor and sufferings of Clark and his gallant followers, nearly eighty years since, if I should impress upon *your* minds and those of *your children* who are to succeed you, the debt of gratitude which you owe to these brave men, long since gathered to their fathers, I shall not have labored for nought or written in vain.

JOHN LAW.

VINCENNES, Feb. 24th, 1858.

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