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IN DEFENSE OF THE FRONTIER

THE WORK OF GENERAL HENRY ATKINSON, 1819-1842

by

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IN DEFENSE OF THE FRONTIER
The Work of General Henry Atkinson, 1819-1842

(A:) THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: A HISTORICAL SKETCH

The history of Mid-western America, in the making of which General Henry Atkinson was a factor, is a story of realities more stirring than fiction. The geographic field of the General's activities extended from the New York-Canadian border to the mouth of the Yellowstone River and from the Missouri area to the lead mining district of southern Wisconsin. The lure of the unknown brought the Spanish De Soto to the great central valley three quarters of a century before Jamestown was settled by the English. Spain was aware of the Mississippi River as early as 1519. A host of brave explorers sent back word of it, though they did not use the Indian name, but called it the Rio del Espiritu Santo. From the earliest settlement, the control of the Gulf of Mexico and the lower Mississippi valley was as vital to Spain as was the control of the St. Lawrence to France. At first, this control was all that the Spaniards asked. But in the minds of many of the French, the "favorable passage to China" idea lingered, and brought about a further exploration of the wilderness. Consequently, with subsequent claims by right of discovery, in the name of the King of France, Father Marquette and Jolliet and later La Salle took
formal possession of the Mississippi Valley. With the stronger claim of occupation, France held the Valley until the Treaty of Paris forced her to cede the eastern half to England. In 1762, the year before the Treaty, she secretly transferred the western half to Spain to save it from a similar fate.

The possession of the lower Mississippi was welcome to Spain. It entailed, however, a forty-year problem in frontier defense against English encroachments, and later against American imperial dreams. For, during and after the American Revolution, pioneers were filling up the trans-Allegheny country, some of them even crossing into Missouri and Arkansas territory. Even the people living in Pennsylvania, found insurmountable difficulties of transportation back across the mountains. They were forced to carry their produce to market in New Orleans by the Ohio-Mississippi waterway. The Spanish were lenient on the whole and permitted the traffic. As long as the port city remained open to them, without duty on warehouse storage, the westerners were satisfied. They were four thousand miles from Napoleonic activities in Europe. No theory of isolation, however, prevented them from receiving repercussions of the struggle over there. In particular, the transfer of Louisiana back to France in 1801 had a serious effect on their commerce.

Jefferson, forced to try to placate the belligerent citizens west of the Alleghanies, planned to buy New Orleans. But before he could make the offer, Napoleon determined to sell the whole of
Louisiana. Matters moved so swiftly, that when, in 1803, the Stars and Stripes were raised over the government buildings in New Orleans and St. Louis, the astonished Jefferson found himself in possession of the land he had dreamed of exploring when it was Spanish territory.¹ The new possession was still practically unknown at that time. Even the French Minister did not know the extent of the land that had been relinquished to the Americans.

Almost at once, Jefferson drew up plans for exploration and occupation. The well-known Lewis and Clark expedition was successfully inaugurated and carried out. The Dunbar-Hunter expedition in the South, destined to explore the Red and Arkansas Rivers, was turned back by the threatening movements of the Indians; instead, it made a preliminary trip to Hot Springs.² In the North, in 1806, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike explored the Mississippi almost to its mouth. But he did more than explore. With a clear grasp of the situation he "believed an important part of his duty was to assert the authority of the United States in this border country and to enforce regulations in respect to the fur trade."³ True, British soldiers had withdrawn from the eastern coast in 1783. There still lingered, however, in the North and West, evidence of British power in the existence of forts and in the influence of the fur trade. The fear of

2. Ibid., 41.
3. Ibid.
foreign domination, and of Indian depredations, clung to the people on the frontier for years. In fact, composed of British subjects, "the North West Company was in complete possession of the field in this section. From the trading posts at Sauk Rapids, Sandy Lake, and Leach Lake, their furs were readily transferred to Lake Superior and Montreal." From these points they found easy access to markets in Europe and the United States. Pike made a valuable suggestion when he urged "the settling of the northern boundary upon the basis of the Lake of the Woods as early as possible in order to prevent the British from claiming two-fifths of Louisiana."  

Although the explorations of Lewis and Clark, of Dunbar and Hunter, and of Pike, were more or less successful, there remained others which Jefferson was unable to carry out, on account of the foreign problems which came up toward the end of his term of office. President Madison was not the type of man to push them through; moreover, the events leading up to and after the War of 1812 absorbed all the energies and interests of the administration so completely that there followed for the Western country a period of inactivity.  

For sixteen years only two attempts at exploration were made. General Bernard, a French engineer, was appointed, with three Americans to examine the

5. Ibid.; Goodwin, 43; Cox, 104.
6. Ibid.; 46.
coasts and inland frontiers, with a view to determining their needs. In 1817 Stephen H. Long led a second expedition.  

(B): FIRST INDIAN TROUBLES

The War of 1812 did more than arrest the progress of exploration in the West. An effect of the war, graver in its consequences, was the unrest of the tribes within border influence and an imminent danger of war, an Indian war, in the Missouri territory. As proof of this, Manuel Lisa wrote to Governor Clark in 1817: "Your Excellency will remember that more than a year before the war broke out I gave you intelligence that the wampum was carrying by British influence along the banks of the Missouri, and that all the nations of this great river were incited to the universal confederacy then setting on foot." The only American company dealing in peltries, the Missouri Fur Company, had been forced to withdraw from the rich field of the Upper Missouri Region, and to confine its endeavors to the country south of the Council Bluffs. In the eyes of the Indians, this withdrawal lessened the power of the United States Government.

Most of the Indian tribes had allied themselves against the United States during the War of 1812, and at its close, the Treas-

7. Ibid., 46-47.  
ty of Ghent stipulated that the United States should make its own treaties of peace with the various tribes with whom it had been at war. This was a difficult matter, for after the Capitol was rebuilt and the Hartford Convention affair was settled, the control of the Indians became the biggest problem of the Government.

Though the Colonies on the eastern seaboard had had their difficulties with the Indians, they never were obliged to face the grave problems that arose when the pioneers pushed westward and friction arose over the lands claimed by both. For more than a hundred years the Indian question in the West was ever present. It was a problem that was to make of the country an Indian battle ground. During those bloody years more than a hundred and ninety battles were fought before the Indians were finally subdued and placed on reservations. Much of this conflict was due to the fact that the Indian Policy of our government had been a changing one. Washington believed that we were bound to honor and treat them with kindness and generosity. He organized the factory system for the purpose of giving them honest trade, but twenty-five years of graft brought about its abolition. Later on, the sudden acquisition of Louisiana gave Jefferson the thought of "setting apart the land west of the Mississippi for the perpetual and exclusive use of the

10. Goodwin, 299 and passim.
tion, 1932. Plate 34, A, B, C, and D.
Indians." The idea grew and was fostered by Monroe. But, we must remember, that both Jefferson and Monroe had meant, not an enforced exile, but a voluntary migration. Jackson found that the Indians had no relish for abandoning their lands, and went a step further. He broke faith with the Indians who trusted him, and through forced migration drove them all west of the Mississippi. By 1840, all the tribes east of the river, with the exception of a few isolated groups, had crossed the river in a migration "the picturesqueness and hardships of which De Tocqueville caught and fixed forever in his book upon America." He says with truth, "No American could see the pathos of such a hegira; no foreigner feel the bitterness or the necessity that drove red men from the country in such wholesale fashion. Irreconcilable conflict of interest" was the cause.

In many cases the disagreeable task of eviction fell to the army. The methods of Indian warfare made the work disagreeable to the soldiers and to their commanders as well. Nearness to the actual situation brought to a close focus the hardships entailed on the unfortunate red skins. It brought also the

13. Ibid., 370.
14. Ibid., passim.
16. Ibid., 250.
sharp realization of the vengeful bitterness enkindled in the savage by this steady encroachment of strangers upon his happy hunting-grounds.

Whatever may have been the personal attitude of General Atkinson, the subject of this study, toward the task confided to him in carrying out the policies of his government, he was too good a soldier to criticize those policies.

(C): HENRY ATKINSON'S PREPARATION FOR WORK ON THE FRONTIER

Before seeing him in action during these years of border service, it might be well to glance briefly over his early life in so far as data about it are accessible. So, though this study is not a biography, an effort has been made to unearth such data. The Army Register is characteristically brief, giving only the date of his birth and his entrance into the army. Attempts to find information for those years have met with the verdict - no records available. If specific details of home and family, of education and boyish aspirations are lacking, there are, nevertheless, general trends of the time, conditions


18. Note: Letters were written to Mr. W. J. Ghent, the author of the article on General Atkinson in the Dictionary of American Biography, Scribners. Through his courtesy, some valuable material was received, but he, too, had been unable to find data for those early years. A letter to the Genealogical Department of the University of North Carolina, and to the County Seat where Atkinson was born produced no results.
conditions of the country and the people, which may be assumed to have affected the growing years of an intelligent boy.

Person County, where Atkinson is said to have been born in 1782, was, at that time, a part of Caswell County. It is situated inland, on the northern border of North Carolina, not more than two hundred miles from the colonially important city of Richmond. But communities were isolated in those days by the lack of facilities for communication. "The absence of roads and the condition of the few that did exist were thoroughly characteristic of the general situation." Talleyrand was struck with astonishment to find that in journeying inland from Philadelphia in 1795, all trace of men's presence disappeared at less than one hundred and fifty miles from the capitol. Could not the same, and worse, be said of North Carolina in the same period? In fact, Beveridge writes: "Whoever dared to take in North Carolina, what at present would be a brief and pleasant jaunt, then had to go through scores of miles of 'dreary pines' in which the traveller often lost his way and became bewildered in the maze of the forest." Can it not safely be said then, that General Atkinson's boyhood was passed in frontier conditions that were to fit him for life on a more strenuous

General Atkinson's letters reveal the fact that he must have had at least an ordinary education. It is a well-known fact that the schools of his day were not much to speak of in the northern colonies, whereas the plantation system of living in the South had prevented their establishment altogether. It was, instead, the custom to educate the children on the plantation by hiring tutors. It may be conjectured that he grew up on one of these plantations, because records of Wills from Person County, North Carolina, bear witness to the fact that a certain John Atkinson left property to four sons and two daughters, of whom Henry was the youngest son named. 22

Henry's reasons for choosing a soldier's life are nowhere stated. The strained foreign relations, especially with England during the first ten years of the new century, caused the President to increase the army in 1808. It was at this time that the Army Register records that Henry Atkinson "entered the Army as Captain from North Carolina." 23 Thus at the age of twenty six we find him beginning the military career which was to end only with his death in 1842. 24

He was not, as the records prove, the only soldier in his family. A year previous to his entry into the army, his brother became a member of the legislature from Person County, serving

22. Information supplied by the New York Public Library.
Note: He was Captain of the 3rd Infantry.
in that capacity until 1820. During the years 1815 and 1816, he led a North Carolina regiment against the Creek Indians, who were causing trouble in the Southeast.  

During the War of 1812, Captain Atkinson served under General Wade Hampton, commander of the Right Wing of the Army, as Inspector General, with the rank of Colonel. He is mentioned in Lossing's History of the War of 1812, as the bearer of a letter from General Hampton to General Wilkinson's head-quarters during the trouble that arose between those two men.  

When the army was reorganized in 1815, on a peace basis, and reduced, Colonel Atkinson was not only retained but was advanced to the command of the Sixth Regiment, newly formed from several other regiments. He was stationed at Cantonment Plattsburg on the western shore of Lake Champlain, with 451 men under him. The Cantonment was in the First Division of the North, under the immediate command of General Winfield Scott. For the first year or two, the days were filled with the ordinary routine of camp life. In November, 1817, Colonel Atkinson sat on court martial at West Point for trying Captain Partridge, who it

seems, had treated some of the cadets roughly. Atkinson was not, however, a graduate of West Point, most probably because that institution was a school for engineers only, until the army was again reorganized in 1821, when it became a training school for officers.

In the fall of that year, 1817, the President directed that a road be opened and improved between Plattsburg and Sackett's Harbor, through Chateaugay country. The work was to be done by the Sixth Regiment, starting west from Lake Champlain, and the Second Regiment under Colonel Brady, starting east from Sackett's Harbor on the eastern shore of Lake Erie. In the report sent in by General Brown at the request of the Secretary of War, he apologized for the lack of completion of the road. This was due to the fact that he had not understood that the Second Regiment under Colonel Brady was to be taken from its duty of improving the public grounds and gardens at Sackett's Harbor. He concludes the letter by saying:

It is due to Colonel Brady and Colonel Atkinson to say that they had discovered not only a becoming cheerfulness in obeying orders received for perfecting Plattsburg and Sackett's Harbor, but much zeal in the performance of this duty, and if these regiments are continued upon this

29. Information supplied by the Librarian at West Point.
important work next season, more than double the length of the way will be completed than was passed the last and the present year. 31

This road was completed to French Mill by the Sixth Regiment, and became famous for its excellence. In describing it, Niles' Register states: "The bed is composed of the best materials; it is raised several feet above the neighboring ground; wide and deep ditches are dug on either side, and its whole surface is covered with a thick stratum or gravel." 32 Knowing the poor condition of roads at that time, and their tremendous value to the people, one does not wonder at the interest taken in the construction of this early, if not the first government road project.

Attempts had been made during Madison's Administration to secure federal aid for the building of roads and canals. Madison in a Veto Message, had stated that it was the duty of the States to take the responsibility of opening up the country. He declared there was nothing in the Constitution that gave him the power to use federal funds for the building of roads and canals. 33 The disasters of the War of 1812 made both the government and the people aware of the defenseless and unprepared condition of the country. 34 A conference of the leading generals was called at Washington and much needed reforms enacted. Three subjects,

the formation of the army, the selection of the officers, and the establishment of military stations, received their special attention. 35

In the spring of 1818, Congress had instructed the Secretary of War to prepare a report on Roads and Canals to be delivered at the next session. It was evident that the new administration took a different view from that of the previous one. Accordingly, on January 7, 1819, Calhoun gave a lengthy report, parts of which are quoted here:

There is no country to which a good system of military roads and canals is more indispensable than the United States. As great as our military capacity is when compared with the number of our people, yet, when considered in relation to the vast extent of our country, it is very small; and if so great an extent of territory renders it difficult to conquer us, as has been frequently observed, it ought not to be forgotten it renders it no less difficult for the Government to afford protection to every portion of the country. In the very nature of things, the difficulty of protecting every part, so long as our population bears so small a part to the extent of the country, cannot be entirely overcome; but it may be very greatly diminished by a good system of roads and canals... When our military posts come to be established up the Missouri and Mississippi, as far as is contemplated, the military frontier of the United States, not including sinuosities, and the coasts of navigable bays and lakes opening into our country, as was stated in a former report, will present a line of more than nine thousand miles, and including them, eleven thousand. 36

CHAPTER II

THE YELLOWSTONE EXPEDITION OF 1819

In the first chapter, the endeavor was made to give a brief historical sketch of that part of the frontier which was to form the scene of Colonel Atkinson's principal service to his country. The sketch is, of set purpose, brief, in order that the proportions of the present study may be maintained. The first chapter also aimed at introducing Colonel Atkinson by giving such meager details as are available of his career previous to the Yellowstone Expedition. The present chapter will take up the first part of that expedition, endeavoring to show its motives, the means employed, what was accomplished before the winter of 1820 came to check those military operations.

CONDITIONS IN THE UPPER MISSOURI VALLEY

When the Upper Missouri Valley was just emerging into history during the early decades of the Nineteenth Century, it was a vast unoccupied, almost unexplored region. ¹ Lewis and Clark had carried the Stars and Stripes through it in 1804. The expedition, however, had been little more than an exploratory achievement. Since that time the government had taken no steps worthy

¹. Paullin, Plate 39.

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of note to establish possession of the Louisiana territory west of the settlements that clung to the Mississippi River.²

American hunters and trappers, led by the enterprising Manuel Lisa, had ventured up the river after the return of Lewis and Clark with their glowing accounts of fur trade with friendly Indians.³ Their presence in the Valley, transient as it was, gave rise to a special type of Indian problem. "When...the white men entered the trans-Mississippi region, where...the fur trade...did not induce fixed settlements, the problem of defense became quite different...The nature of their work...kept men more or less on the move, and made impracticable any cooperative measures of defense. Yet their journeyings back and forth in small parties laden with rich peltries, invited attack, and the demand for some external form of protection became insistent."⁴ Some show of force on the part of the government was deemed imperative.

(A): MONROE'S DESIRES AND CALHOUN'S EARLIER PLANS

The first important step toward military occupation of the Valley had been made several years before the Expedition of 1819 was undertaken. Monroe had been interviewed while he was

acting Secretary of War for a short period, and the plans laid before him for the building of a military post at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. He too saw the strategic value of a post near the edge of Britain's fur-trading sphere. He was willing to push the matter through with government funds, but the opposition of a little group of provincial-minded Easterners prevented its immediate execution.\(^5\) It was not until Monroe became President in 1817 that his idea, which had persisted, could be carried out. For, he was then in a position to sanction the establishment of the post as a part of the system of measures for western exploration and defense.\(^6\) He gave expression to this support in his Second Annual Message to Congress, November 16, 1818.\(^7\)

The preceding March Calhoun had already begun to take active measures for an expedition to the Yellowstone. A letter of

5. Note: This was by no means the last attempt of these men to frustrate government projects connected with the West. John Quincy Adams gives their names as John Cocke of Tennessee, John Floyd of Virginia, and Henry Clay of Kentucky. Memoirs of John Quincy Adams. Vol. VI, 249.


instructions was addressed to Colonel Thomas A. Smith, commanding the Ninth Military Department at St. Louis, with orders to consult with Governor Clark concerning arrangements which would best effect the object to be attained. But Calhoun's views began to change during the summer. The Mandan Villages were the nearest point to the British Military establishment on the Red River. This made the establishment of an American post at that place seem imperative. In spite of this change in objective, the expedition continued to be known as the Expedition to the Yellowstone, although it is referred to in the Annals of Congress as "the Expedition to the Mandan villages on the Missouri."

THE MOVEMENT UNDER CHAMBERS

Not until September, however, did an advance force of three hundred men under Colonel Talbot Chambers leave Bellefontaine for the Mandan villages. On account of the lateness of the season, they landed at Isle de Vache, barely in time to go into winter quarters. Log barracks were hastily erected against the approaching bitter weather, and the expedition settled down to await the break-up in the spring. An officer of the expedition

Note: An account of Bellefontaine is given in Chapter V, page 105.
sent from the wilderness camp, on the Second of November, an interesting letter to a gentleman in Cincinnati. We are indebted for the information it furnishes to the desire for news, so scarce in those days. The Cincinnati Gazette, considering the letter of general interest, published it on January 5, 1819. The story told by the letter was, like most traveler's tales of those days, filled with the difficulties of the journey, and the length of time required to make it. Vivid descriptions of the scenery and the soil of the country passed through lent additional interest to the recital. The official news which it contained is of special interest to us. Two or three points in the part of the letter here quoted are underlined (by the present writer) as especially significant to the narrative:

Colonel Chambers having been ordered to take command of the Ninth Military Department, this command devolved on Captain Martin, who I think well qualified to conduct an expedition of this kind. As soon as the ice breaks in the spring, it is expected we will again resume our slow and arduous march for our destination, the mouth of the Yellow Stone river. It is, however, my opinion we will not reach it, with our present force, and the unfavorable prospects attending it. At least one third of the men's terms of enlistment will expire before the march can possibly be performed and the remainder are of such a description as will never answer the purpose....

There was more in the letter about rumored Indian attacks in the spring, and the fear of British power on the upper river.

Just how much information of a similar nature reached Calhoun would be difficult to ascertain from the available data.

On December 28, 1818, he wrote a letter to Andrew Jackson who was well conversant with conditions in the West.

You are no doubt aware of the great importance I attach to the expedition to the mouth of the Yellow Stone, and as much of its success will depend on the Commander, I have to request that the ablest and most experienced officer of the rifle regiment be selected for that command. The remoteness of the position, surrounded by Indians, and in the neighborhood of the British Fur Company, requires the greatest prudence in the Commander to effect the objects of the expedition. Captain Martin of that regiment is now in command of the expedition. 12 As I do not know his merits, I leave it with you to determine whether he combines the requisite qualities for such a command. 13

Owing to the slowness of the mails, Calhoun probably had not received an answer from Jackson before he wrote the letter dated January 5, 1819. It may be gathered from the letter that the Indians had attempted depredations on the little winter outpost at Isle de Vache. He says:

I regret that the Indians at this early stage of the movement evinced a hostile disposition and trust that every degree of moderation and firmness will be exercised by Captain Martin, to prevent the hostility from extending itself or becoming settled. The command requires great prudence and skill. Jealousy on the part of the Indians ought to be expected and soothed, and the

13. Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, 150.
instigation of the British traders from interest and enmity ought to be counteracted by seizing on every occasion to gain the confidence of the Indians, but as I have already in my letter of the 28th expressed my opinion of these facts, I will not extend these observations. Everything will depend on the character of the commander of the expedition.... 14

(B): THE LATER PLANS: SELECTION OF COLONEL ATKINSON

The hostilities referred to in the January letter may have led Calhoun and his advisers to realize that three hundred men were an inadequate force to send out against the powerful tribes of the new Northwest, even though their mission was a peaceful one. 15 At all events, during the winter, the expedition was completely reorganized on a much larger scale. In March, Calhoun made the selection of the officer on whose character so much was to depend. "The selection of Colonel Atkinson has been made with much reflection," he confided to Jackson. "It is believed that he possesses all the requisite qualities. You will, however, inculcate on [sic] him the necessity of the greatest caution and vigilance. No pains ought to be spared to conciliate the various Indian tribes by kind treatment and a proper distribution of presents...." 16 Two weeks later - writing again to Jackson,

14. Ibid., 151
15. Note: In Chapter VI of this paper, General Atkinson's estimate of the number of these Indians is given in a report to the Secretary of War.
he gave a further commendation to the officer whom he had selected for the expedition which he had recognized as so vitally important. "I have received a copy of your letter to Colonel Atkinson and I take pleasure in saying that he well deserves the approbation you have expressed of his conduct." 17

Early in April, Colonel Atkinson received a long letter of instructions from Calhoun. Its opening sentences seem to indicate that letters had already been exchanged between them. The letter of March 27, is quoted here in full:

Department of War,
27 March, 1819.

To Henry Atkinson,

Sir: It is a subject of much regret that my departure from Washington will take place before your passage through it to take command of the Ninth Military Department. Your command is considered of the first importance and responsibility. The establishment of the contemplated posts on the Missouri have two great objects in view, the enlargement and protection of our fur trade, and the permanent peace of our North Western frontier by the establishment of a decided control over the various Indian tribes in that quarter. These objects will indicate the policy which ought to be pursued. To such of our citizens who may conform to the laws and regulations in relation to the Indian trade and intercourse, you will extend kindness and protection. In relation to foreign traders who by the act of Congress are entirely excluded, your conduct in the first instance must be governed by a sound discretion to be exercised in each case. No decisive step ought perhaps to be taken, till your posts are fully established; and till you feel

17. Ibid., 172
yourself secure against the effects of hostilities; at which time notice ought to be given that after a fixed period, you will rigidly exclude all trade by foreigners and such as are not authorized by law.

Of the two objects in view, the permanent security of our frontier is considered by far of the greatest importance, and will especially claim your attention. If practicable you will gain the confidence and friendship of all the Indian tribes with whom you may have any intercourse. The Agent for the Missouri has had special instructions in relation to his duties, of which I enclose you a copy.

It will be a great point gained, if the posts can be established without Indian hostilities, and such I confidently believe may be the case with discretion. Undoubtedly the Indians ought to be fully impressed with our justice and humanity. Should you succeed in convincing them of both, all difficulties will be removed. In the event of hostilities the Commandant of the Fifth Regiment on the Upper Mississippi is ordered to receive your orders. The distance between the Mississippi and the Missouri is not too great for cooperation and the country is said to be very open and may easily be past over.

I enclose copies of the orders to Generals Brown and Jackson as connected with your department, and also a copy of the order of 10 May 1816 and 11 September, 1818, in relation to Indian Trade and the issue of rations to the Indians. The Quarter-master General has been instructed to purchase a set of the acts of Congress for your use.

You will keep a journal of all your proceedings and report to this Department at short intervals the progress of your movements, and such events as may be of importance to be known.

John C. Calhoun.

18. Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, 159.
Note: The letters to the Generals just referred to are printed in American State Papers, Indian Affairs. Vol. 11, 269.
This letter gives a valuable insight into the character of Calhoun himself. It also indicates a policy, which, had it been uniformly pursued by others as well as Atkinson, would have been far more creditable to the United States Government than that actually carried out.

(C): DEPARTURE OF THE PLATTSBURG REGIMENT FROM PITTSBURGH: JOURNEY DOWN THE OHIO

During the four years at Plattsburg, mentioned in the preceding chapter, Colonel Atkinson's soldiers had experienced much of the 'gay delight' of army life with very few of its hardships and privations. Very probably their heaviest assignment was the building of the road to French Mill. It is to Dr. T. J. Mower, the surgeon of the regiment, that we are indebted for certain details regarding the condition of the troops at the beginning of the expedition. During these years, he states in an official report, many foreigners had entered the ranks of the regiment.

After the journey overland to Pittsburgh requiring about forty days, they spent a week in that city in preparation for the

19. Mower, Dr. T. J. "Statistical Report on the Sickness and Mortality of the Army of the United States, prepared under the direction of Thomas Lawson, M.D. Surgeon-General, Washington, D.C., 1840." Excerpts of the report of Dr. T. J. Mower and Dr. John Gale, of the Rifle Regiment, were published in the American Journal of Medical Science, 1842. Quoted from the unpublished Manuscript of Dr. Irving S. Cutter.

20. Ibid. This report was not sent in until May 1820, after the terrible epidemic of scurvy at Camp Missouri that winter.

21. Ibid.
long trip. It cannot be definitely ascertained whether or not Colonel Atkinson went to Washington, as the letter of Calhoun seems to indicate that he did. It would be safe to conjecture, however, that in view of the long journey ahead, the opportunity of visiting the national seat of government would not readily be missed. There was, perhaps, even a hurried trip to the home in North Carolina for a last farewell before facing danger in the West, with the possibility of never returning. But all preparations were completed about the first of May. The day of departure dawned, full of promise, of adventure, and of danger as well. The soldiers were embarked, the young commander gave the signal, and the ten keel boats slowly pushed off. It was a dramatic moment. Music stirred their hearts as the people cheered. There were hardships on board due to the crowded quarters, and the bad water, but the journey was not without interest as day by day they slipped further into the western country.

In those days frontier towns welcomed any distraction.

22. Mitchell, Captain Harry E. U.S.A. Ret., Adj. History of Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. (Mimeograph Copy). Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, 1921. Supplied by the Army War College, Fort Humphreys, D.C. Colonel O.L. Spaulding, Chief of the Historical Section of the College says of this and a paper by Cedric R. Worth used in Chapter V: "It will be noted that two privately written papers are quoted. Both seem excellent although minor errors have been noted and complete accuracy cannot be guaranteed."

23. Dr. T.J. Mower.
Cincinnati and Louisville must have been thrilled by the arrival of the Expedition. Heralded by the newspapers for many months, their coming was not unexpected. Niles' Weekly Register in a very long article, quoted from the Missouri Enquirer of six months before, spoke of the contemplated post in enthusiastic terms:

......The United States will then have a military establishment eighteen hundred miles west of the Mississippi... The officers carry with them the seeds and grains which are expected to thrive in that climate... Wheat, rye, barley, and oats are expected to thrive there... They attain perfection even at Lord Selkirk's establishment three degrees further north...

Our fellow citizen, Manuel Lisa, so well known for his enterprise, will precede the expedition to prepare the Indians for its reception. He will quiet their apprehensions by showing the benevolent and humane intention of the American Government and will silence the British emissaries, who shall represent the expedition as an act of war against the Indian nations. The establishment of this post will be an era in the history of the West. It will go to the source and root of the fatal British influence which has for so many years armed the Indian nations against our western frontiers. It carries the arms and power of the United States to the ground which has hitherto been exclusively occupied by the British North West and Hudson's Bay companies, and which has been the true seat of British power over the Indian mind...

The name of the Yellow Stone River will hereafter be familiar to the American ear. That a stream of its magnitude should heretofore have been so little known is a proof of the immensity of our country...

24. Note: This article was written when Colonel Chambers set out in September, 1818, but it applies as well to the Expedition proper.

Cincinnati was a thriving little riverport in those days from which, during the open season, boats departed almost daily for points as far distant as New Orleans. As for Louisville, was it there, and then, that General Atkinson met for the first time the charming Miss Ann Bullitt who was to become his bride six years later? There is no basis for the conjecture, other than the fact that the Bullitts were a prominent pioneer family, city founders of Louisville.\(^{26}\) The proverbial southern hospitality, and the friendly spirit that pioneers might be expected to feel for others who were also, in a sense, pioneers, support this hypothesis. As leading citizens, too, they would surely not miss the opportunity of entertaining so distinguished a guest and his officers.

Voyaging down the beautiful Ohio had been an easy matter compared with what lay ahead of the soldiers after they reached the mouth of the river. When the keel boats slipped out into the Mississippi, the most difficult part of the journey began - the two hundred mile stretch from New Madrid to St. Louis against the June flood. Timothy Flint has left a classic description of this toilsome bit of water, but Niehardt’s surpasses it. "All day long under such difficulties... the crew fought its way upstream, and always the hardest task was met

with song, for the French boatmen were famous singers, peculiarly gifted with the genius for light-heartedness... They passed the turbulent waters between the Grand Tower and the Devil's Oven. The Cornice Rock dropped behind them and the perilous point called Sycamore Root became an unpleasant memory. Now they toiled past the mouth of the Kaskaskia, upon which, a few miles inland stood an important old town of the same name. St. St. Genevieve,... the mouth of the Maramec... the thriving villages of Carondelet and Cahokia were soon left behind. Then, at last, fifteen days after they left the mouth of the Ohio, they saw the city of St. Louis rising gradually from the water's edge up the flanks of the westward bluffs... "27

STAY IN ST. LOUIS

On June 2, the Missouri Republican announced that the St. Louis had arrived from New Orleans on the First, with Colonel Atkinson and Major M'Intosh as distinguished passengers. The Captain's log book quaintly recorded:

On May 26, 7 p.m. at the Grand Turn, below Island no. 60, passed nine keel boats with the Sixth Regiment, United States Infantry, commanded by Colonel Atkinson, destined for the Missouri. At 11 p.m. took on board Colonel Atkinson and Major M'Intosh... 28

27. Niehardt, John G. *The Splendid Wayfaring, 1821-1832*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924, 21-23. Note: It is not certain from the data that the soldiers manned the boats on this stage of the journey.

In 1819, St. Louis was a town of about five thousand inhabitants, having more than doubled in population since the transfer from French to American ownership. "A traveller of those days informs us that 'lines of buildings containing handsome and spacious city houses' were to be seen - 'houses that would not have disgraced Philadelphia'. "29 If the Yankee spirit had transformed the general aspect of the old town, the culture of the French and Spanish inhabitants still clung to the best families and gave to St. Louis society a brilliance unequalled perhaps on the eastern coast.

Through this wide-awake city, in 1819, passed various military detachments, for the State Papers for that year show a tremendous movement of troops.30 Up to this point, the expedition of Atkinson, the largest part of this greater movement, had met with no disaster and no delay. The outfitting and planning of the expedition which had started out the preceding year, had been left entirely to Colonel Smith as the following quotation from the letter referred to in an earlier part of this chapter shows:

You will take immediate and efficient measures to carry it into effect. The strength of the detachment - the means of transportation - the supplies of provisions, are wholly under your control. You will consult with his excellency Governor Clark, in relation to the country, with its capacity to supply the wants of the detachment, the navigation

of the river, the force and disposition of the tribes of Indians in that quarter, in order to enable you to make your arrangements in such a manner as may be best calculated to effect the object in view. 31

There is no mention of the means of transportation or the supplies in Colonel Atkinson's letter of instructions. Early in December, a contract had been made with James Johnson of Kentucky, to transport the troops and provisions up the Missouri. The contract was evidently secured without competition:

Not only were the prices exorbitant but some of them were left to future contingencies to be fixed by arbitration if agreement should fail between the principals. He was also to be allowed advances before the services were performed and that without adequate security to the government. Thus practically insured against loss, the shrewd Colonel Johnson took little care to see that his equipment was of a character which should ensure a fulfillment of the contract. 32

The closing sentences of Colonel Atkinson's letter from Calhoun had read: "You will keep an exact journal of all your proceedings and report to this Department at short intervals the progress of your movements, and such events as may be of importance to be known." 33 The journal of this expedition seems to have been lost. We are indebted for the preservation and printing of the official reports sent in by Colonel Atkinson, however, to the trouble that arose with the Contractor, Johnson,

32. Chittenden, Vol.11, 569.
33. Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, 159.
over the provisions and transports. They tell their own story of the expedition.

The first report from Atkinson was sent from St. Louis, June 7, 1819. Several days had been spent in reconnoitering. After stating that he expected to send Colonel Chambers on ahead with two hundred and seventy men in four keel boats brought from Pittsburgh, to await the rest of the expedition at Cantonment Martin, he says:

My regiment and the detachment of the Fifth arrived this morning and will reach Belle Fontaine today... I do not think that we can get off sooner than a fortnight. Colonel Johnson will, most probably not be ready earlier... The steamboat under care of Major Long is a short distance below and will probably arrive today... The detachment of the Fifth under Captain Pelham is at Belle Fontaine. The part of it intended for the rifle regiment will be immediately transferred and the remainder, with the detachment that accompanied my regiment, ordered up the Missouri, to join the Fifth. 35

When the fortnight was almost over, the Colonel reported again on the 19th. Johnson's boats had not all arrived; the Calhoun had not been heard from, a fact which would make it necessary to crowd the soldiers into three steamboats and "four of our keels." The troops were ready to depart, but the reloading of the steamboats would require several days. He then stated that

34. Note: That is, the first report of which there is record.
he fully expected to reach Council Bluffs with all the soldiers and if possible to carry the Rifle Regiment on to the Mandan villages. He would not risk too much, nor yet leave anything undone that could be prudently accomplished. He said that Long's "exploring steamboat" would start the next day.  

The scientific part of the expedition was distinct in command but the two were to travel together, and cooperate as far as possible. Major Long's steamboat had been specially designed by the government with the object of impressing the Indians. On June 19, the day before it was expected to depart, the St. Louis Enquirer published a description which lost nothing in the telling:

The bow of the vessel exhibits the form of a huge serpent, black and scaly, rising out of the water from under the boat, his head as high as the deck, darted forward, his mouth open, vomiting smoke and apparently carrying the boat on his back. From under the boat, at its stern, issues a stream of foaming water, dashing violently along. All the machinery is hid... The boat is ascending the rapid stream at the rate of three miles an hour. Neither wind nor human hands are seen to help her; and to the eye of ignorance the illusion is complete, that of a monster of the deep carries her on his back smoking with fatigue and lashing the waves with violent exertion.  

To what extent this is pure play of the reporter's fancy may be left to the judgment of the reader.

During the month and more of delay in St. Louis, Colonel Atkinson had observed that the labors of the troops might be lightened by the application of an apparatus to the keel boat.\(^3^8\) The soldiers were immediately put to work on the idea. Within three days, it was possible to make a successful trial up the river and back. But whether or not, it was employed on this expedition cannot be ascertained from the data.\(^3^9\) In any case, the expedition was not allowed to set off without the approbation and encouragement of the social leaders of St. Louis. A newspaper item of general interest to the public runs: "An elegant entertainment was given on Thursday last to the officers of the Missouri expedition and the gentlemen of the scientific. Also to Captain Hewes of the St. Louis and Nelson of the Independence. The latter left for Louisville on Sunday last." On June 23, the news was printed that the Western Engineer had departed on her journey up the Missouri on Monday the 21st."

"Colonel Chambers with part of the Rifle corps left Belle Fontaine on the 14th inst. to proceed to Martin's Cantonment up the Missouri."\(^4^0\) The Missouri Gazette carried a lengthy editorial as follows:

> The importance of this expedition has attracted the attention of the whole nation and there is

38. Note: The invention will be described in Chapter IV.
40. Ibid., Vol. XX, 23.
no measure which has been adopted by the present administration that has received such universal commendation. If the agents of the government who have charge of it fulfil the high expectations which have been raised, it will conspicuously add to the admiration with which the administration of James Monroe will hereafter be viewed... 41

The arrival of so many steamboats also brought forth excited comment:

Wednesday, May 19. The Expedition Capt. Craig, arrived here on Wednesday last (May 12) destined for the Yellow Stone... Already during the present season we have seen on our shores five steamboats, and several more expected. Who could or would have dared to have conjectured that in 1819 we should have witnessed the arrival of a steamboat from Philadelphia and New York. Yet such is the fact, the Mississippi and Ohio have become familiar to this great American invention and another new arena[sic] is now opening... two others are now here destined for the Yellow Stone. The time is fast approaching when a journey to the Pacific will become as familiar and indeed more so, than it was 15 or 20 years ago to Kentucky or Ohio. 42

Chittenden says with truth that "the high expectations which were built on the possibilities of this expedition are in no way better illustrated than in the exaggerations to which they gave rise." One enthusiast even declared that it would open a way to China. 43

(D): DEPARTURE: JOURNEY UP THE MISSOURI

The expedition so long delayed, finally started on the 4th

42. Nebraska Publications. Vol. XX, 18, 19.
and 5th of July in three steamboats and four keel boats. Scharf quotes apparently from a newspaper of the day though he does not indicate his authority for the following account of the departure. "Their entrance into the mouth of the Missouri was signalized by music, waking the echoes of the forest wilds, and by the streaming of flags in the breeze. It was the intention of those in charge of the expedition, out of respect to ex-President Jefferson, who had done so much to acquire Louisiana, to award the honor of the first entrance to the steamer bearing his name; but an accident to her machinery caused a temporary delay, and therefore the entry was made by the Expedition which slowly steamed her way to Belle Fontaine, situated about four miles from the entrance of the river." Having made the arrangements for the departure of the expedition and seen it safely on its way, Colonel Atkinson, in company with Captain Smith of the Rifle Regiment, went up by land as far as Franklin.

After the expedition had steamed out of sight, the Daily Missouri Republican published the following prophetic article:

The keel boats will undoubtedly reach their destination in season. The steamboats experienced considerable difficulty in ascending the Missouri to St. Charles, and no doubt will meet with more, but the expedition never

45. Nebraska Publications. Vol. XX, 351.
returned to Belle Fontaine as has been stated, and we sanguinely expect, they will be able to proceed some distance up the Missouri at least. In case they should be unable to proceed at any time, arrangements are made to prevent a failure or long delay of the expedition. 46

The folly of experimenting with river steamboat navigation especially in this first important step toward military occupation of the valley was about to be demonstrated. The successful transportation of heavy cargoes in keel boats had been made at least twelve years before by Manuel Lisa and other fur traders; the first steamboat had come to St. Louis in 1817, and as yet, no steamboat had attempted to ascend the swifter current of the Missouri. Although Niles' Weekly Register said of it that "the reported difficulties in the navigation of the Missouri appear to be greater to the imagination than in reality," the difficulties of upriver travel to those toiling on the Missouri were not imaginary. For, "notwithstanding the great sickness and mortality of that particular year, in the shape of bilious and intermittent fevers, which prevailed to a great extent throughout the settlements on the western waters", and from which the troops also suffered, Dr. Mower reported that on the arrival of the troops at Belle Fontaine, June 8, the men

46. Ibid., 25.
47. Niles' Weekly Register, Vol. XV, 295.
appeared to be "somewhat enfeebled." Nor did the excessively warm weather restore their strength. "Without the experience of watermen, the men had now to contend with a torrent, which in point of rapidity and natural obstruction is perhaps without a parallel." The surgeon provides the only bit of real information regarding the difficulties of the trip:

The narrow channel of the Missouri at low stages of water, combined with its frequent and sudden bends, precludes in a great measure the use of sails. In propelling the barges, the cordelle and setting poles form the principal dependence. This mode of ascending the river requires of the navigator the most active and incessant exertions; while the severity of his labors is not a little aggravated by being frequently compelled to plunge into the water.

Colonel Atkinson reported from St. Charles, on July 11, that "after exerting himself for more than a month, he was unable to get from Johnson sufficient provisions to justify movement until the 2nd of July. Immediately upon receipt of the provisions he ordered the troops (Sixth Regiment) to embark; four companies on the three steamboats and four on the keels started on the fourth and fifth. The keels made fine progress. Two steamers went aground the first day and were got off with great difficulty; they all reached St. Charles on the eighth. On the 10th, the Jefferson was again delayed by broken machinery."  

49. Dr. T. J. Mower.  
50. Ibid.  
51. Nebraska Publications. Vol. XVII, 195. Note: This is not a direct quotation of Atkinson's letter.
When he arrived at Franklin by land on July 19, he wrote that four companies of the Sixth Regiment in keels and one company and a half in the Expedition arrived by July 22nd at Franklin. The other two steamboats were still sixty miles below. He was still at Franklin on August 13, for he then reported that Colonel Chambers with a detachment of his regiment and four companies of the Sixth had reached Fort Osage, that the Expedition was about fifty miles below the Fort, and that the Johnson had reached Franklin and was forty miles above the town on the 11th. The Captain of the Jefferson had notified him that she could proceed no farther. Colonel Atkinson at once despatched a keel boat down the river to secure the Jefferson's cargo, and sent an order post haste to St. Louis for keels to bring up the troops. Having made arrangements for the Jefferson, he set out to join the Johnson at Fort Osage and board her for the remainder of the journey. Writing of the disaster to the Jefferson, he said:

The tardiness of the Jefferson would have authorized me to have discharged her two or three weeks ago, which would have been so much time saved. But, knowing as I did, that Colonel Johnson, had drawn largely on account of trans-

52. Note: Franklin, Missouri, was located on the north bank of the river, 205 miles by river above St. Louis, on the opposite bank from the modern city of Booneville. It possessed for many years the westernmost newspaper of the United States, the Missouri Intelligencer and Boone's Lick Advertiser. The original site of the town has been washed away.

portation I thought it most prudent, as I had yet time on my hands, to wait till a failure was acknowledged on the part of the boat, that he might not have the slightest reason to say that any interference on the part of the commanding officer of the expedition caused him a loss. Indeed, I have been careful to avoid giving him the smallest clue by which he could claim indemnity from the government for losses which he must certainly sustain in his contract for transportation. 54

These words throw light on the good sense and shrewdness of Atkinson. Obviously, he reckoned among his responsibilities that of saving all unnecessary expense to the government.

During the stay at Franklin, the people of the frontier town fairly outdid themselves in their extravagant celebrations. On July 27, they gave a dinner to Colonel Atkinson and other officers of the expedition. The record of these elaborate ceremonials can still be read in the files of the Franklin newspaper. 55 By the time he reached Chariton, 56 another of the little frontier towns lately sprung up, Colonel Atkinson was convinced that failure would result the next year if a contractor had to be relied on. He reached Fort Osage on the 23d of August and reported on the 25th, that the Expedition had

56. Note: Chariton, now Glasgow Missouri, founded in 1818, was situated on the north bank of the Missouri, on the east side of the Grand Chariton... twenty or thirty miles from Franklin, and 150 miles from St. Charles... It owed its existence to the fact that three navigable rivers met at that place. Nebraska Publications. Vol. XX, 11.
left that day for Cantonment Martin while the companies which had been on board the Jefferson were expected to arrive at any time. The Johnson had broken down above Fort Osage and keels had been despatched to her to take on her cargo and troops.

From Atkinson's letter we learn that:

The steamboat Expedition had halted here, it being deemed impracticable, in consequence of the lowness of the river, to get her to the Council Bluffs. The Johnson will probably be able to reach that point as her draught of water is much lighter. The cargo of the Expedition had been reshipped in our transport boats and a keel employed by Colonel Johnson's agent, and should the Johnson fail, I have ample means within my control to have her cargo taken up in good season. The Rifle regiment and five companies of the Sixth embark today at one o'clock for Council Bluffs. We shall, no doubt, make the march in twenty days. The infantry which were on board the steamboat Jefferson are charged with the safe conduct of the keels that received her cargo, and may be expected to join us above by the 15th proximo; those on board the Johnson will be up sooner; therefore it may be safely calculated, that the principal part of the troops will be established at the Council Bluffs by the first of October, and the residue by the 20th, together with all our ordinance, munitions, and provisions for twelve months. 57

(E): ARRIVAL AT COUNCIL BLUFFS: BUILDING OF CAMP MISSOURI

Colonel Atkinson himself reached Council Bluffs about


58. Note: This is the Council Bluffs of the Lewis and Clark expedition near which those two men had recommended the establishment of a post. It is on the western side of the river about sixteen miles north of the present city of Omaha. Father De Smet, Prince Maximilian of Wied, and other noted travellers testify to this.
the 1st of October, as his next report bears the heading "Camp Missouri, near the Council Bluffs, October 3, 1819" and states that he had arrived:

with the Rifle Regiment and five and a half companies of the Sixth, at a point a few miles below this, early on the morning of the 29th ult., where we remained till yesterday morning to examine the neighboring country for the purpose of selecting a position to canton the troops. Having fixed on this place (an extensive rich bottom, covered with suitable timber for huts, situated a mile above the Council Bluffs) we reached it yesterday evening. Tomorrow we shall commence hutting and probably cover ourselves in five weeks...

They [Light Company A and part of B] may be expected to reach this by the 20th instant, together with the cargo of the Jefferson escorted by Captain Bliss's command. It was on board the Johnson which broke part of her machinery thirty miles above Fort Osage. Keel boats were discharged from here some days ago and sent down to her; therefore the cargo and the company will no doubt be up in all this month. 59

While the first arrivals were beginning the work of building the barracks, those still on the river were having their difficulties. "A keel boat from the Jefferson, with such articles of the quartermaster's and ordinance stores as we should most want in making our first establishment", struck a snag in the middle of the river near the mouth of the Platte and sunk in twelve feet of water. Colonel Atkinson at once despatched Lieutenant Keeler, acting ordinance officer, well supplied with spare anchors, cable, etc. to raise the boat and as much of her cargo as was possible. 60 A light boat was expected to leave

60. Ibid., 199.
within a few days for St. Louis but Colonel Atkinson preferred to send a first report at once, taking the chances of its safe arrival. He had received a communication from the Secretary of War, dated August 18, bringing the latter's approval of his movements up to July 11.

As the camp was nearly eight hundred miles from the base of supplies in St. Louis, the matter of provisions was a serious one, especially as the troops had arrived too late to realize anything from crops. "On account of the deficiency of the meat, an article the contractor fell short in" Colonel Atkinson had beef cattle contracted for and driven to this place. Upwards of two hundred head had arrived which would make the supply ample."61 In addition to supplies came the demand for housing the troops. It needed courage to begin this task. Building barracks for a thousand men in October and November was no sinecure, as building was done in those days. Early in October, the ground was surveyed and laid off, but as yet only five companies had come up, and they bore the brunt of the first labors. Cotton-wood trees, the only material at hand, were cut down and hewn into logs and planks. The stone and lime had to be transported from a place twelve miles up the river. Fifty rooms, eighteen feet in dimensions were erected for the regiment ex-

61. Ibid.
As soon as the quarters were planned and under way, Colonel Atkinson sent in the following report of the defenses:

The barracks are laid out as well for defense as for accommodation. They form a square, each curtain presenting a front of five hundred and twenty feet, made of heavy logs, the wall about sixteen feet high and the whole of the roof sloping to the interior. In the center of each curtain there is a projection twenty feet, its width twenty with a heavy ten foot gate in the front. The upper part of the projection will have a second floor and will still project over the lower part to afford loops to fire down through. It will be raised to barbet (te) height and will answer for cannon or musketry. The barracks rooms, the exterior of which forms the curtains, are twenty feet by twenty and will be pierced with loop holes for small arms. When completed, no force will be able to carry the work without the aid of cannon. As soon as the engineer, Lieut. Talcott, arrives, who took passage in the Johnson, you shall be furnished with a plan of the work and a topographical survey of the ground, the river, and the adjacent country.

In spite of Atkinson's hopefulness and resourcefulness, the difficulties of the enterprise, and as will presently be seen, a certain lack of cooperation had brought a halt to the expedition. Disaster, or even failure, it cannot be called.

Colonel Atkinson's energy could not make immediate advance possible. He turned it therefore into lines of less direct advance. He cultivated the friendship of the Indians, for Indian

63. Mower. Dr. T. J.
tribes in the vicinity came to the unfinished fort. Councils were held with the Kansas, Oto and Missouri, Iowa, Grand Pawnee, Pawnee Loup, Pawnee Republic and Maha tribes. Colonel Atkinson attended the meetings with the last four named and invited the chiefs to sit and eat with them. He investigated the Indian trade of which more will be said in a later chapter. He interested himself in exploring roads and road making possibilities. Hardhart, one of the Indian Chiefs, had led him to believe that an excellent road might be made with little trouble from Council Bluffs, but starting on the Iowa side of the river, across to Chariton, a distance of one hundred and eighty to two hundred miles. Hardhart offered to act as guide for the six or eight soldiers who went to mark out the road, over which communication could be made with the post office at Chariton at least once a month and perhaps oftener.

As three navigable rivers met at the town of Chariton, it made a good terminal. Also it was only one hundred and fifty miles from St. Charles. Major Long describes the section of road as it leaves Chariton as being sixty miles long, and known as Field's trace. It connected with another trail running northwest, undoubtedly the continental trace or trail, which is noted on De Lisle's map, extending northwest through the plains at the headwaters of the little Platte and the Nishnabotna in Missouri.

and the almost boundless plains of the upper Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. Field's trace to the headwaters of the Grand River, was a favorite war path followed by the Sauks, Foxes, and Pottawatomies into the Osage country. 66

But what hampered Atkinson's efforts more than difficulties of navigation was the lack of cooperation of which mention has been made. The Yellowstone Expedition seems to have been handicapped from the beginning by the unpatriotic money-making schemes of one man, James Johnson, the government contractor. Had he provided the help upon which Colonel Atkinson so justly counted, the labors of the able leader would probably have borne greater fruit. As it was, unsuccessful as the attempt appeared to be, never before in the annals of the West had a thousand soldiers ascended the Missouri river to build an outpost of American empire. "Thus was established the first military post within the Nebraska country and the first of more than local importance on the Missouri." 67 The Expedition familiarized the American public with the trans-Mississippi country and undoubtedly added to the geographical knowledge of the country. The driving power of Colonel Atkinson, though nowhere mentioned, must have been great, for considering the obstacles -

"Everything had depended upon the character of the man chosen to lead the expedition."

Snug in their winter quarters, the troops awaited the spring, and made acquaintance with the country in the immediate neighborhood of their wilderness fort. An anonymous writer, in describing the prairies as they extend westward from the Missouri river toward the mountains, said there was a time when they were under a mantle of idle silence, when these plains were treeless and waterless.

Against this sweeping background the Indian loomed, ruler of a kingdom whose borders faded into the sky. He stood, a blanketed figure, watching the flight of birds across the blue; he rode, a painted savage, where the cloud-shadows blotted the plain and the smoke of his lodge rose over the curve of the earth. In the quietness of the evening the pointed tops of the tepees shone dark against the sky, the blur of the smoke tarnishing the glow of the West.

Colonel Atkinson left the soldiers to their first winter without him, and returned to St. Louis, as he had been ordered, to attend to the affairs of the Ninth Military Department. In the meantime, he would make arrangements for the completion of the expedition in the spring.

CHAPTER III

THE FIGHT FOR THE YELLOWSTONE EXPEDITION

The preceding chapter attempted to give an account of the Yellowstone Expedition of 1819 from its initial organization to the establishment of Camp Missouri at the Council Bluffs. The next chapter will continue the events of the winter of 1820, will give the General's observations on the Indian Trade; an account of the Johnson case, and of the Fight for the Yellowstone Expedition in Congress; and it will conclude with such activities of the General in his department as available data will furnish.

GENERAL ATKINSON IN CHARGE OF THE NINTH MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

For purposes of national defense, the War Department had divided the country by a diagonal line running from Lake Superior to Florida. When in 1819 Colonel Atkinson took charge of the Ninth Military Department in the Southern Division, his jurisdiction included the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Illinois, and the whole territory of Missouri.¹ Some idea of the task imposed upon the head of this department may be gained from the substance of a communication sent to General

Jackson, the divisional commander of the South, and Atkinson's superior officer.

The Indians of the Missouri Country compose a number of Warriors well armed and mounted. For attack not less than 15,000 can be concentrated at any given point. This force is exclusive of the Sioux and Chippeways, of the plains of the Mississippi, with whom they could co-operate by way of Stony Lake in three weeks. The latter tribes are remarkably brave and expert in war...it has been the impression and is still believed that if a respectable force is not kept in that country they will be induced to become hostile. 2

It must be remembered that the entire force of the United States Army in the Southern Division numbered only four thousand men at this time; of this number, eleven hundred had just been stationed at Camp Missouri, while a considerable force was constantly needed in the Cherokee-Creek area in Georgia and Florida.

When Colonel Atkinson took up the problem of his command he made St. Louis his headquarters, although the troops under him at this place were at Belle Fontaine some miles north of the city. It is not known where he resided during the first year. Possibly he already occupied the brick residence at the corner of Maine and Spruce Streets, which Billon describes as "a sort of Military Headquarters and Bachelor's Hall, being

occupied conjointly by General Atkinson, Major Thomas Biddle, Captain Thomas Smith of the United States Army, and Major Richard Graham, United States Indian Agent... This was before the building of Jefferson Barracks provided a permanent residence for the troops and their leaders.

(A): REPORT ON THE INDIAN TRADE

Almost immediately after establishing himself in St. Louis, Colonel Atkinson prepared a report on the Indian Trade. He had charged Major Biddle to give particular attention to Indian affairs during the journey up the Missouri. Accordingly late in the autumn of 1819, Major Biddle sent in a report from Camp Missouri. It contained the results of his personal observations among the Osages, Ottos, Missouri, Ioway, Pawnee and Maha nations, as well as information collected from persons acquainted with the remote tribes which he himself could not reach. The result of his research was embodied in Colonel Atkinson's own report to the Secretary of War, Calhoun. After stating that Major Biddle had been able to form a correct idea of the manner in which the Indians trade had been carried on, and the character of those engaged in it, Colonel Atkinson continues;

Such has fallen under my observation and agrees with his statements. The conduct of the traders generally, tends more to distract and corrupt the Indians than to effect the objects contemplated by the laws establishing the intercourse.

Instead of carrying on a liberal, open, and fair trade with the Indians, and impressing them with a proper sense of respect for character and views of the government, everything is made to bend to an underhand, backbiting policy. Each trader endeavors to impress the Indians with a belief that all other traders have no other object but to cheat and deceive them, and that the Government intends taking away their lands by sending troops into their country. Hence the jealousy and distrust of the Indians towards the Government and the bad opinion they have of the whites for truth and honesty. So illiberal are the traders in their conduct towards each other, that when one of them gives a credit to a tribe to enable it to send out hunting and trapping parties, another despatches an agent or agents with a supply of goods and whiskey, to dog the parties on their excursions, and by the lure of a little whiskey and some trifling articles, rob them of their peltries and furs as soon as they are taken from the animal's back, and the just creditor of his pay. This sort of conduct has very injurious consequences; for as it is so generally practised, every trader is afraid to give such credits as are necessary to enable the Indians to provide such articles as their women and children stand in need of; and the dogging gentry leave little or nothing in their hands at the end of the hunts to purchase with. However, notwithstanding the arts and wiles practised by the trader on the Indian, they have unbounded influence on them; for trade is the strong cord by which they are all bound. Withhold their trade and you bring them to any terms; afford it and you make them do anything. If this be the fact (and I assure you it is) is it just that the influence over the Indians be left in such corrupt hands? Their friendship, at no time, while this state of things exists can be calculated on. It appears to be an easy matter for Congress to remedy the evil; and it would seem that they will, if they can believe those who are personally acquainted with the facts. To do it, all intercourse by individual leaders with the Indians should be prohibited and let the government take the whole trade into their hands, or con-
fide it to a single company with a sufficient capital. The first, in my opinion, would be preferable, as all the influence desirable might be acquired by the Government over the Indians. Besides, if the factories were well managed, the profits arising from them would probably defray all expenses of the Military that might be necessary to establish the posts and protect the trade in the Indian country. If the latter should be thought (best) the individuals of a single company, having but one interest, would find their account in impressing the Indians with a proper regard and respect for the character and views of the Government.

The foregoing subject being so intimately connected with your views relative to the Missouri expedition, and deeming a change in the system so essential to the interests and views of the Government in that quarter, I have thought proper to order Major Biddle to report in person to you, for the purpose of giving any further information on the subject that might be thought necessary.

With great respect, I have the honor to be,
Your most obedient servant,
H. Atkinson,
Col. Sixth Infantry
Commanding the 9th Military Dept.

Hon. John C. Calhoun, Sec. of War.

During the 1st session of the 16th Congress, 1820, the Committee on Indian Affairs reported a Bill offering as remedies some of the observations made by Colonel Atkinson in the above report.

Concerning the debates in Congress over a revision of the methods of Indian trade, Calhoun had written Atkinson:

Your view appears to me well founded. Carried on as it is, it, the Indian trade, at the same time endangers our peace and debases the Indians. The remedy is in the hands of Congress; and I hope they will apply an adequate one. I re-

ported on this subject at the last session of Congress but the report was not acted on; and it is now preferred to vest the power of granting licenses in the President. If no more can be done this will give to the government much more effectual power over the Indian trade than what it now possesses and with prudent management will go far to cure the evils of the present system. 5

Colonel Atkinson sent Major Biddle to Washington, as his letter indicates, to give a personal presentation of the conditions in the Indian country. Nothing, however, came of the efforts made by him and others who were sincerely interested in a betterment of existing conditions. In fact, so numerous were the objections raised by those who were content with the regime, that when on April 6th Mr. Leake of the Committee on Indian Affairs sent the Bill to the Senate, that body resolved that it was "inexpedient to abolish the present system of Indian trade as it is now established by law". The term "inexpedient", so fit to obscure or conceal the true motives of legislation, received, as is usual, much muddy interpretation. With this, however, the present study is not concerned. The decision itself, whatever its motivation, was a check to the desires of both Calhoun and Atkinson, but did not prevent them from forming their plans for the following spring.

(B): THE FIGHT FOR THE YELLOWSTONE EXPEDITION
In his annual Message to Congress, December 7, 1819,

5. Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, 170.
President Monroe, too, showed his interest. He stated that the Yellowstone Expedition had reached Council Bluffs whence it would proceed in the spring to its objective, the Mandan Villages. The personal interest which the President had taken in the Expedition, the willingness of the members of the government to back the project, the favorable comments of the press, and the evident approbation of the people seemed to indicate that its success was assured.

On the 21st of December, however, the committee on military affairs was ordered to find out "what the expedition had cost the government, what sums would be required to accomplish the objects intended, and what those objects were". It is significant to note that the motion which called forth this order was offered by John Cocke of Tennessee, one of the men who had helped to block the founding of the post at the Yellowstone in 1815. In answer to the request for a report Chairman Smyth of the committee on military affairs submitted several papers to Congress early in January, among them the report of John C. Calhoun on the Yellowstone Expedition. Though somewhat long to incorporate in the body of this present paper, it gives the best idea of the situation on the frontier.

Sir:
The expedition ordered to the mouth of the Yellowstone or rather to the Mandan Village, (for the military occupation of the former, depending on circumstances, is not yet finally determined on,) is a part of a system of measures, which has for its object, the protection of our northern frontier and the greater extension of our fur trade. It is on that frontier only that we have much to fear from Indian hostilities. The tribes to the Southwest are either so inconsiderable or so surrounded by white population, and what is of no less importance, so cut off from the intercourse with all foreign nations, that there are reasonable grounds to believe, that we shall in future, be almost wholly exempt from Indian warfare in that quarter. Very different is the condition of those on our northwestern border. They are open to the influence of a foreign power, and many of the most warlike and powerful tribes, who, by the extensions of our settlements, are becoming our near neighbors, are yet very little acquainted with our power. To guard against their hostility, it has been thought proper to increase our forces on that frontier from one to three regiments; and to occupy new posts better calculated to cut off all intercourse between the Indians residing in our territory, and foreign traders or posts; and to garrison them with a force sufficiently strong to overawe the neighboring tribes. With this view measures have been taken to establish strong posts at the Council St. Mary's between Lake Superior and Lake Huron. The posts at Green Bay, Chicago, Rock Island, and Prairie du Chien, will still be continued. The posts at the mouth of the St. Peter's and at the Council Bluffs, have already been occupied and that at the Mandan village will probably be next summer. The position at the Council Bluffs is a very important one, and the post will consequently be rendered strong, and will be occupied by a sufficient garrison. It is about half way between St. Louis and the Mandan village, and is at the point on the Missouri which approaches the nearest to the post at the mouth of the St. Peter's with which in the event of hostilities, it may co-operate. It is, besides, not more than one hundred and eighty miles in
advance of our settlements on the Missouri, and is in the center of the most powerful tribes, and the most numerous Indian population, west of the Mississippi. It is believed to be the best position on the Missouri to cover our flourishing settlements in that quarter, and ought, if it were not wholly unconnected with other objects, to be established for that purpose alone.

The position at the Mandan village has been selected for a military post on account of the many advantages which it is supposed to possess. At that point the Missouri approaches nearest to the establishment of the Hudson Bay company, on the Red River of the Lakes, near the mouth of the Assiniboia, and, at the same point it takes a direction to the south, which in the event of hostilities, would render it more difficult for any force which might be brought against it from the possessions of our northern neighbors to interrupt the communication with the posts below. It is besides well situated to protect traders, and to prevent those of the Hudson Bay Company from extending their trade towards the head-waters of the Missouri, and along the Rocky Mountains within their limits which tract of country is said to abound more in fur and of a better quality than any other portion of this continent. The post at the mouth of the St. Peter's is at the head of navigation. ... When these posts are all established and occupied, it is believed with judicious conduct on the part of our officers, that our northwestern frontier will be rendered much more secure than heretofore, and that the most valuable fur trade in the world will be thrown into our hands.

Trade and presents, accompanied by talks calculated for the purpose are among the most powerful means to control the actions of savages; and so long as they are wielded by a foreign hand, our frontier must ever be exposed to the calamity of Indian Warfare. By the treaty of 1794, Great Britain obtained the right of trade and intercourse with the Indians residing in our territory; we gave her nearly a monopoly of the trade with various tribes of the Lakes, the Mississippi and Missouri, and a decided control over all their
measures. The effects of this ascendancy over them must be remembered and lamented so long as the history of the late war shall be perused. The most distressing occurrences and the greatest disasters of that period may be distinctly traced to it. This right of intercourse and trade with the Indians which has proved to us so pernicious terminated in the war and was not reserved in the Treaty of Ghent; and, in the year 1816, Congress passed a law which authorized the President to prohibit foreigners from trading with the Indians residing within our limits, and instructions have been given under the act to prevent such trade; but it is obvious that the act and instructions to Indian agents can have but little efficacy to remedy the evil. Without a military force properly distributed the trade would still be continued, and even if it were prevented that which is more pernicious would remain - Indian talks at the British posts, accompanied with a profuse distribution of presents.

This intercourse is the great source of danger to our peace; and until it is stopped our frontier cannot be safe. It is estimated that upwards of three thousand Indians from our side of the Lakes visited Malden and Drummond's Island last year; and that, at the latter place at one time, presents were distributed to them to the amount of 95 thousand dollars. It is desirable that this intercourse should terminate by the act of the British Government; and it is believed that it has been continued by its agents in Canada, rather in consequence of the practice before the late war under the treaty of 1794, than by the direct sanction and authority of the government. Its attention has, however, been called to it through the proper Department and as it is wholly inconsistent with the friendly relations between the two countries, it is hoped that it will not be permitted in future. The occupation of the contemplated posts will in the meantime put into our hands the means to correct the evil. The posts on the Lakes will not only enable the government to
check effectually all trade with foreigners on that quarter but also to restrain the Indians from passing our limits. On that side the remedy will be complete.

The facility of communication by the Mississippi and Missouri with our posts on those rivers is so much greater than that between Hudson's Bay or Montreal, particularly without passing through our territory and the British posts north of ours, that our ascendancy over the Indians of those rivers, both as to trade and power ought, with judicious measures on our part, to be complete. The ultimate success of the contemplated measures must necessarily depend very much on the manner in which they are executed. With this impression great care has been taken to select officers every way well calculated to effect the objects of the government. Strict orders have also been given to use every effort to preserve the peace with the Indians, and impress them favorably with our character; and it affords much pleasure to state to the committee that the conduct of Colonel Atkinson (who has received every aid in the Indian Department from Major O'Fallon) the agent, and Colonel Leavenworth, the former of whom commands the troops on the Missouri, and the latter those on the Mississippi, as well as that of their officers and men, has been very satisfactory and has fully justified the confidence reposed in them. There is every reason to expect that, with their judicious conduct, the posts will be established and maintained without exciting the hostility or jealousy of the Indians.

John C. Calhoun

To Hon. A. Smyth, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs.

This report, so explicit, and so creditable to its author, seems

to have been unavailing against the desire of certain persons to continue things as they were. It is invidious to assign possible motives to these persons. The mere statement of facts suffices for the present purpose.

THE JOHNSON CLAIMS

On January 24th, Cooke submitted another resolution directed against the Expedition asking that the Secretary of War be ordered to report to the House an itemized statement of the money paid to Colonel Johnson, and of the amount claimed by him under the contract of December 2, 1818. The Members of Congress who favored the Expedition attempted to table the resolution but failed. Calhoun submitted the required date on February 3, but the matter could not be closed, because a further delay was caused by referring the report to the Committee on military affairs.

About this time John Quincy Adams noted in the famous old Diary that he had received a letter from Mr. John Pope of Kentucky who had said: "Let the Administration be prepared to be attacked about the Yellow Stone Expedition". To this interesting communication Adams added his own characteristic comment:

12. Ibid., 1047.
I had heard here in Boston, obscure intimations of complaint against Colonel Johnson and his brother, who are contractors for supplies to the troops employed upon it. The honesty of the Johnsons is deeply implicated, and rumors are afloat that advances have been made to them by the Government which will eventuate in a loss of public money. 13

As a matter of fact much unfavorable criticism had arisen in the country over the manner in which James Johnson had fulfilled his contract. The St. Louis Enquirer, with caustic comment, had stated:

It is exceedingly ridiculous to see in what manner the Messrs. Johnson have been extolled for their enterprise, their patriotism, and their pecuniary sacrifices in carrying out this expedition; when in point of fact they have had incredible advances of public money, have failed in all their undertakings, and occasioned great delay in the progress of the troops. Already sixty or eighty thousand dollars have been expended... to meet the deficiencies of the Johnsons. 14

The investigation which was demanded for the Johnson contract dragged on for two years. General Atkinson's letters (printed in the Annals of Congress) show the Anti-Johnson side of the controversy. From first to last, it would seem that the Johnsons foreshadowed the modern racketeers. Their influence at Washington was so great that in the final settlement of the case, Johnson was "Allowed all he asked which over-

paid him $76,372.65.  

FURTHER FINANCIAL COMPLICATIONS

When the Military Appropriation Bill for the Year 1820 came up before the House for consideration two amendments were proposed. The first, to add $130,000 to the appropriation for clothing the army, need not be of concern to us here. The second involved the question of "whether or not the Missouri Expedition shall be limited to the Council Bluffs or authorized by appropriation to be extended to the Mandan villages as had been originally intended by the Executive".

On March 28, after it had been fought out in the House, the Senate took up the Bill with the amendments which the Senate Committee of Finance had added. Ten men expressed their views that day; three, Mr. Burril, Mr. Macon, and Mr. Morrill against the continuance of the expedition, seven in favor of it. Perhaps the best argument advanced for the expedition was that given by Mr. Otis, who said that it was an improper way of legislating to favor the expedition and then suddenly to attempt to frustrate it for a trifling sum of money. Mr. Logan followed a similar train of reasoning when he said that the expedition was

Annals of Congress, 16th Congress, 1st session, 290-292.  
Note: Atkinson's letters were used as documents in the case. 16th Congress, 2nd session, 159-171.

part of a great national policy for which the sum involved was unimportant compared with the objects in view. 17

The discussion was resumed the next day. Mr. Smith, with a truly eastern sea-board viewpoint, brought out the now amusing idea that "the expedition if encouraged would in time draw the whole army from the Atlantic States which the proper defense of the seacoast would not permit". 18 Mr. Dana defended the expedition earnestly, and read again the report of the Secretary of War. 19 Several other speeches followed, in which the expedition was well defended, after which the question was taken "to increase the appropriation of the Quartermaster General's department from $45,000 to $500,000 and decided in the affirmative by yeas 24 and nays 18". 20 The point seemed to be won, but the House disagreed with the decision of the Senate. A message to that effect was sent to the Senate on April 7th. As $30,000 of the proposed increase of $50,000 was necessary to maintain the force at Council Bluffs, it became a question of $20,000. 21 After much futile discussion the final decision was taken on receding from the amendment and decided in the affirmative; thus the Senate "convinced against its will" permitted the House to dictate terms to it.

18. Ibid., 555.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 556
21. Ibid., 556.
By the middle of April, it was evident, that without funds the expedition would have to be abandoned. With the opening of the second session of the 16th Congress in November, 1820, the Yellowstone Expedition was not referred to in the President's Annual Message, other than to say that a post was maintained at the Council Bluffs. John Quincy Adams, in the old Diary two months later, reveals the true cause of the failure of the expedition. "T. Fuller... told me that there had been severe animadversions yesterday upon the Secretary of War by John Floyd, a member from Virginia. The example had already been set by Lewis Williams who owes Calhoun an old grudge; and the attack which commenced by arresting the Yellowstone River expedition, is now systematically pursued by a coalition of all partisans of Mr. Crawford, of De Witt Clinton, and of Mr. Clay, in the House". 22

The Yellowstone Expedition had been popular with the people throughout the nation, but in particular "No measure of the Administration...had given so general satisfaction in the Western country as that". 23 The newspapers had followed its progress step by step. On April 15th, the National Intelligencer carried a severely critical editorial giving expression to the western opinion of how affairs had been conducted that winter

23. Ibid., Vol. IV, 473.
in Washington. As something had to be done to satisfy the people, the scientific part of the expedition was ordered to the Rocky Mountains "to acquire as thorough and accurate knowledge as may be practical of a portion of our country which is daily becoming more interesting, but it is as yet imperfectly known". This order was, according to Chittenden, a half-hearted apology to the public for the failure of the Yellowstone expedition.

The official communications by which Colonel Atkinson was informed of the abandonment of the project seem not to be available. In February, he had received a long letter from Calhoun commending him in the following terms:

The movement of the important expedition under your command has thus far been entirely satisfactory; and I have every reason to hope that the same caution, prudence and industry which you have evinced will continue to characterize your conduct in the part of the expedition which remains to be performed.  

Calhoun goes on to state that he is satisfied with the fact that the troops remained at Council Bluffs for the winter where they would make a favorable impression on the Indians because of their number; furthermore, it would make the Government known through other channels than those of traders. At the time when the letter was written, the expedition was still expected to

continue to the Mandan villages in the spring. Accordingly, Calhoun gave further instructions. He repeated his warning to Atkinson to proceed cautiously in order to avoid hostilities with the Indians, preferring that the expedition should take two years rather than encounter "any considerable hazard by too rapid a movement this year". He thought that an intermediate post at the Great Bend of the Missouri would in time become necessary. The posts were to be made as strong as possible in order to prevent the Indians from seeing in their weakness any hope of successful attack.

For this expedition to the Mandan villages, which Calhoun still envisaged when he wrote, supplies would be needed. In spite of the experience with the provisions and transports the preceding June, the arrangements for such supplies were again to be by contract from the East, to be delivered in St. Louis by the middle of April. Such a proceeding only goes to show the extent of the influence exercised by the Johnsons in Washington. Calhoun adds in the letter - "The latter (Col. Johnson) gives every assurance which I hope facts will hereafter justify, that his delivery will be made at and previous to the time stipulated". This time, however, the means of transportation were to be left to Colonel Atkinson's discretion, although Calhoun still preferred if it was possible that one or two steamboats should accompany the expedition to give "interest and eclat", i.e. to impress the Indians and British with "our means of supporting
and holding intercourse with the remote posts on the Missouri.

But the legislation in Congress put a stop to all this and an expedition to the Mandan villages did not set out for another five years.

Nevertheless, the honors which Colonel Atkinson might have won had the plans of Calhoun been carried out, were replaced by others in recognition of his efficient management of the part that he had already been permitted to do. On May 13, 1820, the title of Brigadier General was conferred on the leader of the expedition. Whether or not this was by way of compensation would be difficult to say.

(C): EVENTS AT CAMP MISSOURI: BUILDING OF FORT ATKINSON

In the meantime, a combination of circumstances had resulted in a disastrous winter for the troops at Camp Missouri; the site selected for the camp was not satisfactory especially with regard to health. Some of the food had spoiled in transit; the medical stores were insufficient for the emergency which arose. Moreover, the soldiers found it difficult to adjust themselves to life in the wilderness. During the course of the winter, the worst epidemic of scurvy known to medical science developed at the Fort. With the coming of spring, the wild onion found in the vicinity together with fresh meat brought about

27. Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, 168-169.
a swift recovery. 29 Although the figures vary, at least one hundred of the soldiers gave their lives in this unforeseen, and to soldiers, inglorious manner. It is strange that no explicit mention of the disease is found in the available letters of General Atkinson. The reference (in the October report of 1820) to the health of the soldiers during the summer and to the fact that only one death had occurred since April 15 would, however, indicate that some communication with regard to the scurvy had been made in a now non-existing letter.

In the spring the soldiers were ordered to build a better post on higher ground. For this, the bluff indicated by Lewis and Clark was chosen about two miles south of the first camp. The construction was carried through with vigor and thoroughness; the newly built fort discarded the name of Camp Missouri, with its memories of hardship and suffering. It became the first spot to bear the name of Fort Atkinson, 30 and the presence of their Brigadier General in the autumn brought cheer to the soldiers.

We can picture the life in this frontier camp, for in OLD Fort Crawford and the Frontier, Bruce E. Mahan gives a good description of the daily routine at that Fort which applies to Fort Atkinson as well.

At dawn the trumpeters of the post took their stations, and the ringing tones of the reveille called the sleeping garrison to the duties of the day. The rolls of the companies were called in front of the quarters; then the quarters were put in order; the ground in front swept; and the horses fed and watered. Breakfast at nine. The tasks of the day; at three o'clock third roll call and dinner. Half an hour before sunset the trumpeters called the garrison for dress parade. Drills and manoeuvres were practised, and orders were read. Following dress parade, companies were dismissed, arms were placed in the armracks, and the horses were bedded for the night. 31

There is a note of potential hardship behind this simple recital of life at the Fort. "The duties of the day" varied with the season. As Fort Atkinson was nearly eight hundred miles from the base of supplies in St. Louis, special efforts were made to begin food production as soon as the weather permitted. It was a necessity for defense as well as a saving to the government. General Atkinson's Report gives ample evidence of the success of the agricultural activities of the soldiers. An order had gone out in September, 1818, to the commanding officers of permanent posts to have a garden cultivated by the troops under their command to supply the hospital and garrison with the fresh vegetables needed. Nor was this solely to guard against scurvy. This plan developed out of the necessity for changing the current system of supplying the army with provisions through civil contractors. Disadvantages and even disasters had resulted from the old plan. General Scott and

General Gaines had complained of the system during the War of 1812 when, as they said, the contractors were more powerful than the generals in that it was possible for them to withhold supplies, or give information to the enemy as to the number of troops.

The activities of the summer of 1820 can best be read in General Atkinson's report to the Secretary of War:

Franklin, Oct. 1820.

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communications of the 17th and 21st of June. Your instructions respecting the occupancy of Fort Osage, and in relation to the complaints made by the Osage deputation, at Washington, shall be particularly attended to.

I left Council Bluffs on the 1st inst., and came down the wagon road that Lieut. Fields has opened, with his command. We overtook him, on Grand River, about 40 miles above its mouth, on the 10th inst., with his wagon team and party in good condition. As soon as I get his report on opening the road, it shall be forwarded to you as shall be the report and topographical sketch of Lieut. Talcott, of the route across to St. Peters. The road is measured from the Bluffs, to Chariton, the distance is about 250 miles; the distance across to St. Peters is estimated at 300 miles. From a belief that the Sac Indians are secretly hostile to the whites, I have deferred having the country across to Rock Island and Prairie du Chien explored, for the present.

The ague and fever has been prevalent at the post above, for the last two months but there is every reason to believe that it will soon disappear. Only one death has occurred among the troops from the 15th April to the 1st inst. that from a case of typhus.

The new barracks were in a state of forwardness on the 1st inst., indeed, most of the troops were quartered. The rooms were put up with round
logs, and hewn down with the... (a few lines here illegible). The barracks are dry and comfortable and will probably last some 15 years; a plan of their construction and of their defences, shall be forwarded to you on my arrival at St. Louis.

Our crop surpasses our expectation; of corn we shall no doubt gather more than 10,000 bushels from the quantity gathered and measured from an acre, which I believe yields more than an average, we should count no more than 13,000 bushels. The acre alluded to produced 102½ bushels of shell-ed corn, but, as it was not yet quite dry, an allowance of shrinking of 22½ percent would still give us more than the latter quantity. Our potato crop will not be as abundant as anticipated, nor will the product of turnips, of the former we shall probably gather 4,000 bushels, and 4 or 5,000 of the latter. Grasshoppers appeared in myriads the last week in August, and stripped the turnips of their leaves; they were so well grown, however, as to resuscitate measurably, and will give half a crop. If these destructive visitants had made their appearance six weeks sooner, we should not have made 1 bushel of corn. They stripped it, even at that late period, of half its leaves. The Pawnee Indians lost their whole crops by their ravages, and I understood that at the Earl of Selkirk's establishments on Red River, the two last crops have been entirely destroyed by them. If we are not again visited by these insects, there is no doubt but we shall be able, after gathering the next crop, to subsist ourselves in plentiful abundance by our own labors. We have cut and preserved 250 tons of hay, which will be sufficient for our horses and cattle.

The Indian tribes in the most continue friendly towards us. Our opportunity of judging of their disposition has been greater the present season than at any former period. In September there was assembled at one time, at the Bluffs, the chief and head men of the 3 bands of Pawnees of the Kansas, of the Mahas, of the Puncas; of the three bands of the Yankton Sioux, of the Teton Sioux, residing above the Great Bend; all of whom professed to be, and are no doubt, as friendly as could be wished. It is said that the Aricaras, who inhabit the country 150 miles below the Mandans, speak lightly of the coming
of the troops, and the friendly disposition of the Mandans is also questioned. In these reports but little confidence is to be placed. For my own part I have not the least doubt but the presence of 400 troops would be quite sufficient to overawe them, and make as favorable an impression as could be desired, and which I must hope will be authorized early in the spring. There is certainly not the least difficulty with proper management, of carrying the views of the Government into full effect, in regard to opening a friendly intercourse with the upper tribes.

Whilst the representatives of the above mentioned tribes were at the Bluffs the brigade was paraded for review, with 2 pieces of cannon on the right, supplied with horses and mounted artillery. After the troops were reviewed in line, and in passing in common quick time they were carried through various evolutions and the artillery made to pass over the (... illegible ...) which was most favorable as to the appearance and efficiency of the troops and of the practicability of using cannon with ease and effect. The steamboat "Expedition" was also put in motion, to their great astonishment and admiration.

Major O'Fallon has been zealous and indefatigable in the discharge of his duties as Indian Agent. His impartial and dignified conduct towards the Indians has made a very favorable impression on them; and it required nothing but a similar course of conduct on the part of the agents of the Government, to perpetuate their friendship. 33

With the highest respect, Sir, I have the honor to be your obedient servant

Henry Atkinson
Brigadier General,
Commanding 9th Military Dept.

To the Hon. J. C. Calhoun, Secretary of War

It cannot be ascertained when General Atkinson made the journey to the Fort which now bore his name, nor how long a time

Jefferson Memorial Library.
he remained there, but he was present at the treaty signed with the Maha tribe on September 23, while the letter quoted above proves that he left the Fort on the 1st of October. By the treaty of September 23, just referred to, the Maha chiefs relinquished "the right, title, interest, and claim...to the tract of fifteen miles square of the country around Council Bluffs..." In return the "said Henry Atkinson, brigadier general of the United States Army, and Benjamin O'Fallon, Indian agent...hereby stipulate that... the United States will pay to the Maha...30 smooth bored guns, one nest of brass kettles, 63 point mackinaw blankets, 225 yards of strouding, 200 lbs. of powder, 400 lbs. of lead... 1000 flints, 48 dozen belt knives, and 250 lbs. of tobacco on or before the month of June next, at this place, provided this convention is duly ratified by the government of the United States". 34

As much importance had been attached to the very practical idea of opening land communications between the various forts, in case of need, a party set out from Fort Atkinson on the 2nd of July bound for the post on the Mississippi which was later called Fort Snelling. Captain Kearny, a member of this first party of white men to cross through Iowa, kept the only existing record of the journey in the form of a journal. As Atkinson states in his letter, the party destined to make connections with Fort Crawford and Fort Armstrong on the Mississippi was held back on account of the rumors of the hostili-
ty of the Indians in eastern Iowa. To neither of the forts was a road opened at that time. Yet land communications between these points would have been advantageous. The 1200 mile water route around by St. Louis was out of the question with half of the journey to be made up-stream in hand-power boats. Moreover, the force stationed at Belle Fontaine at this time, was inadequate should additional troops be needed against Indian uprisings at points up the river.

(D): THE ATTACK UPON THE WAR DEPARTMENT

Calhoun's troubles did not end with the closing of the 1st session of the 16th Congress in the spring of 1820. For several years certain members of the government, with a bent for economy, had been clamoring for retrenchment in expenditures. Following an old policy in our country (based on the fallacious notion that the army was an unnecessary expense) these economies were first and principally levelled at the War Department. Whether or not the charge of extravagance in that department was true or not the present paper is not concerned. The motives, however, which prompted the policy were obviously not disinterested. Individual personal jealousies, envies and resentments, partisan ambitions, private interests and hopes show themselves in letters and newspaper articles of the period. Another significant entry in the "Diary" discloses the fact that the movement for economy attained the proportions of a
real attack on the War Department and reveals the nature of
the opposition:

Mr. N. Edwards, the Senator from Illinois, called
at my office and took leave. I had some conversa-
tion with him upon political affairs and the
state of the parties, especially with regard to
the systematic attack on the War Department and
Mr. Calhoun which has been carried on through both
sessions of the late Congress. Cocke and Cannon
of Tennessee, personal enemies of General Jackson,
and Lewis Williams, of North Carolina, a personal
enemy of Calhoun, have been its principal leaders.
With them have concurred all the partisans of
Crawford and De Witt Clinton; and partly though
not completely Clay and his band. Combined, they
constitute a decided majority in the House of
Representatives. 35

As a matter of fact, as early as the 15th Congress, a resolu-
tion instructing the Military Committee to report a bill to
reduce the army had been attempted. The resolution offered was
temporarily tabled. 36 But on May 11, 1820, the House of Repre-
sentatives passed a resolution asking that the Secretary of
War prepare for the next session "a plan for the reduction of
the Army to 6000 non-commissioned officers and privates..." 37

The document drawn up be Calhoun provided, however, for an
"expansive organization such as almost every army in the world
has now found it necessary to adopt". 38 Calhoun's idea was

38. Ibid.
that "in passing from the peace to the war formation, the force may be sufficiently augmented without adding new regiments or battalions". The advantages of such a scheme can readily be appreciated. Although there were certain defects in Mr. Calhoun's idea, the general scheme was "fundamentally sound and would have given the Army all the benefits derived from the most modern staff organization; but, as usual, Congress eliminated the most important features". By the act of March 2, 1821, the Army was reduced from 12,664 officers and men to 6,183. Moreover, the President was prevented "from adding an enlisted man", although he could authorize governors and generals to call out militia in case of Indian wars.

By the same Act of 1821, the General Staff, which had consisted of two Major Generals and four Brigadier Generals, was reduced to one Major General and two Brigadier Generals. With necessity therefore of reducing the number of brigadier generals came the problem of making provision for those who would be deprived of their rank. The solution was made in the following way: General Jackson was given the post of Governor of the Floridas; General Macomb was placed at the head of the

41. *Ibid*.
42. Crowe, 38.
corps of engineers; while General Atkinson, "likewise an officer of great merit" was appointed to the newly created office of adjutant general. 43

General Brown wrote to General Atkinson soon after the decision was taken urging his acceptance of the appointment:

Head-Quarters, Washington.
April 13, 1821.

My dear General:

I am here as you will perceive by the papers, for the purpose of aiding in the selection and arrangement of the officers to be retained in service, under the act of 2d of March reducing the military peace establishment. You will have seen also that General Gaines and Scott have been retained as brigadiers. General Macomb will, if agreeable to himself be placed at the head of the corps of engineers, as colonel, with his brevet rank; and it is my earnest wish that you should be arranged to the office of adjutant general, with your brevet rank. As I am to be stationed here as general-in-chief of the army, it is to me a subject of deep interest to have an officer as chief of my staff in whom I can place, and the army and country can repose, the most implicit confidence, you are that officer; and if as I believe it will, the selection should fall upon you, as a friend who has rendered you some service, permit me to call in your acceptance of this situation in my military family. It is very possible that you may be the greatest gainer by this arrangement, but it will be a part of my duty to see that you are not a loser. Admitting that your commission upon the Missouri is more agreeable to your views, I should hope that you would be willing to make some sacrifice to meet my wishes and the just expectation of the army. It may be proper for me to say, in this place, that it appears to be a well digested and settled opinion here that the brigadiers are to be so arranged that one of them will command the Atlantic, and the other upon the Mississippi or western frontier, including the Gulf of Mexico;

and should this arrangement be made, St. Louis, or some place in that section of the country, would be the headquarters of the general commanding in the west.

I cannot close this latter without saying that it is my confirmed opinion that you can be more useful to yourself and the army, by accepting a situation that will place you under the immediate eye of the Government, than in any other which you can hold under the present law, and that it is your duty to accept the office of adjutant general if it be assigned to you.  

Your friend
Jacob Brown.

But General Atkinson declined the office of adjutant general for reasons which he gives in his replies to General Brown.

St. Louis,
April 6, 1821.

Sir:
The letter of Colonel Wool, containing your propositions for me to accept the situation of adjutant general, under the new organization of the army has been received. I have to offer you my thanks for the complimentary terms in which I am mentioned, but I must decline acceding to the proposals. I could not go to Washington with degraded rank. The only situation below my present grade, that I would accept of, has been offered to me by the Secretary of War—a regiment with brevet rank of brigadier. With this I can wear out my time on a remote frontier till better times offer, when, if I merit it, I shall be rewarded. Accept my best wishes for your health and prosperity, whilst with respect and esteem, I am, my dear sir, your most obedient servant
H. Atkinson
Brigadier General.

45. Ibid.
St. Louis,
June 15, 1821.

Sir:

I have had the honor to receive your favor of the 27th April. The same reasons that I offered in my letter of the 4th May prevent me from accepting of the situation of adjutant general of the army.

I regret that it is not in my power consistently with my own interest, to oblige you in your repeated requests to take a place in your staff.

With great respect and esteem,
I have the honor to be, etc.

H. Atkinson,
Brigadier General of the Army.

Daniel Parker, in his deposition before the Military Committee of the Senate, said:

I had understood General Atkinson was offered the 6th regiment before the board met; and I stated as well to those gentlemen, as to the Secretary of War, that several years since, when Atkinson was only Colonel he had said to me he would not exchange his regiment for the office of adjutant and inspector general with the rank, pay, and employments of brigadier general, and that, of course, I was convinced he would not now take it with reduced rank....

Whatever other causes for this refusal were operative than that somewhat brusquely stated in Atkinson's letter to Brown are matters of futile conjecture. It would appear that for some reasons not obvious in this correspondence some fine point of military honor was involved. Does the phrase, "if I merit it, I shall be rewarded" imply that he felt that the "arrangement" was rather a matter of political wire pulling than a recogni-

47. Ibid., 410.
tion of his worth as a soldier? But it is idle to try to read between the lines. The best that can be done is to accept his words at their face value, and see how he set about proving his worth in the frontier work he had chosen.

The recorded history of General Atkinson's activities for the next two or three years is regrettably meagre. In October of the year 1821, the St. Louis Enquirer mentions his return from Fort Atkinson. With him were Major O'Fallon and a delegation of Indian chiefs and head men of several tribes of Missouri Indians. They (the Indians) were en route to Washington City where it was hoped that they would be impressed with the power of the United States and realize at the same time the futility of opposing it. 48 The Missouri Intelligencer noted in the autumn of 1822 that General Atkinson spent five days in the town of Franklin on his way from Fort Atkinson to St. Louis; he had arrived on the 15th (Oct) and would depart on the 20th. 49 Presumably he was present at Fort Atkinson during the visit of General Gaines whose Inspection Report of Fort Atkinson was dated September 30th. 50

At some time during the years 1820-1824, General Atkinson made an official trip from Fort Atkinson to Fort Smith, Arkan-

50. Cutter, Dr. Irving S. Unpublished Manuscript.
sas to examine the defenses and to oversee the possibilities for connecting the forts by building a road. The plans submitted to Calhoun met with the latter's approval. Yet in spite of this, all his road-planning seems to have come to nothing. As has been seen, Calhoun's desires to profit by the suggestions of General Atkinson were repeatedly blocked by personal enemies of the former.

Other journeys there were, as is evinced by various little expense items found in the American State Papers, Military Affairs:

Transportation of baggage from Fort Atkinson to Fort Smith and back. (Time not indicated.)
Ditto, from St. Louis to Louisville via Baton Rouge, in 1823, $302.40
Travelling allowances same distance as member of court martial, in 1823, $63.
Transportation of baggage from Louisville to Big Bone Springs and back to Louisville, and from thence to St. Louis, Missouri, 3rd Quarter, 1823, $73.92

The purpose of the travelling is left to conjecture. There seems to be nothing available about the General's activities in St. Louis as head of the Ninth Military Department, although these journeys show that he was alive to the situation. It was a period of waiting for him, but obviously not one of idleness. Later will be seen the fruits of the patient, persevering, yet apparently fruitless effort now put forth. That he had seen clearly what policies would be for the true interest of

52. Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, 170.
his country has appeared in his reports to Galhoun. That he chafed under his inability to do his part to carry out these policies is no fanciful surmise. At least he would be here at his post, ready to do (or undo) when the time for more vigorous action came.
CHAPTER IV

THE YELLOWSTONE EXPEDITION OF 1825

Chapter III endeavored to show how the Yellowstone Expedition was halted at Council Bluffs through lack of funds to carry it to its destination. Chapter IV will show that events resulting from the failure of the first expedition led the men who had voted against it to reconsider the project. The chapter will deal principally with the second expedition organized in 1825.

In view of the conditions described by General Atkinson in his letters to Calhoun, cited in Chapter III, it is not surprising to find that the first Indian hostilities west of the Mississippi can be traced directly to the expansion of the fur trade in the valley of the Missouri. With the protection afforded by the troops at Fort Atkinson, many new firms entered the field. The competition between these companies was keen; moreover, the "methods employed by the companies were not at all times legitimate, and often led to distrust and bad feeling". ː Resentment deepened as the Indians began to realize that American hunters and trappers were becoming a menace. "It is not unreasonable to suppose that they the Indians will not


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only steal (from) but murder those who are depriving them of their means of subsistence" testified the Indian Agent, Richard Graham, to the Committee on Indian Affairs during the investigation of the causes of the Aricara outbreak. 2

(A): THE ARICARA OUTBREAK

Since the days of Lewis and Clark the Aricara Indians had been particularly unfriendly. In June, 1823, the continued refusal on the part of General Ashley 3 to give compensation to the tribe for two Aricara Indians killed by the Missouri Fur Company resulted in the killing of a number of his men during a night attack. General Ashley, isolated in the Indian country, sent a messenger post haste to Colonel Leavenworth 4 at Fort Atkinson. The latter enclosed a copy of General Ashley's account with one of his own informing General Atkinson of the attack. With half the available force at Fort Atkinson he soon set out on a punitive and repressive expedition of 700 miles. He was joined at Fort Recovery, a Missouri Fur Company trading

3. "William Henry Ashley, born in Virginia 1778. One of the most important figures in the fur trade... entered the fur trade in 1822 in partnership with Andrew Henry from which venture he eventually became very wealthy..." The Atkinson-O'Fallon Journal, 42.
post, by General Ashley with eighty men of the company and by Joshua Pilcher with a large party of Sioux Indians. The entire force was known as the Missouri Legion.

General Gaines considered the undertaking very hazardous. The Aricara villages were well fortified and contained six or seven hundred warriors. Colonel Leavenworth had but half that number and had to skirt the lands of several Indian tribes who might be induced by the Aricara to become hostile. Even though few lives might be lost at that time, he felt that disaster would tend to "undo most of what had been done by the United States on the minds of the Indians since the first occupancy of the posts up the Missouri." General Gaines ordered General Atkinson to repair to the Missouri. Six companies of the First and four of the Seventh Infantry were to be placed under his command. These, with the disposable part of the Sixth, would make it possible not only to support Colonel Leavenworth but also "to punish the Ricarees and arrest the progress of Indian hostilities in that quarter." Two steamboats were to be employed

5. Joshua Pilcher, member of the Missouri Fur Company, was the owner of the trading post at the mouth of the Platte river, some miles south of Fort Atkinson. Niehardt, 36.
6. General Gaines was divisional commander of the Southern Division of the army, with headquarters at Louisville.
8. Ibid.
to transport the six companies of the First Regiment at an expense of $4,000. 9 While re-enforcements were being gathered, Colonel Leavenworth arrived on the 9th of September before the enemy's villages which he found enclosed with palisades and ditches. The actual fighting was of short duration, for the Aricara sued for peace within a remarkably short time after hostilities commenced. Colonel Leavenworth was inclined to grant it, thinking that the "Government would be better pleased to have the Indians punished than exterminated". He left the place without doing serious damage, but before he was out of sight of the town, it was set on fire "by clerks of the Missouri Fur Company". Colonel Leavenworth says that if this had not been done the Aricara would have been restored to good humor. The truth seems to have been that Mr. Pilcher, the acting partner of the Fur Company, had been appointed a special agent to raise the Sioux against the Aricaras. 11 Mr. Pilcher's part in the affair is well told by Neihardt in Chapter VII of The Splendid Wayfaring, and it would seem that the blame for much that had happened should be laid at his door. The newspapers did not fail to give caustic comment on the affair:

How came an Indian trader, the acting partner of the Missouri Fur Company, to be appointed sub-agent of Indian Affairs? If Colonel Leavenworth

were censurable for anything during the expedition, it was perhaps for failing to arrest Mr. Pilcher and to have him tried by a court martial for mutinous conduct... We know this was the opinion of the commanding officer of the Western Department - and such we are confident will eventually be the opinion of the public at large. 12

The effect upon the minds of the Indians was disastrous. The tribes which had been antagonized were neither placated nor subdued. The effect of the apparently poor showing made by the American troops served to decrease the power of the government in the eyes of the Indian tribes who had been friendly. The Mandans and Gros Ventres were reported as aroused and the Black-feet again attacked Major Henry's men at the Ashley establishment on the Yellowstone. During the winter a number of other outrages were reported. 13 Colonel Leavenworth had been severely censured for failing to annihilate the Indians. Subsequent events cast no shadow on his career as a soldier. His bravery is unquestioned. Whether or not his judgment was at fault, the information sent by letter to Major O'Fallon during the summer of the campaign must be taken into consideration.

While toiling up to the scene of action he had written:

But I can plainly perceive our force is not sufficient to inspire that degree of awe and respect among the Indians which I would wish. We make but a small show, on a large prairie, by the side

of 400 to 500 mounted Indians. If we can obtain a fair fight our superiority will probably be more apparent. 14

(B): THE EXPEDITION TO THE YELLOWSTONE RECONSIDERED

The alarming conditions in the Indian country on the rim of the United States were communicated to Congress. In March, 1824, the President conferred with John Quincy Adams about renewing the proposition for the Yellowstone River projected post, which he said he had recommended, as Secretary of War, immediately after the peace of 1815, which Floyd and Cocke with the help of Mr. Clay had broken up... These men now saw their own wrong and were moving round and round to get themselves out of the position in which they had placed themselves. 15

Rumors of new attacks and murders of white hunters and trappers were reported at intervals. Congress was at length sufficiently impressed with the seriousness of the danger of inter-tribal alliances among the thirty thousand Indians at the Northwestern frontier. Accordingly, May 25, 1824, Congress passed an act, without opposition this time, authorizing treaties to be made with the Missouri tribes. An appropriation was made to defray the expenses. 16

As has been implied in the preceding chapter, the Expedition of 1819 may be deemed a failure, but the quality of Atkinson's leadership was proved by the fact that the President appointed him commander of the new Yellowstone Expedition. It was too late in the year to accomplish the work that season. Atkinson therefore laid his plans for an early start in the spring. Keel boats were in building all during the winter in St. Louis, and equipped with a special device of which mention was made in Chapter II. General Atkinson had invented it to facilitate navigation on the Missouri river, when the slow progress averaging ten miles a day had engaged his attention. During the month of delay in St. Louis referred to in Chapter II he had tried the experiment which proved to be practical. When he became convinced of its success he sent a long description of the invention to Calhoun. After describing the experiments made, he gives the advantages of the invention:

Besides the facility gained by the boats on this plan the fatigue to the men is in a great measure done away, and some five or six thousand dollars worth of clothing saved to a regiment in ascending from St. Louis to Council Bluffs. The risk of losing boats is also greatly lessened. I have observed above that the wheel has an inclination of twelve degrees. A man can walk upon it with his hands resting upon a cross bar a whole day, therefore if relieved every hour the exercise would not be more than would be necessary for the health of the crew.

Having made the above statements upon actual experiment and being willing to vouch for the success and practicability of the plan, I have to request (in case troops ascend the Missouri next season) authority to prepare all
our transport boats in the same way. Expense will amount to $150 to $200 per boat...With a flotilla of this description I will venture to affirm, and I am sustained by the opinion of the officers of the detachment of the first Regt. that I could arrive at Council Bluffs in thirty days from St. Louis with a regiment, transporting six months provisions. The facility would carry us to any point on the Missouri early in the season and enable us to effect any object that might be pointed out. Indeed I consider the great difficulty of navigating the Missouri with troops as overcome and a new era in that respect presented to us. 17

Calhoun must have been favorably impressed with the proposed plan to judge from the following quotation:

T.S. Jesup, Q.M. General.

Dear General,

...The above is an extract of a letter to Mr. Calhoun respecting a proposed improvement on our transport boats for the Missouri. I have tried the experiment fully and am satisfied with its great utility. Will you favor me with your approbation to carry this object into effect. It will more than double our progress, save our clothing and lessen our fatigue. Besides making ultimately a great saving in your Dept... I must request that you will have the amt. allowed which you will return in bills accompanying Capt. Brant's return. 18

In order to prepare for the Yellowstone Expedition a detachment of the First Regiment was sent up to Council Bluffs in the autumn of 1824. It is not certain whether General Atkinson accompanied the detachment. At any rate after a trip to Council

17. Copy of a photostat letter supplied by the office of the Qm. General, U.S. War Department, Hall of Records, Book 4, A #43. Published in the North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. IV, No. I, 55.
18. Note: Atkinson had enclosed a copy of his letter to Calhoun similar to that quoted in 17.
Major Kearny's Command reached the Bluffs on the morning of the 2d November in a passage of 6 weeks from St. Louis after several days delay by boisterous weather, making the trip in three weeks less time than several private boats that were navigating the river at the same time manned by select French crews. The men were in order for review and inspection the day after their arrival.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPEDITION

The necessary equipment and presents for the Indians were assembled in St. Louis and sent up to Fort Atkinson in the early spring. The only feasible way of reaching the various Indian tribes was by the water route up the Missouri river. Unfortunately the official correspondence regarding the preparations for the expedition does not seem to be available. It may readily be surmised, however, that the instructions were similar to those sent out by Calhoun when the first expedition was still expected to be carried from Council Bluffs to the Mandan villages in the summer of 1820. The experience of that first expedition stood General Atkinson in good stead now. This time he was allowed to plan the expedition in all its details. The Commissioners left St. Louis about the middle of March to travel to Fort Atkinson from which place the expedition was to make its real start. The little town of Franklin, Missouri, was again

proud of its distinguished guests:

General Atkinson and Major O'Fallon are now in this town on their way to Council Bluffs. Horses and other preparations have already passed, except the Antelope, a boat built for the accommodation of the Commissioners, which is expected in a few days. The military force will impress the Indians with our power and ability to punish them. Our fur trade is of importance, and these arrangements are designed to protect it from the general spirit of hostility which the Indians in that quarter have manifested towards it for more than two years past. 21

On the 13th of May the Commissioners reached the Fort where the preparations for departure were hurried to completion. The expedition was carefully planned. A bold front was to be presented to the Indians. The fleet of keelboats, if one could call it such, was to be led by General Atkinson's flag boat, accompanied by a sutler's boat. 22

[C]: THE DEPARTURE FROM COUNCIL BLUFFS

Sunday, May 13, the Fort waited in expectation of the departure on the following day. No doubt the last evening was one of celebration at the Fort. Then, the next day, salutes were fired as the expedition slowly pulled out of sight of the last

22. E. Smith, 77.
signs of civilization. With formal brevity the Journal of the Expedition records:

FORT ATKINSON, Monday May 16, 1825

Set out at 7 o.c. this morning on the Missouri expedition with 8 keel boats & 435 men leaving Capt. Armstrong to follow by land with 40 mounted men... 24

A general idea of the daily advance of the expedition can be gathered from the entry of the second day:

Tuesday 17 May. Set out at half past 4 ran 6 miles halted for breakfast at ½ past 8 - set out at 10 & proceed till one & halted for dinner making 6 miles - set out at ½ past 2 & proceed 6½ miles & halted for the night on the right bank of the river making 18½ miles. 25

A regular routine was followed. After Reveille at dawn came four or five hours of toil before the halt was made for breakfast on the river bank. A camp of tents was erected each night

23. Reid, Russell, and Gannon, Clell G. (Editors). "Journal of the Atkinson-O'Fallon Expedition." North Dakota Historical Quarterly. Vol. IV, No.1. The Journal was printed with the permission of the Missouri Historical Society through whose foresight the original journal was preserved. In a letter (to the Editors) dated May 23, 1929, Miss Stella M. Drumm has this to say of the Journal: "Bound with the journal is a letter from Gen. H.G. Gibson, Brvt. Brig. Gen... Jefferson Barracks, Mo. Dec. 5, 1866, to James H. Lucas, President of the Missouri Historical Society, stating that he was presenting the journal to the Society, and that 'it has lately come into my hands'."


Note: It is known through Mother Mary Atkinson that the wife of General Atkinson's son married General H.G. Gibson after the death of her first husband, Benjamin Walker Atkinson. The Journal may have 'come into his hands' through her.

24. The Atkinson-O'Fallon Journal, 10:

25. Ibid., 11.
on the shore. Progress up the river was slow, and many are the minor disasters and delays due to snags, broken machinery etc. recorded in the Journal. At each mishap the boats waited for one another. The Journal seems monotonous at times, but even today there would not be much more to tell about an automobile journey except that it would pass through towns and villages not then in existence. Moreover, the Expedition was well planned and well carried out; consequently there was not much to recount in the way of major excitements.

The happenings of Thursday, the 19th, give a typical idea of the minor difficulties of the way:

Thursday 19. Set out at half past 4 -drift running rapidly in great quantity & the river rising rapidly. Proceeded 5½ miles & halted for breakfast. Here Capt. Spencer's boat, the Otter, injured her machinery in coming to in crossing the river & Major Kearny with three boats of the I Regt. were left behind to repair the boat - which was done in an hour & in attempting to bring the Otter round the point her cordel broke & the mast gave way & again delayed her. Major Kearny sent an express with this news stating that the boat would be repaired by the morning. After leaving Major Kearny we came 7 miles with the other 5 boats and halted at 1 o'clock for dinner. Heavy squalls coming up & the other boats being behind we lay out the head of a sluie all night. Here the sutler's boat came up at ½ past 5 in the afternoon - making 12½ miles today.

The region above Council Bluffs was virgin wilderness - there were no settlements from which to procure supplies, and until

26. Note: The extensive quotation from the Journal in this Chapter, and from Atkinson's Reports in other chapters is made with a view to popularizing the sources.

they reached the Mandan country game was scarce.

On Wednesday, June 8, they came to the Puncar village, where Captain Armstrong and the forty horsemen had been waiting for thirteen days. At two o'clock, the Journal tells us, General Atkinson explained to the Indians the object of the visit and appointed the next day at eleven o'clock for a council with the tribe for the purpose of forming a treaty. Two hours before the time set for the Council the troops were paraded in Brigade in uniform and reviewed by the General. In the words of the Journal we read - "They appeared extremely well & excited great curiosity in the Indians [sic] the whole Tribe, men, women and children leaving the village to witness the scene." 28 The soldiers returned to camp at ten, but the Council was deferred until twelve. When it opened says the Journal:

Major O'Fallon first spoke on subjects relating to his agency and appointed the Young Smoke and one other, chiefs, & gave medals to them, made seven soldiers and gave them gargets. General Atkinson then addressed the Indians on the subject of the Mission and explained a treaty that was previously drawn up which was unanimously agreed to and signed by the chiefs & Braves and ourselves. Presents were then distributed consisting of 4 guns, strouding, Blankets, Knives, Tobacco, etc. etc. The Indians retired at 5 o.c. 29

On the 17th of June runners were sent to bring in the Te-tons, Yanktons, and Yanktonas, and on the 18th, Rose, Harris, and Shania were despatched in the morning to look for the Chyan

Cheyenne Indians and bring them to the Expedition when it should arrive at the Aricara villages or at some other convenient point. At Fort Kiowa about ninety Yanktons and Yanktonas appeared on the river bank. The following day the Commissioners entertained the officers of the Brigade at one o'clock, and at three o'clock the Indians were brought across the river to prepare for the Council to be held the next day. The usual military display was staged - "the troops being in fine order" and "all the Indians witnessed the circumstances". On Wednesday the Council was concluded after the treaties were signed and the presents given. "These tribes deport themselves with gravity and dignity" comments the keeper of the Journal.

Although the Expedition was some distance from the Aricara country, General Atkinson instructed Pierre Garrow and another man to go on ahead and announce the coming of the Expedition. They were given tobacco to distribute to the Indians and were to collect buffalo meat for the troops now sadly in need of fresh meat. Just above the Teton River, the Expedition was halted to wait for the Siones, Shians and Oglallas. Captain Armstrong, Captain Kennerly, eight men and an interpreter were sent on June 30 to bring in these tribes with the greatest possible speed. The Shians were reported to be eighty miles away.

On the First of July six buffalo weighing in all 3,300 pounds were brought in and issued to the troops, making enough for four and a half days rations, "besides the officer's Messes
were supplied with an abundance. The Fourth of July, 30 celebrated for the first time in this wild country by United States troops, was unique. Such an event called for a ceremony. The Journal recounts:

At eight in the morning the chiefs & Braves of the Shyans came in and were seated at the council place. Major O'Fallon and General Atkinson explained to them the object of calling them to us.

At 3 o'clock the commissioners accompanied by most of the officers went to the Oglalla camp by invitation of the chiefs and partook of a feast. It consisted of the flesh of 13 dogs boiled in plain water in 7 kettles, much done. Our drink was water from the Missouri brought in the paunches of Buffalo, which gave it a disagreeable taste... After being seated with the officers on the left, the chiefs of the Oglalla Chyennes & Siones on the right. Standing Buffalo rose took up the pipe & presented the stem to Gen. A. & put fire to the pipe. Gen. A. took a few whiffs & passed it to Major O'Fallon - The chief then took the pipe emptied it of its ashes... & presented the pipe to Gen. A. The Robes & skins on which we were seated were also presented to the commissioners. We were occupied about an hour & a half at the feast, when ourselves & the officers returned to camp & sat down & partook of wine & fruit at a table provided by the commissioners. 31

30. Note: General Atkinson little dreamed that Fourth of July that his son would come up the river in a steamboat as Government commissioner in 1857. He brought with him his young wife, Harriet Leavenworth Atkinson, and his little son, two or three years old. During their stay at Fort Pierre, now Pierre, S.D. the child died. Another child, Mary Houston Atkinson, was born at the Fort, the first white child born within the present limits of the State of South Dakota. "The Indians came for miles around to see the 'white papoose'." From information supplied by Mother Mary Atkinson, and the South Dakota Historical Collections, Vol. XII, 300.

One wonders if this after-celebration was wholly patriotic, or for the purpose of overcoming the unpleasant effects of the dog feast. The usual military display was staged on the morning of the 5th and in the evening the commissioners went to the Indian camp to invite the Indians to witness fireworks. The next day in order to conform to the customary practice the council was held at nine. After the treaty was concluded the three head chiefs were singled out for special distinctions. General Atkinson presented them each with a horse, a holster, a pistol, and a sword. The council closed at three o'clock. In the evening "High-backed woolf", the principal chief of the Cheyennes, "came into camp and presented General Atkinson with a Handsome mule with rope and Spanish saddle, or rather of the Indian fashion. This man is one of the most dignified & elegant looking man sic I ever saw" commented the unknown writer of the Journal. 32 That evening Lieut. Holmes made a deep impression on the Indians by throwing six shells from the Howitzer. "They exploded handsomely" says the Journal. 33 The departure of the expedition is best described in the words of the Journal:

Thursday July 7th. This morning at \( \frac{1}{2} \) before 9 the troops embarked & moved up the river. The exhibition was beautiful the wind fair the boats put off in regular succession under sail & under the wheels & ran up a stretch of 1½ miles in view of more than 3,000 Indians who lines the shore... 34

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
The party of Horse had been kept until now but that evening it was decided to send it back to Fort Atkinson as it had become more of a hindrance than a help after the grazing became scarce. Lieutenant Waters with five men and with Harris as guide took back thirty of the horses. Thirteen were kept to pack in the meat that should be killed for the command.

On Friday, July 15, at 2 p.m. the expedition arrived at a point one half mile below the Aricara village. The day before, Rose was sent with two Sioux and some tobacco to the Aricara village. The next day, Rose returned with six Aricara chiefs "who were presented to Major O'Fallon and myself", says the writer of the Journal. The following day a council was held with the Hunkpappas who had come in to sign the treaty and also to make peace with the Aricara with whom they had been at war. In the afternoon, recounts the Journal:

(after the conclusion of the Hunkpappas treaty the comm & most of the officers repaired to the Aricara Village by invitation to a feast - Garrow, Garreau, a French trader, a white man living with them had become drunk as were some of the Indians, for which cause we returned to Camp. Maj. O'Fallon & Capt. Kennerly returned to the village at ½ past 4 by request of the Indians (General A. declining the invitation) Major O'Fallon admonished the Indians on his visit for their many offenses. They offered as a present 7 Horses a pile of Buffalo meat and some earthen pots. They were told that they would be called to council at 10 the ensuing morning. 35

Here it seems well to quote directly from the Journal instead

of giving its contents in summary as has been done in a number of the preceding paragraphs:

Sunday 17th July. The troops appeared under arms in Brigade this morning at 8 o.c., 2 pieces of artillery on the right & a compy. of Rifle men on the left (350 men under arms). The Aricaras arranged themselves on the rising ground near the parade & witnessed the review. The artillery passed first in common time in review & in quick time, full gallop, the pieces being served with horses. After the troops were dismissed some 8 or 10 shot were thrown from the 6 Regt. some reaching on the river & some thrown across. The wind violent from the So east which caused a suspension of our council with the Aricaras till the morrow.

Monday 18th July. This morning at ½ past 5 the Aricaras came into council, 6 chiefs, 14 braves & 100 thereabout. A treaty of peace trade & friendship was concluded with them. A medal was given to the chief (handful of Blood), & arm bands to the others. 400 plugs of tobacco was all the present given to these Indians as they have so recently been committing murders of our people. They appear to be impressed with deep & full contrition for their offences & it is thought they will behave well in future. Proceed on our voyage at ½ past 8, running on our wheels by the villages & made 7 miles & came to at 1 o.c. on the right bank for dinner. Here the Interpreters (the Garrows) came to us accompanied by the Handful of Blood & two other chiefs to pay us a parting respect... 36

On Tuesday, the 26th of July, the expedition reached the Mandan villages, so long considered important by Calhoun. From this point the British factories or trading houses were distant only 150 miles but the Journal makes no mention of the British. The expedition halted 400 yards below the first village which was situated on a perpendicular faced bluff sixty feet high.

This village contained 150 warriors. Four miles farther north there was another Mandan village of one hundred warriors, while three Grovont villages at intervals of three miles above the latter had 250 warriors. The 27th was spent in repairing the boats and in repacking pork. The Mandans came in and staged a begging dance for the benefit of the camp. The next morning the Mandans went out to kill buffalo by making "what is called a surround" which Major Kearny, Captain Mason, and Doctor Gale went out to witness. The unexpected diversion yielded some fifty buffalo.

The Mandans and Gros Ventres came into council Saturday the 30th. Treaties of peace, trade, and friendship were concluded with them as with the other tribes encountered thus far on the trip. The expedition remained three or four days waiting for the Crows to come in to council. Finally on Thursday the usual military display was held and a treaty concluded with them. All seemed well but the Journal recounts an incident which might have terminated seriously:

Two Iriquois prisoners were demanded of the Crows; from this or some other cause unknown to me the Crows became very very hostile in their conduct, and from their attempting to take the presents before they were told to do so Maj. O'Fallon struck three or four of the chiefs over the head with his pistol. About this time Gen. A. who had been a few minutes absent from the council to get his dinner, in returning to the council saw the commotion & ordered the troops under arms - this probably saved blood-shed. 37

Major Kearny, who was also a witness of the affair, gives a more detailed account of it in his journal:

The army Roll was beat - the battalions paraded - 3 officers of us alone remained with the Indians (who) were prepared and ready to fight - their guns cocked - their arrows ready for use - by some trouble and exertion a partial reconciliation was effected, which was afterwards matured by General Atkinson meeting and talking to some of the principal men outside of camp - at one time it was considered that the result - Peace or War - was so uncertain as in throwing up a copper whether it comes heads or tails - the nation moved about a mile further from our camp - a Captains guard was mounted, and our chain of sentinels increased. 38

General Atkinson left Major Kearny in command as officer of the day and rode over to the Crow camp himself to make certain of the conditions existing there. Long Hair and the other chiefs received him with friendliness and declared that their wounds were covered. The next day the Expedition proceeded up the river but the guard was not reduced to the usual subalterns until it was known that the Crows had returned to the mountains. 39

George Kennerly, one of Major O'Fallon's clerks who accompanied him on this trip, wrote a private letter at the time, from which it may be gathered that the above incident was not the only time that Major O'Fallon caused trouble on the Expedi-

38. E. Smith, 89. Quoting from the Kearny Journal, Manuscript in the Jefferson Memorial Library, St. Louis.
tion, although the Atkinson Journal makes no mention of it.

Young Kennerly says that Major O'Fallon and General Atkinson were not on speaking terms part of the time, and one day at table almost came to murder: Kennerly blamed Major O'Fallon for 'unnecessary interference with General Atkinson's duties as a military officer'; and says that 'Major O'Fallon was vain and overbearing and jealous of any one who seemed to be thought to stand as high as he in the judgment of Indian character'.

Atkinson and O'Fallon quarrelled on the evening of July 30, 1825. One grabbed a fork and another a knife, but James Kennerly separated them. They did not speak to each other for days, perhaps weeks. Kennerly thinks O'Fallon was a jackass (my word for it) and all to blame. Said Atkinson was a gentleman.

After the danger seemed averted, the Expedition pressed on up the river to its goal - the Yellowstone. By the 17th of August, it came in sight of the mouth of the Yellowstone river, passed it and encamped at General Ashley's old Fort about one half mile above the mouth of the river, near the present site of Buford, North Dakota. Here the keeper of the Journal took in the superb view offered by the confluence of the two streams and recorded:

The position is the most beautiful spot we have

40. Ibid. Taken from the Kennerly Journal. Manuscript published in the Missouri Historical Society Collections, October, 1928.

seen on the river being a tongue of land between the two rivers, a perfect level plain elevated above high water & undividing bank two miles to a gentle ascent that rises at the distance of three miles 100 feet — this gorge of bottom is a quarter of a mile across where we encamped & gradually opens out to a mile & ½ where it joins the rising ground to the rear — a heavy timbered bottom on the left bank of the Missouri & prairie in the forks on its right bank. The bottom on the Yellowstone extends 60 miles on its left bank before the hills intersects the river & is ½ mile to a mile wide... 42

They had come to the westernmost limits of the U.S.A. — the spot of Calhoun's ten years' dream. Of the many projects which he had on foot as Secretary of War, the post at the Yellowstone had been nearest his heart. Two days later General Ashley arrived with twenty four of his trappers and one hundred packs of beaver. He had set out from Fort Atkinson in November, 1824, and had spent the winter trapping over new trails in the mountains. "...he knew of the projected military expedition under General Atkinson to the Yellowstone, and expected to find it at the junction of the two rivers on his arrival. His expectations were realized. Atkinson offered him safe convoy." 43 General Ashley gratefully accepted the protection of the government and waited until the Expedition should be ready to begin

42. The Atkinson-O'Fallon Journal, 41.
43. Ibid., 42.
the homeward journey.

Accompanied by General Ashley, General Atkinson now took five of the boats and 330 of the men further up the Missouri. The rest of the men were left to procure meat and to guard the temporary camp, which had been named Camp Barbour in honor of the then Secretary of War. General Atkinson proceeded up the Missouri as far as the "2000 mile creek" - erroneously so-called because it was believed to be that distance from St. Louis. As no more Indians were encountered, the Blackfeet being too far away, the boats were dismantled of their now unnecessary machinery, and the return trip prepared for. Now that the Expedition had been completed in safety and with entire success, the Journal mentions for the first time that General Atkinson goes hunting. He might prudently do so, for rumors of hostility had now been dispelled. The intervening tribes were at peace. On the trip down to Camp Barbour his shot from the boat at a distance of fifty yards brought down a buffalo. It was weighed when brought in and tipped the scale at a thousand pounds.44

(D): RETURN OF THE EXPEDITION

General Ashley shipped his furs on board the Mink, Muskrat and Rackoon, three of the boats; buffalo beef was salted down, a skiff was sent ahead to hunt and have meat ready for the ar-

44. The Atkinson-O'Fallon Journal, 43.
arrival of the flotilla downstream, and the return voyage was begun. The boats made sixty-five to seventy miles the first day on the easy downstream passage, — a satisfactory speed that was to bring the expedition to result in a swift return. The Journal records:

Wednesday 31st, 1825. Proceed at ½ past 4 passing the Grovonts & upper Mandans from 7 till 9 & arrived at the lower village at 10 o.c. fired a gun (swivle) on passing each village & on our arrival at this point... We find here some 40 Sioux Indians of the Sione & Hunkpappas bands who are on a friendly visit — we understand that the Chayanne Tribe is at a short distance (30 to 40 miles) hence, some of the tribe were here a few days since to make a peace with the Mandans & Grovonts. They have succeeded & Yellow Belly (the young Grovont Chief) with a party of warriors have now gone to visit the Chayennes. 44 a.

The efforts at inter-tribal peace seemed to have borne fruit. Just below the Mandan villages, it was learned that the Assiniboins were within ten days' travel. But the delay that would be occasioned by waiting for them was too great. The duty of making the treaty with them was consequently assigned to Mr. Wilson, sub-agent to the Mandans, and the Expedition continued on its way. A month later the treaty was signed and sent on to General Atkinson. 45

The story of the difficulty with the Crows at the Mandan village, on the upward journey, had preceded the returning expedition. The Indians down the river were anxious to hear about it. One wonders what other stories, impressions, and rumors were circulated among them. This unrecorded history leaves many gaps that the historian must deplore.

At the Poncar village the horses which had been put on board at the Yellowstone for swifter travel were disembarked and sent across by land to the Bluffs, "by way of the Maha village with instructions to turn Harris, our express, who sic we expect on his way to the Great Bend with the mail - 5 lodges of the Yankton Sioux are here - 3 of them go with Maj. Ketchum to make peace with the Mahas". When the expedition was nearing Council Bluffs four keel boats were met, the only boats which Kearny recorded as having met on the entire journey. These boats, belonging to Pratt and Co. and Mr. Tilton, were on their way to the Mandans, Aricaras, and Sioux to open trade under the protection of the new treaties. These boats had brought mail for the expedition.

ARRIVAL AT FORT ATKINSON

Monday 19th Sept. Proceeded at ½ past 5 and ran till ½ after 8 and came to on the left

46. The Atkinson-O'Fallon Journal, 46
47. Note: The trading post of Pratt and Co. was located near Fort Atkinson.
48. E. Smith, 98. Taken from the Kearny Journal.
bank for breakfast – proceeded at ½ past 9 & ran till 3 o.c. and arrived at Council Bluffs. The troops were disembarked & the 6th went into quarters – the first under tents. 49

Thus briefly ends the account of a long but successful venture. No serious accident marred the trip, nor major event occurred to give it much history. Chittenden says of the Expedition:

On the whole the expedition was a distinct success. It had undertaken to accomplish a definite thing and had accomplished it promptly and thoroughly. It was a conspicuous exception among the various enterprises with which we are here called upon to deal... 50

This expedition like that of Lewis and Clark a score of years before, is one which can be viewed with great satisfaction because it was conducted in an eminently sensible and practical way and because it fully accomplished its purpose. 51

The expedition is silent on the actual arrival at Fort Atkinson but Beckwourth, one of Ashley’s men, supplies the information. Ashley’s party remained three days "which passed in continual festivities", the trappers "feeling themselves almost at home". General Atkinson remained at the Fort for some time but sent in a brief report to the Office of Indian Affairs. Councils were held with the Otos, the Pawnees, and last of all the Mahas,

52. Niehardt, 217.
and on Friday, October 6, the Antelope left Fort Atkinson for St. Louis, bearing the two Commissioners, General Atkinson and Major O'Fallon. Captain Riley, Lieutenants McRee and Rogers, with ten invalids and eight effectives composed her crew. They stopped for the night at the camp of the First Infantry under the command of Major Kearny to inspect the building of the winter quarters for that regiment.

The Journal continues to record the daily events of the trip until it ends with the entry made on October 20, when the Commissioners disembarked at St. Louis at five p.m. 53

(E): THE REPORT OF THE EXPEDITION

In St. Louis, a more detailed report of the trip was prepared. It was ready by November 7. After an account of the customs, manner of living, and dress of the Indians, they communicated certain special observations:

Notwithstanding the many rumors that the North West traders were holding intercourse and exercising an injurious influence over the Indians on the Missouri, no such fact appears to exist; nor is it believed that any of their traders cross to the Missouri below Milk river, for several years. Mr. McKenzie (then a British trader) visited the Mandans in 1820. If the British have traded and trapped within our limits east of the Rocky Mountains, among the Blackfeet Indians; which we understand has been and probably is now, the case. They can have no possible interest in coming to the Missouri lower than Milk river to trade, as the Indians below the point have little or

nothing to barter but Buffalo robes — an article not trafficked in by them, for the reasons above mentioned. It is moreover believed (and the fact is not doubted) that none of the Indians residing on the Missouri river ever visit the northwest establishments on the Red river. 54

We have the honor to be sir, your obedient servants,

B. O'Fallon, U.S. Agent of Indian Affairs.

These reports may have been sent by post or messenger to the Secretary of War, but it would seem from the Report sent from the Office of Indian Affairs to the President, that General Atkinson himself brought the precious documents to Washington. 55

On November 23, General Atkinson reached Louisville. From this place he wrote to General Ashley in St. Louis for a sketch of the country over which he had passed in his tour across the Rocky Mountains. The latter promised to send a topographical sketch as soon as it could be prepared. With the promise he included an exceedingly long account, describing in detail the winter journey and giving a very fair idea of the section of the country through which he and his men had made new trails.

It is a very good supplement to the Expedition Journal for historical and geographical knowledge of the early new Northwest.

At Louisville, that same day, General Atkinson prepared the following quoted report for his Commander-in-Chief, Major General Brown.

Adjutant General's Office
Western Department
Head-Quarters Louisville, Ky.
Nov. 23, 1825

Sir: I have the honor to submit to you a copy of the report of Major O'Fallon and myself to the hon. Sec. of War, giving a detail of our operations as commissioners appointed to treat with the Indian tribes "beyond the Mississippi". It comprises both the movements of the military escort, and a description of the localities, habits, pursuits, and numbers of the several Indian tribes with which we have made treaties, including the Blackfeet and Assinaboin tribes whom we did not see. As the detail is full and contains the best information I can give upon these points, I beg leave to offer it as part of my official report; adding in conclusion, other remarks applicable to subjects that did not fall under our notice as commissioners.

With respect to the river and bordering country, from Council Bluffs to the extreme point the expedition reached in its ascent, both may be compared to that below the bluffs, until we arrived at the mouth of the Ponca River, a distance of three hundred miles by water; the river thus high being as difficult of navigation as it is below, and the bottom lands equally fertile and productive. The timber however which is chiefly cottonwood, interspersed with ash, elm, and some oak and hickory, decreases somewhat in quantity and size in the bottoms, and of which there is an entire absence...

With regard to the propriety of establishing a military post near the Mandans as suggested by your communication of the 21st July, it will be seen, by reference to the report of the commissioners, that no circumstances, either relating to the conduct of the British traders in a supposed intercourse with our Indians in that quarter, or as relates to the Indians themselves, would call for such a measure. The British traders as stated in the report, never, of latter years, visit the Indians residing on the Missouri below the Falls of that river, nor do those Indians visit the establishments on the Red River. And as all the tribes east of the mountains except the Blackfeet are friendly disposed towards Americans, our traders can go among them in great safety, without the protection of a military force. If, however, it should be thought advisable by the government, to establish a military post in the upper country as a post of rest for the trader, I would recommend the mouth of the Yellowstone river as the most eligible position; for there is the diverging point whence our traders must approach the mountains of the west and the northwest. But, as to the practical protection of our people who seek for furs, (as this article is only to be found profitably upon the headwaters of our rivers in the mountains,) a military force should be located near the three forks of the Missouri. Still this is a point so remote that a garrison could not be sustained there without the vast expense; for it would be highly imprudent to depend upon the game of the country for subsistence as is well known the buffalo quit any neighborhood inhabited by white men; and besides the expense, it would be difficult to send up supplies from the interior. From these considerations, I am of the opinion that it is inexpedient at this time to extend our military posts above Council Bluffs. I should rather recommend that, once in three or four years, a military force of from three to four hundred men should ascend the Missouri, as high as the falls of the river. By leaving Council Bluffs as early as the first of April, in a suitable class of transports, that point might be reached by the 1st of July, this would allow the detachment July, August, and part of September, to open a communication with the Blackfeet Indians which would result I have
no doubt in a friendly understanding with that nation, and open a profitable intercourse with our traders. An occasional show of an imposing military force in an Indian country produces in my opinion, a better effect than a permanent location of troops among them.  

A Mr. Smith, an intelligent young man, who was employed by General Ashley beyond the Rocky Mountains for two years and who visited the British house on the north fork of Lewis river last winter, informs me that British traders often visit the Blackfeet Indians on the headwaters of the Missouri, within our limits; trading with them and trapping for beaver; that on Lewis' river the British have three trading posts two occupied permanently, one other during the winter. A fourth establishment, their principal depot, called Fort George (formerly Astoria) a strongly fortified position on the Columbia, near its mouth, where they receive their goods, by ships navigating the Pacific, whence they distribute supplies to their upper establishments, and to their moving parties. The number of trappers and hunters employed by the British Trading Company beyond the mountains is estimated at six hundred men, chiefly half breed Cree and Iroquois Indians. The furs which they take in great numbers are carried down to Fort George and thence shipped to the Pacific.  

I learn from General Ashley that there is an easy passage across the Rocky Mountains, by approaching them due West from the headwaters of the Platte; indeed so gentle is the ascent, as to admit of wagons being taken over. This point is about latitude 42 - perhaps a little more south. In going west from this pass, you come to the headwaters of a river which is believed to empty itself into the Pacific, some distance south of the mouth of the Columbia. The general is now preparing for me a topographical sketch of this section of the country, which shall be forwarded to you as soon as received... 57 a.

57. Note: This refers to Jedediah Smith, the subject of Niehardt's *The Splendid Wayfaring*.  
57.a. This was the famous South Pass.
If, as it is contemplated by the Government, the Indians residing in the interior of the country are to be removed and located on the borders of Missouri and Arkansas, it will require a cordon of posts along that whole extent of country to preserve peace among the multiplied number of tribes and to give protection to our frontier. 58

With very great respect, sir, I have the honor to be your most obed. serv.


To
Major General Brown
Commander in Chief, Washington City.

The exact nature of the effects of the Yellowstone Expedition is difficult to ascertain because the history of the region still lies buried in untouche source material. The Government did not establish the post contemplated somewhere near British influence because that influence was found to be non-existent. The expeditions into the Indian country at stated intervals, which Atkinson advocated as probably necessary, were never made, such was the psychological effect of the Yellowstone Expedition itself. Chittenden says the uniform of the American soldier was not seen in the region again until 1864.

On January 9, 1826, "the treaties twelve in number were submitted to the Senate for their consideration and advice

with regard to the ratification". They "comprise large and valuable acquisitions of territory, and they secure an adjustment of boundaries and give pledges of permanent peace between several tribes which had long been waging wars against each other". From this statement made by President Adams and from General Atkinson's detailed, yet modest report just quoted, the value of the Yellowstone Expedition to the United States may be seen. Calhoun's part had been that of the statesman, envisaging the frontier situation with its possibilities for good, as well as its dangers, forming plans to deal with that situation, and selecting the man who could carry them out. This chapter has endeavored to show that he made no error in his selection. After giving due credit to the man who planned, is it not also fitting to look upon the work of General Atkinson in the execution of the plans as a signal service to his country? The fact that others did not later build upon what they laid, or even destroyed them in part, does not derogate from the achievements of either.

CHAPTER V

JEFFERSON BARRACKS: INDIAN CAMPAIGNS

In the preceding chapters the account has been given of the work done by General Atkinson which established his standing with the government as a faithful, brave, and resourceful servant. Henceforth they were to make use of him confidently as the situation required, not for brilliant exploit, but for the steady, somewhat uneventful service in which the latter part of his life was spent. It was consolidation, rather than conquest; holding rather than gaining, though not without vigorous fighting at times.

(A): FOUNDING OF JEFFERSON BARRACKS

A step forward was about to be made in frontier defense. The War Department had long contemplated the transfer of the troops at Bellefontaine to the vicinity of St. Louis. The necessity for a corps of reserve somewhere in the West, created perhaps by the difficulties of sending reinforcements to Colonel Leavenworth in the Aricara campaign, hastened the decision. The choice of St. Louis as the headquarters of the area was unquestionably wise. From a post at this place troops could be sent north to the Upper Mississippi and Lake country, northwest in-
to the wilderness on the Missouri, east on the Ohio, and south to the Arkansas and Sabine country as well as to New Orleans. For many years the reserve force soon to be established there continued to reenforce or relieve the remote posts in time of danger.¹

The earliest defense of the town itself had been the old Spanish Fort on the Hill. It was this building which the American troops had occupied in 1804. The opening of the combined fort and Indian factory at Bellefontaine where the Missouri rushes into the more quiet waters of the Mississippi provided the defense for the next twenty years, although the force stationed there was always inadequate. Destroyed by flood, it was rebuilt on higher ground but suffered from neglect. When Major Kearny and his troops came down from their temporary camp south of Fort Atkinson, where they had spent the winter following the Yellowstone Expedition, they found the barracks scarcely habitable.²

The transfer to St. Louis may have been discussed at Army headquarters while General Atkinson was in Washington submitting his report on the treaties of the Yellowstone Expedition.


2. Worth.
He was in Louisville in January where on the 16th of that month he married Miss Mary Ann Bullitt, the beautiful daughter of Thomas Bullitt, Esq., one of the founders of the town. The prospect of a permanent home at the new post may have had something to do with the marriage at this time. He was called to Washington again in May to attend the trial of Colonel Talbot Chambers, lately cashiered from the army. Upon his return he began in earnest the work of erecting the newly proposed fort. He selected the site, seventeen hundred acres "in the wilderness at Carondelet, south of St. Louis, on the west bank of the Mississippi River. The War Department, in directing him to begin work, made only two stipulations. Comfortable barracks were to be erected with all possible speed, and the work was to be done largely by soldier labor. A thousand officers and men concentrated at the camp during the summer of 1826. Major Kearny was the first to arrive from Bellefontaine and went into a temporary camp which was called Cantonment Adams, in honor of the President. Brigadier General Leavenworth made the long journey

7. Note: Billon erroneously says that this regiment was in command of Colonel Talbot Chambers, 425.
from Fort Snelling by September, and went into a separate camp which was called Camp Miller after the Governor of the State.

In October, General Order No. 66 came from Headquarters:

The barracks ordered to be constructed on the site recently selected for the Infantry School of Practice, on the right bank of the Mississippi, near St. Louis, will be denominated Jefferson Barracks.

This order sent one hundred and eleven years ago from Washington D.C. was epoch-making in the history of this country. Jefferson had died on July 4th, 1826, and it was a fitting tribute to the man who had given Louisiana to the United States that the new fort should be named for him. Jefferson Barracks became the most important post in the West in pre-Civil War days. It is still a post of some importance.

We are able to picture the new camp, for General Albert Sydney Johnston, who was stationed at the Barracks for a time, wrote to a friend: "The position is a good one and particularly excellent from a military point of view... the site of the barracks rises gradually from the river and swells to a beautiful bluff covered with oak and hickory trees, almost far enough apart to permit military manoeuvres..." The quarters of the officers and soldiers were built in the form of a quadrangle with the east side open to the river. Near the river at the

10. Worth.
northeast end was the handsome house (for those days) of the general, built in cottage style. The main buildings, which were constructed of limestone at General Atkinson's suggestion endured for fifty years.

By Christmans the soldiers had built themselves log barracks for the winter. On the 1st of January, the officers of the post gave a grand ball to which they invited many of the leading families of St. Louis. The General, tall, dignified, distinguished-looking in the military full-dress of an officer of the time - blue, trimmed with gold braid and epaulets - did the honors with his charming wife. One can easily picture the scene, the gayeties of which sometimes continued till morning to the music of the stirring army band. In return for the courtesies shown them, the guests who had been entertained at Jefferson Barracks returned the compliment by inviting the officers to the annual ball held on January 8, in honor of the Battle of New Orleans. Thus began a long series of delightful social interchanges. "To an educated and accomplished, well-born and pleasure-loving class such as the officers of the army, the society they found in St. Louis was a perpetual cause of thanksgiving...."

15. Ibid., 313.
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\textsuperscript{12} Scharf, Vol. I, 525.
\textsuperscript{13} E. Smith, 108.
\textsuperscript{14} Scharf, Vol. I, 314-316.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 3131
At one and the same king's ball, were Generals Scott, Gaines, and Atkinson, Henry Clay and Tom Benton, the two Chouteaus, Manuel Lisa, Wilson P. Hunt, and Henry, the fur traders, and H. M. Brackenridge. Lord Marpeth, the Earl of Dunmore, and Charles St. Vrain, John Scott, Rufus Easton, and Charles Delassus.

The Barracks were not fully finished for a year or two. After that General Atkinson beautified the grounds. With the opening of spring, 1827, the famous "marching Sixth" had orders to abandon Fort Atkinson and take up their residence at Jefferson Barracks. The soldiers pulled down the Stars and Stripes which had proclaimed proudly in the wilderness the protection it stood for. Indians demolished the fort. It sank into ruin and oblivion. Just what the motives were in abandoning the Fort it is difficult to make out. General Atkinson had advised against the establishment of another post further out in the Indians' country but surely he saw the advantages of this post, favorably situated as it was within reach of the Northwest Indians. There is no need to conjecture that he advised the government to abandon Fort Atkinson. The absence of recorded evidence by which the responsible person can be identified makes it quite as legitimate to suppose that it was probably another of the movements started at Washington by men who little

Scharf, Ibid., 316.
knew the situation. But steps were taken that made the abandoning of Fort Atkinson less unwise than it might otherwise appear.

The lure of wealth in Santa Fe attracted merchants whose caravans of pack mules and covered wagons, loaded with merchandise, invited attack. Because of their need of protection and because the removal of several Indian tribes to the vicinity west of it preluded trouble, a new post was necessary. That same spring, Brigadier General Leavenworth was sent from Jefferson Barracks into a suitable spot on the Missouri above the bend, to establish such a post. Henceforth, the new Fort Leavenworth superseded Fort Atkinson. 17

(B): THE WINNEBAGO WAR OF 1827

General Atkinson was called from the unfinished fort at Jefferson Barracks to new scenes of adventure in the North. In the summer of 1827, Governor Cass himself arrived to inform the General that the Winnebago Indians were in revolt. The cause of the trouble was the usual one on the border - the struggle for the control of the land. In spite of the treaties of 1816 and 1825, the whites, adventurers and others, two thousand in number, had crossed into the land or Lead Mine region which was Winnebago territory, and guaranteed to these tribes as their dwell-

The Indians had not been satisfied with the treaty of 1825, and since that time their resentment had slowly deepened until they took matters into their own hands. In spite of the threatening outlook, an order had come to abandon Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien, and to increase the garrison at Fort Snelling instead. Old traders at Prairie du Chien feared the worst, but others felt that Fort Snelling, Fort Howard, and Fort Armstrong were sufficient protection. The murder of Methode, one of the inhabitants of Prairie du Chien, with his wife and children, the Gagnier murders, and the attacks upon Captain Allen Lindsay's keel boats alarmed and incensed the whites against the Indians. Coincident with these events, the false rumor of the killing of two Winnebago taken as prisoners to Fort Snelling aroused the Indians.

The excited citizens of Prairie du Chien took possession of deserted Fort Crawford and counted their effective fighters, ninety in all. What seemed of greater moment than the killing, real or rumored, was the fact that during the month of the actual outbreak, Governor Cass and Colonel Thomas L. McKenney, sent as United States Commissioners to the Winnebago to adjust the boundary disputes of the Treaty of 1825, found no Indians to meet them in the place designated for the council. Here they

19. Mahan, 103.
20. Ibid., 104.
learned of the hostilities on the Mississippi. Governor Cass had accordingly warned the whole countryside, from Prairie du Chien to Jefferson Barracks, from Jefferson Barracks to Chicago and Green Bay.

General Atkinson, with the promptness that always characterized him, set out at once with five hundred men in two steamboats. He stopped at Galena long enough to furnish the Committee of Safety with a supply of ammunition etc. On the 29th of July, he reached Fort Crawford. He had sent a messenger to Governor Cass and while waiting for his report as to the outcome of a council at the Butte des Morts, he sent supplies to Fort Snelling. On the 19th of August, Atkinson's messenger returned with news as to the outcome of Governor Cass's negotiations with the Indians. The treaty adjusting the boundaries had been concluded on August 11, but the difficulties over the murders and the attack on the keelboats was still unsettled. Cass urged Atkinson to move his troops to the Portage of the Wisconsin.

At Atkinson's request a company of volunteers was organized and set out overland for the Portage. Atkinson himself left Fort Crawford on August 29. Five keelboats and ten Mackinaw boats, according to Mahan, were pressed into service, to car-

22. Mahan, 110.
23. Ibid., 112.
24. Ibid.
ry his force up the difficult ascent of the Wisconsin. An Interest-
ing personal note is given by Colonel Thomas L. McKenney who thus describes a typical scene:

At La Petite Roche, 25 miles from the Portage, at eight o'clock in the evening we fell in with General Atkinson and his command. His barges were arranged alongside the bank of the river and moored there. The long keel boats...with the sails of several of them hanging quietly in the calm of the evening against the masts; the numerous fires that lined the shore, around which a large portion of the General's command of 700 men were gathered, gave to the place the appearance of a sea port...

Such was the picture as Colonel McKenney drew near the camp that night.

Presently a sentinel challenged and demanded the countersign. I told him who I was and that I was the bearer of tidings from Major Whistler's command (which I had left that morning at Portage) to General Atkinson. The sergeant of the guard was called who, making the message known to General Atkinson, we were invited to come alongside his barge, and (he being confined to his berth by a slight fever) down into the cabin to see him. We were received with the courtesy that always distinguished that gallant officer. 25

Major Whistler's command arrived at the Portage of the Wisconsin on the afternoon of September 1st. While they were encamping on a high bluff which overlooks the country to the south and west, an express arrived from General Atkinson announcing his approach. He directed Major Whistler to halt and fortify himself at the Portage. Atkinson felt that the capture of the

enemy could be made with more ease and less sacrifice of life if his own forces came up to join Whistler's.  

The Winnebago Indians were now in a desperate situation. To the west Colonel Snelling guarded the country around Fort Crawford, Major Whistler and his troops occupied an impregnable fort at the Portage, while General Atkinson was at hand to follow them up in case of their retreat. It meant annihilation or an appeal to their pursuers for mercy. The Indians, several hundred strong, "were encamped about a mile from Whistler's camp. They learned of Atkinson's approach even before Whistler did. In a short time they decided to surrender before General Atkinson should come up.

When General Atkinson arrived at the Portage on September 6, the Indians had already surrendered. The prisoners were delivered over to him. On the 9th he drew up articles of agreement with the Winnebago chiefs. By these articles the miners or whites were to be permitted to secure minerals unmolested between the Galena river and the Wisconsin until the Governor should appoint a commission to settle the conflicting claims of that region. On the 22nd, he issued a proclamation granting the Indians peace. He ordered Major Fowle and four companies to re-garrison Fort Crawford as he did not deem it safe to leave the

fort unoccupied at such a time. Leaving twelve months of provisions with them, he returned to Jefferson Barracks at the end of the month.

There is another bit of personal information about the Winnebago affair found in a letter from Major Kearny to Colonel McNeil:

We returned from the Winnebago expedition the latter end of September, having accomplished the object of it, without resort to arms. The Indians were perfectly submissive, and readily acceded to the demands made of them by General Atkinson. The General in the management of this affair displayed much good judgment combined with his usual military firmness; both of which were very necessary in consequence of the peculiar situation we were in toward the Winnebagoes resulting (as I conceive) from the intercourse held with them by Governor Cass.

When Major General Brown sent in his report he used the late movement as a practical illustration in pointing out to the Government the results obtained by "a prompt and imposing display of military force in the very heart of their (the Indian) country" by which they were awed into submission.

Because the outbreak was so promptly dealt with, there was no war to make history. In the War annals it is scarcely mentioned. Even in the records of Indian affairs it has not much significance. Yet as its result there was quiet on the border for several years. But the crux of the trouble - the encroach-

30. Mahan, 117.
A PROPOSED CHANGE

Another incident which also failed to make history occurred at this time. In view of its interest to Colonel Atkinson it is included here, although it did not make the abrupt change in his career that it seems to make in this narrative. For some reason, far from clear, the heads of the two departments of defense, General Gaines and General Scott, were directed by the War Department to exchange commands. The transfer to the Western Division was very annoying to General Scott who repeatedly stated that he did not intend to leave his department because he was entitled to first choice as the senior officer.

Writing on June 1828 to his friend Major Richard Graham at Hazelwood Farm, Florrisant, General Atkinson says:

I understand you propose going to Kentucky some time this week. Had you not better wait for the Cleopatra, whose arrival is expected about this day week... I think it not improbable that we shall ourselves go in the Cleopatra. It is more than probable I shall receive an order by the next mail to go to Cincinnati to take command of the Department. Scott on the 28th May was determined to disobey Macomb. On that day the President ordered Macomb to assume command of the Army. He did in order on the 29th. Scott was at Washington waiting the result. He is either in arrest for the disobedience or has been dismissed - God forbid the latter result - yet Scott on the 28th understood that was the President's determination

should he disobey and under his knowledge he was determined to breast the storm.  

The affair ended in this way. The West was so displeased at the removal of General Gaines just when he had become familiar with the peculiar needs of the frontier that the commands were reversed to everyone's satisfaction. General Atkinson consequently did not receive orders to take command at Cincinnati. But new demands upon his loyal devotedness were soon to be made, as a result of another Indian rising, this time of a more important and serious nature, resulting in a war of several months duration.

(C): THE BLACK HAWK WAR: The Indian Policy in 1830

A rapid survey of the Indian Policy of the Government was given in the introductory chapter. A brief summary of the changes to be noted in that policy at the beginning of Jackson's administration serves to set forth the Indian situation about 1830. The policy of Indian removal, as has been said elsewhere in this paper, dated back to the acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase which first gave Jackson the idea of using the new lands for such a purpose. Presidents Madison, Monroe and John Quincy Adams held the same views. Their idea of Indian removal,

33. Ibid.
however, was voluntary removal. Jackson, in spite of the "just and liberal policy" which he advocated in his inaugural address, had pointed out to the Creeks two weeks later, that removal was a necessity. The Cherokees, too, were shortly told that they must go West. He determined to get rid of the Indians by force.

The policy, which had for its object the clearing of the Eastern states involved the fate of a race, but that fact was disregarded. In June, 1834, Congress passed an Act setting aside "all that part of the United States west of the Mississippi and not within the states of Missouri and Louisiana, or the Territory of Arkansas," to be known as the Indian Country. In his report of 1831 Secretary Cass recommended that Indians be removed and be maintained in the land assigned to them; that liquor be excluded; and that sufficient military force be provided to enforce the Federal Laws. "The duty of removing these Indians to their new lands, of freeing these lands of their white settlers, and of enforcing the Federal laws upon both the Indians and the Whites fell to the Army of the West.

35. Abel, 370.
36. Ibid., 412.
Note: For a graphic presentation of Indian Cessions, 1750-1890, see Paullin, Plate 47A.
38. American State Papers, Military Affairs IV, 716.
39. Smith, E., 133.
40. Ibid., 134.
With the exception of the Florida Indians the problem of removal presented the gravest difficulties in Illinois. Trouble had been brewing since the confederated tribes of Sac and Fox Indians had made the treaty of limits with Governor Harrison in St. Louis in 1804. By this treaty the Sacs and Foxes are said to have ceded some 50,000,000 acres of land lying "in the present states of Missouri, Illinois, and Wisconsin." In exchange the Sacs and Foxes were relieved of a $2000 debt to Pierre Chouteau and were to receive $1000 annually for an unspecified number of years. The Indians were permitted to occupy their land until it was needed for settlement. Such a transaction seemed less unjust at that time than it does now, in view of the present value of the land surrendered. "Taking advantage of the head men [who signed the treaty] may have seemed a good bargain at the time but its results proved tragic and costly, and culminated finally in the Black Hawk War of 1832." 41

THE SITUATION IN ILLINOIS

The tribes north of the Ohio were numerous but each tribe was in itself too small to offer effective resistance. "Their very number was a source of weakness, as their frequent quarrels enabled the white men to play off one faction against another, and in the long run to reap the whole advantage for themselves." 42

41. Mahan, 16-17.
42. Abel, 258.
The vigourous measures of William Henry Harrison and others had already cleared out many of these tribes. In 1830, the Kickapoos, Chippewas, Pottawattomies and Winnebagoes together with the Sacs and Foxes still occupied Illinois and Wisconsin. These tribes gradually divided into two camps. The Keokuk faction promised to remove West as soon as its individual members had gathered their crops. In view of that peaceful settlement the Department of War requested Governor Edwards, who was determined to free the state of Indians, to wait a year. Forsythe, the Indian agent, brought up the subject of removal again in 1831. Keokuk said he had done his best to persuade the party of mutinous Indians to leave. They promised to do so as soon as their braves returned from a journey to the Winnebago. Forsythe, thinking this was only a pretext to gain time, urged a display of military force. But the Government was satisfied with threats.

When the British Band of Sac Indians returned from their western hunt in 1831 they found their land, three thousand acres which they had cultivated north of Rock River, occupied by white squatters. In their anger, "they threatened to form a coalition against the United States and to destroy the settlements from Detroit to the Sabine". A series of aggressions seriously alarmed the whites who petitioned Governor Reynolds for aid.

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43. Note: So-called because they had helped the British in the War of 1812.
44. Abel, 389.
against a foe whose numbers they did not scruple to exaggerate. General Gaines, with a show of force, succeeded in quelling the disturbance. The Indians were forced to sign a capitulation June 30, 1831, with a solemn promise never to return to Rock River without the consent of the President of the United States and the Governor of Illinois.

Colonel Atkinson sets out for the north

In the month of August, however, a war party of this band ascended the Mississippi and attacked an unarmed band of Menominees, a nation which was friendly to the United States. The latter tribe, it was rumored, meditated revenge. The Secretary of War, the Honorable Lewis Cass, realized more fully than others the significance of this act. He ordered General Atkinson to ascend the Mississippi and to demand the surrender of the lead-

Abel, 390. Smith, Captain Henry. "Indian Campaign of 1832." Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. X, 112. Note: Captain Smith served at the head of a company in General Atkinson's Brigade. His paper on the Indian Campaign was written in 1832 at the request of the editors of the Military and Naval Magazine published at Washington. It appeared in August of that year as "written by an officer of General Atkinson's Brigade". He left a copy in manuscript which was given to the Journal of Rockford, Illinois, by his daughter, in which it appeared August 12, 1832, and was copied into the Milwaukee Republican Sentinel of September 17, and 24th of that same year. Lyman C. Draper says that all errors had been carefully corrected. Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. X, 150.
ers of this "outrage on our flag". The order reached General Atkinson on the 1st of April, 1832, only four days after the death of his little daughter, Mary Diana Louise, aged eleven months. When he said goodbye to his sorrowing wife and five year old son, neither realized that this northern expedition would lengthen out into bloody weeks of Indian warfare, and that he would not return until the end of August.

Two hundred miles north of St. Louis, the General learned the gravity of the situation. The Indians were determined not only to refuse to surrender the murderers but also to take and to hold territory thrice ceded to the government. 650 of the "British Band" and 120 Kickapoos had already crossed the Mississippi and were marching up Rock River. They were subsequently joined on that river by the Prophet's band. Traders and others had carefully counted the Indians and reported their number and condition to General Atkinson when he arrived at Fort Armstrong on the 12th of April. General Atkinson held the regulars here for a time, while he took preventive measures. He immediately sum-


Note: The Illinois State Historical Journal, Vol. XVIII, part 2, 1010, erroneously says in a footnote, "with General Scott, General Atkinson was ordered from Buffalo to reinforce troops on the Rock River Valley".

47. Missouri Republican, April 3, 1832.


49. Ibid.
moned those chiefs of the Saos and Foxes who had not participated. Among those chiefs who answered the summons was Keokuk. They gave up the murderers whom they could lay hands on and professed their allegiance to the Government of the United States. At the conclusion of the conference General Atkinson told them to return to their homes beyond the Mississippi and remain there.

Then the General dispatched two sets of messengers to Black Hawk, the chief of the rebellious Indians. Officially, in the name of the President, General Atkinson ordered him to return. Personally, he advised him to obey the command, reminding him of the consequences of his resistance. But the answer to friendly advice was defiant challenge. Captain Smith of General Atkinson's staff says:

Up to this time, it appeared to have been the general belief of the officers of the army... that the Indians - almost always 'more sinned against than sinning', would under the forbearing, dignified, and determined course pursued by the General, be brought to a sense of their conduct and situation, and induced to comply with the demands of the Government.

General Atkinson was widely and favorably known to the Indians.

50. Smith, H., 154.
52. Smith, H., 154.
53. Ibid.
as the "White Beaver". When he sent the "talk" to Black Hawk, urging him to yield without bloodshed, saying "that thr troops would sweep them like fire over the prairies" the old chief replied "that he would find the grass green and not easily burned". General Atkinson had done all he could to avert the catastrophe. If the only solution was to be a bloody one, then he would direct all his energy, foresight and decision to face its realities. With Indian warfare begun on the border, he took measures to secure the neutrality of tribes who, if thrown in the balance against him, would have menaced the border disastrously.

OPENING OF HOSTILITIES

Upon the bravery and endurance of his regulars he knew he could count. But their number, only two hundred and eighty men, unmounted, was inadequate against a reported force of more than 600 mounted Indians. For Captain Smith says of the latter:

"They were very efficient cavalry on hardy well-trained horses. They never came into contact with our militia, both mounted, that the Indians did not come off victors, whatever might be their inferiority in numbers."

As General Atkinson said in his letter to Governor Reynolds requesting that the militia be called out: "to make an unsuccessful-

56. Smith, H., 154.
ful attempt to coerce them would only irritate them to acts of hostility on the frontier...." He also called upon regulars from Fort Crawford and Fort Leavenworth. To provision the troops was a difficult problem, with the only store of government supplies at Jefferson Barracks. Collecting stores, provisions, etc. and providing means of transportation was finally accomplished in spite of the limited transportation facilities and the bad weather of a backward spring.

About the 9th of May a force of nearly 1800 volunteers from various settlements in Illinois concentrated in answer to the Governor's call. Fifteen hundred of them were mounted. They out-numbered the regulars three to one. No one could doubt their courage or their marksmanship, but the discipline and obedience which prevails as a tradition in the army was lacking. They were of an independent, impatient spirit, anxious for revenge in a quick fight, and eager for a speedy return to waiting crops. To weld such a group into a single fighting machine required all of General Atkinson's tact, patience, and firmness. In addition to this first handicap, the territory which was to be the scene of the war was unbroken wilderness. The Indians themselves were not acquainted with the region except along

57. Letter of General Atkinson to Governor Reynolds, quoted from Wakefield, J.A. History of the War between the United States and the Sac and Fox Nations of Indians, and parts of other Disaffected Tribes of Indians in the Years 1827, 1831 and 1832; Jacksonville, Illinois: Calvin Goudy, 1834. 35.
narrow trails. In the lead country around Galena and Mineral Point there were a few trading posts and small mining settlements. The thin wave of settlement was still fifty miles to the eastward. An Indian trail connected Galena with Chicago, then only a village of two or three hundred people. Cramped and inadequate as this stage seemed for the enacting of one of America's historic dramas, General Atkinson wasted no time in "raising the curtain". He gave General Whiteside, a volunteer officer, directions to proceed to the Prophet's village about thirty or forty miles by land with the mounted troops, while he himself followed by water with the regulars who were "charged with the severe and unpleasant duty of dragging up the river... provisions and stores in boats... it was cold... and for many days... they had not a dry stitch on them".

THE MASSACRE AT STILLMAN'S RUN

A plan of campaign was drawn up on the 9th of June. The two divisions of the forces, as before mentioned, took the aggressive and followed hard upon the Indians. When General Whiteside reached Dixon's Ferry ahead of General Atkinson, he found gathered under the leadership of Stillman and Bailey


59. Smith, H. 156.
volunteer detachments who objected to serving with the main army. They were a reckless set, anxious to do something brilliant. Unable to restrain their impetuosity, General Whiteside gave them permission to push on ahead in search of Indians. They found them - with the resulting massacre of Stillman's Run.

More than this, their folly prolonged the war. Black Hawk, now convinced that British promises were empty, and a Winnebago coalition a mirage, sent envoys to Stillman's camp which he had mistaken for Atkinson's encampment. He hoped to persuade the White Beaver to conclude a peace, and grant him permission to cross the Mississippi. A flag of truce was a symbol even Indians would not disregard. But Stillman's men wantonly killed the envoys sent by Black Hawk. There followed a fierce retaliation on the part of the Indians. The white men fled, spreading panic wherever they went. Black Hawk, elated over the capture of various stores, withdrew into the impregnable fastnesses of the Lake Kosh-ko-nong country, known at that time as Michigan Territory.

As soon as General Atkinson heard of the bloody skirmish he hurried forward, leaving volunteers to guard the stores at Dixon's Ferry. When he reached the scene of the disaster, urgent news was brought to him that the volunteers in charge of the stores had determined to abandon their charge and go home. Re-

60. Thwaites, 154.
gulars were immediately sent back to guard the stores. The deserters were Whiteside's men. They had enlisted for a month; their time was up, and they would go. Not even the sight of fifteen massacred men, women, and children on Indian Creek could move them to renew the struggle scarcely begun. Such was their "patriotism" that they spent the next few months beside pleasant firesides, leaving to others the sterner task of protecting the exposed frontier. 61 What can be said of the government policy of depending on the state militia? General Atkinson realized that infantry alone were insufficient. With his staff, he followed the deserting volunteers and succeeded in inducing a few companies to remain to guard the settlements. "By exertions almost incredible", Captain Smith records, "General Atkinson succeeded in calling out a new militia mounted force... and in procuring provisions for a new movement." 62 On the 28th of June the army was again ready to advance on the enemy. The force consisted of 400 regular infantry, Henry's brigade of 1000 mounted militia, and Posey's and Alexander's brigades. These last two were detailed to guard the settlements. 63

The great lines of the struggle, as they stand on the most trustworthy records of that time, are plainly truth opposed to sentimental fiction that grew around this stern frontier strug-

62. Smith, H. 159.
63. Ibid.
gle. Political bias also has helped to cloud the facts of the Black Hawk War. In a study of General Atkinson's career, there seems no need to reproduce such a detailed chronological sketch as can be read in Wakefield's, or Steven's or even Thwaites' antiquated chronicles. Instead, only those phases of the struggle in which his part is evident will be here considered. 64

General Atkinson scattered mounted men far and wide to make discoveries but there was not much definite information to be obtained. "The only calculations that could be made as to the next operations were that they would be in an impassable wilderness." 65 Marching through heavy mud, wading streams, drenched with torrential rains, sleeping on the sodden ground - all this was part of the price paid to gain in reality the Northwest already nominally ours. When possible at the close of each day, the troops encamped in the timber. Here they were protected by breastworks, though at all times they slept on their arms, for there was constant danger of a night attack. 66 When finally the outlet of Lake Kosh-ko-nong was reached on the 2nd of July, At-

64. Note: Thwaites says in a footnote on page 184: "Ford, pp 146-156, publishes some interesting correspondence showing that Dodge was disposed to claim more than his share of the honors of this and some other engagements in the war, and to ignore Henry as his superior officer. Those men under Dodge, who have written about the campaign ex­tol the merits of their chief; but in Illinois pioneer reminiscences, Henry is invariably the hero of the occa­sion."


66. Thwaites, 167.
kinson found a deserted Indian camp. Here he erected Fort Kosh-ko-nong as a base. 67

In the meantime, Dodge had reorganized his rangers, increasing the number to three hundred. General Atkinson then sent an order to him to join the main army on the Kosh-ko-nong. White Crow and thirty Winnebago offered to conduct Posey and Dodge, by way of the Four Lakes' route to Black Hawk's camp. They accepted the offer, and had almost reached the locality sought, when hurried and imperative orders from General Atkinson reached them. They were to come without delay to his camp on Bark River. Their prompt obedience saved them from a trap planned by White Crow's treachery. Had they trusted him farther, they would have been annihilated. 68

The expedition became more and more beset with obstacles. The greatest of these was the lack of sympathetic cooperation. Pessimistic views grew darker each day. Governor Reynolds, recognized and paid as a major-general, lost faith in the final outcome when the army reached the Illinois border, beyond whose safety lay unknown dangers. His staff, together with many citizen soldiers—prominent in Illinois, grew discouraged. They returned home, declaring that Black Hawk would never be captured. 69

67. Note: This fort was located on the outskirts of the present village of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. Wakefield, 85.
68. Thwaites, 168-169.
69. Ibid., 170.
By the middle of July the volunteer force was reduced to one half its original number.

Troubles thickened. On the same day General Atkinson sent Henry and Alexander with their brigades and Dodge's squadron to Fort Winnebago, the nearest supply point, eighty miles to the northwest, for much-needed provisions. Atkinson had realized that to attempt to penetrate further without adequate supplies would be rash. At the same time Posey was sent to Fort Hamilton to guard the mining country which Dodge's absence had left exposed.

THE ENCOUNTER AT WISCONSIN HEIGHTS

At Fort Winnebago, information furnished by willing Indians determined Henry and Dodge to return to Atkinson by way of Black Hawk's supposed camp. General Alexander's men refused to enter on this perilous expedition and insisted on obeying Atkinson's orders to return to camp. This they did, taking twelve days supply for the main army. The other two, following their own will in the matter, and taking only twelve day's supply for themselves sought out Black Hawk's camp. They found Black Hawk's recent camp, deserted, but overtook the Indians at Wisconsin Heights.

A battle ensued for which the volunteers crowned themselves with laurels, and yet permitted the elusive Indians to withdraw into the wilderness of the unknown country beyond the Wisconsin River.

70. Mahan, 170-171.
71. Cooke, 171.
Lieutenant Cooke says of this encounter:

After all their boasting, the simple fact was, that Black Hawk, although encumbered with the women, children, and baggage of his whole band, covering himself by a small party, had accomplished that most difficult of military operations, to wit, the passage of a river,—in the presence of three regiments of American volunteers! And they were now gone— the victors could not tell us whither. 72

As soon as Atkinson learned of the discovery of the trial of Black Hawk he set out in pursuit through severely inclement weather. When he reached the Blue Mounds— and the exulting volunteer victors he at once assumed command. At Helena, Wisconsin, all the Generals were united.

On the 27th of June General Atkinson started for the Kosh-kok-nong where Black Hawk was still believed to be encamped. On every side was the suggestion of peril which was to be their daily portion to the end of the campaign. It took men for such a campaign— hardy, fearless, tenacious of purpose, and thoroughly disciplined. Perhaps one of the bitterest trials Atkinson had to face was the flippant, superficial, unjust criticisms flung at the regular army by press and politicians. Lieutenant Cooke bitterly complained:

"I well remember reading in a National Intelligencer which some express-man had brought into the camp—a speech made by a Western senator who branded the regular army as "the sweepings of cities" (an untrue statement) etc. etc. and extolled the frontiers-men—militia-rangers—(our friends—the volunteers) as infinitely superior men who would be "here

72. Cooke, 170.
tonight and tomorrow 50 miles off"; who would subsist themselves, etc. Verily your politician excels in humbug." 73

In the face of the stern realities of frontier and Indian warfare of which the regulars bore the brunt, the attitude even of the Government seemed a testimonial of ingratitude. Yet it never changed the purpose of the men whose military record has stood the test of time. 74

Not all the criticism was adverse. The New York Evening Post, giving an excerpt from the St Louis Beacon of July 19th, said:

The approach of the Army to the recent stronghold of the Indians at the foot of Lake Kosh-ko-nong, we are informed, was attended with almost insurmountable difficulties... This information is of the 10th from the Frontier by a gentleman direct from the Army. The indefatigable and untiring efforts of General Atkinson to overcome the Indians - added to his high qualifications as an officer - are spoken of in the warmest terms of commendation by the whole Army. That he has done all that an experienced officer could do under the circumstances, is the opinion of every impartial man with whom we have communicated, and who is at all acquainted with the nature and conditions of the present scene of operations. 75

Anxiety over the dangers of the unknown is unavoidable.

While passing through an especially difficult country in Wisconsin.

73. Cooke, 167.
74. Ibid., 167.
   Smith, H., 161. Note: Captain Smith and Lieutenant Cooke were both on General Atkinson's Staff.
75. The New York Evening Post, August 1st, 1832.
sin just before the final conflict "It was stated that the General, for the four days during which we contended against these dangerous obstacles, with the whole Sac force but a few miles in our front, was in a great state of anxiety and apprehension for the result; and was anything but desirous of an opportunity of striking them on this ground". 76

THE BATTLE OF THE BAD AXE

By July 30, unmistakable signs proved that the army was gaining on the Indians. On the night of August 1st, Reveille sounded after two or three hours of sleep. Several hours of marching in the darkness followed. At dawn shots ahead confirmed the reports of the scouts. Smith says: "Our order of battle was promptly arranged under the supervision of General Atkinson, the center composed of the regular troops, about 380 in number and Dodge's corps, perhaps about 150. The right of the remains of Posey's and Alexander's militia brigades probably in all about 250 men; the left of Henry's brigade in numbers not far from 400 men..." 77

Some historians such as Thwaites and Wakefield, supposedly reliable chroniclers, see in this placing of Henry at the left and near the rear, an attempt on the part of General Atkinson to deprive him of an opportunity to distinguish himself. Thwaites says "this was clearly an additional affront to Henry". 79

76. Cooke, 178.  
77. Smith, H., 163.  
78. Wakefield, Appendix, 211.  
79. Thwaites, 188.
Governor Ford, in his history of the war, goes further in saying that Henry was detailed to guard the baggage. Bracken denies this and asserts Henry may have marched next to the baggage train of the regular army, but not as its guard. If Atkinson were jealous why did he assign Dodge's command to the post of honor, the advance guard, supported by the regular soldiers under Colonel Zachary Taylor? Bracken says: "It cannot be questioned that General Atkinson and Brady, Colonels Taylor and Davenport and the officers of the regular army serving under them were well qualified to judge of the qualities and merits of Dodge and Henry - no newspaper puffs impose on them." 80

Peter Parkinson Jr. corroborates Bracken's statements. He says further: "It is only necessary to mention the fact that after the battle at this place was over, General Atkinson met General Henry and Dodge both at the same time and taking each of them by the hand, said, with much warmth and feeling, 'My brave fellows, you have forced me on to victory!'" 81 Bracken criticizes Ford's account of the Battle of the Bad Axe. He says:


Note: Peter Parkinson Jr. bases his argument upon information obtained from Colonel Daniel Parkinson who commanded a company under General Dodge and who was an intimate friend of both Dodge and Henry.
"From Ford's account of the battle of the Bad Axe, it would also appear as if the action was alone fought and won by Henry and his brigade while Atkinson with the regular soldiers and Dodge's volunteers were following up the river". But Lieutenant Cooke says that the latter shared more largely in the engagement, for it so happened by chance that Henry's men came into the encounter first. The others came upon the scene later simply because of the distance they had to come. The battle was a desperately fought engagement lasting three long hours. At length, the Indians were overwhelmed, most of them being either killed or drowned in attempting to cross the Mississippi. Then General Atkinson, according to Cooke, "very humanely issued orders to stop the further effusion of blood".

Two days after the battle General Atkinson provisioned a force of Sioux and Winnebago Indians and sent them to track Black Hawk and bring him in as a prisoner. Then he went down to Fort Crawford with the army. For some time he had doubted the loyalty of the Winnebago, and, holding council with the principal chiefs of the tribe and a few of the Menominees, he bluntly accused the former of disloyalty. Prisoners taken in battle were a sure indication of the truth of the accusation. Atkinson

82. Bracken, 412.
83. Cooke, 184.
84. Ibid., 188.
85. Wakefield, 140.
86. Ibid., 142.
then had a talk with one of the chief men of the Menominees who had never been at war with the United States. In tactful, friendly words he pointed out the advantages that peace with the government would bring to the tribe. His plea was successful, and promises were made by the chief. Then came a unique request. Addressing General Atkinson as Father, the chief begged him to give each of his young men a pair of shoes, as their feet were worn out with walking. He then explained naively that "horses" were the shoes he solicited. On August 5, Atkinson sent to General Headquarters a report of events from the crossing of the Wisconsin, July 28, to the final encounter on August 2.

GENERAL SCOTT ARRIVES

The nature of the warfare and of the country together with the defaulting of the volunteers before the war had actually begun determined the War Department early in the campaign to reinforce the wholly inadequate number of regulars at the scene of action. Major General Scott was directed to go to Chicago where all the available forces of the seaboard and the lakes were to be concentrated. Some of the troops reached the place within eighteen days, a rather quick movement for those days. But cholera, (said to have been brought down from Canada), was contracted on shipboard, detained the troops at Fort Dearborn until the term of fighting was practically over.

87. Wakefield 142.
General Scott, finding it impossible to bring his troops into the field, left Colonel Eustis in command at Chicago and started for the scene of action. He was not far from General Atkinson's army when it was at Lake Kosh-ko-nong, but it is said that "he magnanimously refrained from assuming a nominal command, which would have deprived General Atkinson of the credit of closing the war of which impracticableness of the militia, and the intrinsic difficulties of the campaign - for which no allowance was made by an impatient chieftain, wrought upon by the ignorance and criminal folly of demagogues, had well-nigh robbed him." 89

General Scott had reached Dixon's Ferry when the news of the final battle reached him. He continued to come westward and soon arrived at Prairie du Chien. Colonel Eustis followed with General Scott's troops, those who had survived. "They could serve to swell the command of the new general commanding, and add to the pageant of the treaty of settlement of the affairs of the now subdued and humbled Sac band." 90 The wounded were left at Prairie du Chien. The army descended to Rock Island where they arrived on the 9th of August. Captain Smith says:

89. Cooke.

Note: This statement as to Scott's reason for delay is confirmed by Mr. Thomas Kearny of New York, author of General Philip Kearny; Battle Soldier of Five Wars, New York: Putnam and Company, February, 1937. In a letter to the present writer, Mr. Kearny says: "This is a bit of historical gossip but I give it for what it is worth."

90. Cooke, 193.—Smith, 164.
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90. Cooke, 193.- Smith, 164.
Indeed it is astonishing how perfectly healthy the troops had been during much and great exposure to the ordinary causes of sickness. Up to this time not a death from disease had occurred during the campaign among the regular troops... It has never been the fortune of the writer Captain Smith during a service of twenty years, to witness for a length of time the conduct of any command so perfectly exemplary. 91

COLONEL ATKINSON'S RETURN TO ST. LOUIS

On the 15th of August, General Atkinson with his staff left on the steamboat Warrior for St. Louis. Black Hawk, who had been brought in by the Indians, was sent down to Jefferson Barracks in another steamer under the custody of Lieutenant Jefferson Davis.

On August 20th a letter came from a committee of gentlemen in St. Louis inviting General Atkinson to attend a public dinner in St. Louis, to be given as a testimonial of appreciation for the splendid services the General and his army had rendered during the Indian war. The committee spoke in the name of the citizens of St. Louis who were justly proud of their fellow citizen. He was asked to designate the time most convenient for him. They begged his acceptance of this honor that would best show their confidence and respect for the leader who had so nobly proved himself.

To this cordial letter, General Atkinson sent the following courteous reply, before returning to Fort Armstrong:

91. Smith, H. 165.
Jefferson Barracks.
20 Aug. 1832.

Gentlemen:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your highly complimentary note, inviting me in behalf of my fellow-citizens of St. Louis to a public dinner, at such time as I may designate.

Such a proof of their approbation at any time would be highly gratifying, but at the present, while still suffering under the recollection of vexations and perplexities, incident to the duty which it has recently been my lot to discharge, and to which it is only necessary at this time to allude, I need hardly say it is peculiarly so, and that I receive it with sincere gratitude.

The very limited time allowed me here, and the necessity for my immediate return to the Army above (where it is possible that active operations may still be deemed necessary) oblige me, at present, to decline the compliment you offer me.

You have kindly urged me (personally) that, if not now convenient, I should on my arrival again from the army accept the invitation; this I cheerfully do, should I return still in the possession of the confidence and favor you have manifested.

For the approbation expressed by you, of the conduct of the officers and soldiers under my command during the late campaign in the Indian country, I offer you their thanks. It will, I know, be duly appreciated by them, after the toils, fatigues and exposures under which they have suffered. I cannot omit the opportunity of assuring you, and my fellow citizens generally, that the token of their favor in this instance is justly bestowed as well in relation to the militia volunteers under my command, as to the officers and soldiers of the regular army.

I request of you to convey my acknowledgments to my fellow citizens whom you represent; and to accept for yourselves, individually, assu-
In the meantime all the troops moved down to Fort Armstrong where Scott's troops, not sufficiently recovered from the cholera suffered another siege of the dread disease. Atkinson's troops were likewise affected. This delayed the peace council until September. The conference was held across the river at the site of the present city of Davenport. The Winnebago, who had secretly sympathized with and aided Black Hawk, and the Sacs and Foxes were summoned. By the treaty "the whole country east of the Mississippi called the 'Mining district', and a large tract on the bank, probably on the whole about 8,000,000 acres was ceded to the United States".

The Winnebago were treated with first. On the 15th of September they signed a treaty by which they ceded all their land east of the Mississippi and agreed to take in exchange the Neutral Ground in Iowa and Minnesota, plus certain annuities. The Sacs and Foxes signed on the 21st. The treaty of 1804 was reaffirmed, but they had to cede also a strip of land west of the Mississippi, first known as Scott's Purchase and later as the...
Black Hawk Purchase. This western tract formed the nucleus of the State of Iowa. As a reward for non-participation in the war, Keokuk was given the land known as Keokuk's reserve. The removals contemplated by these treaties were to be effected by June, 1833. The War cost the government more than three million dollars.

In spite of the hardships, lack of cooperation, and criticism, General Atkinson had added another creditable page to his record as a faithful servant of his country in the difficult task of protecting its frontier. The less turbulent events of the concluding decade of his career will form the final chapter.

94. Mahan, 176.
CHAPTER VI

PROBLEMS OF FRONTIER DEFENSE: INDIAN REMOVALS

In summing up the life of General Atkinson, we encounter the difficulty of finding sufficient and clearly defined data. The best picture of the man is given in the letters — his own, those of his friends, and the official letters from Headquarters. He was a forceful figure, hidden rather than revealed by the outstanding importance of the work that he pushed through with resolute patience and energy. Perhaps no higher compliment can be given him than this.

(A): PERMANENT COMMANDER OF JEFFERSON BARRACKS

The *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, record General Atkinson in 1830 as permanent commander of Jefferson Barracks.¹ The exact time of the appointment is not given. But the duties assigned to him at this post bespeak the confidence of his superior officers both in his ability and his personal worth. The charges entrusted to him involved not only the business connected with the First Department of the West, but also the training

¹ *American State Papers, Military Affairs*. Vol. IV, 875.
of the young officers. These were the most promising of the West Point graduates, chosen by the War Department to be sent to Jefferson Barracks to receive the special training under the veteran commander. Such a trust indicates the high standing of General Atkinson in military circles. The most distinguished of the veterans of the War of 1812 were also sent to end their days at this beautiful place. General Atkinson had seen clearly that the chief disadvantages encountered by the regular troops in the Black Hawk War were due to the fact that they were not mounted. The realization of this state of affairs convinced the War Department that a mounted regiment was necessary in the West. In 1833, a year too late, it is true, the United States Regiment of Dragoons was organized at Jefferson Barracks.

In 1835, the Seminole War began a seven year course in Florida. The Sixth Infantry was ordered from Jefferson Barracks to the scene of action. For the first time in the case of an expedition of importance, General Atkinson did not lead his men. His duties as Commander of the First Department of the West kept him on the frontier. He must have felt keenly his inability to be at the head of his men at this time. In addition to the regulars, the War Department had asked for 1000 Missouri volunteers. The response was generous and immediate. They rode in from all parts of the plains to encamp at Jefferson Barracks until their organi-

2. Worth.
3. Ibid.
zation was completed. Here they learned to love the commander, a devotion shown later by their grief at his death. In Florida, they joined with the regulars and Indian allies to make up the force of 4000 men fighting in that war. Only 2458 men were kept in reserve to guard the frontier. These soldiers were scattered at some twenty posts averaging 150 to 200 men at each post. 4

(B): FRONTIER PROBLEMS OF DEFENSE, 1832-1842

Indian tribes had been steadily moving across the Mississippi. By 1836, 31,348 had migrated. 5 Considering that there were 150,000 Indians within striking distance of the frontier, it is not to be wondered at that the western people were apprehensive. They resented the clearing of the East of Indians to the disadvantage of the West. 6 Each new tribe that came was a possible danger point - for it came under protest, unwilling to exchange its eastern home for a western land already occupied by western tribes. The fact that 62,000 Indians were yet to be removed to the West did not help the situation. 7 The men in power at Washington - at least those of them cognizant of frontier affairs - realized clearly the necessity of furnishing more effective protection in the West. Colonel Richard M. Johnson of the

5. Ibid., 154.
6. Abel, 343.
Committee on Military Affairs submitted a report to the House of Representatives March 3, 1836. He pleaded for the establishment of a line of posts and military roads for the defense of the western frontiers against the Indians. The plan, if carried out, he urged, would be both economical and effectual. It would embrace Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The expense would be insignificant compared with the ultimate results and benefits.

It will be recalled that Calhoun had written and spoken in a similar strain in behalf of road building for the development and defense of the interior of the country. Indeed, as has been seen, Atkinson had received Calhoun's approval for roads in the West. But Congress voted against the funds, on the plea of economy. One wonders therefore, if anything more was accomplished by this later project than the presentation of the report. In a letter to Colonel Dodge, Governor of Wisconsin Territory, L.F. Linn and A.G. Harrison state: "In the discussion which we have heard on the floor of Congress upon the subject [of defense and road building], opinions have been advanced very wide from those we hold ourselves, directly impeaching the existence of any necessity for the further protection, without which, we firmly believe, our frontier citizens are doomed..."

these opinions[9] the all sufficient argument of economy[9] is used...

To counteract this opposition, the members of Congress in favor of defense attempted to back up their arguments by deeds as well as words. Letters were sent to the Higher Officers of the Army, requesting facts relative to the Posts and Military Forces required for the Western Frontier. Letters were also sent to the more eminent Indian Agents. It is interesting to note that all the letters written in answer to the above request are in favor of the proposed defenses. General Gaines gave a pertinent idea when he said:

Indians...deeply wounded and exasperated at what they deem to be our hostility and injustice in urging them to abandon the lands of their ancestors...are prepared for a spirited attack...sufficiently numerous when combined to lay waste hundreds of miles of our frontier settlements in a shorter time than the news of their hostility could possibly reach the seat of the federal government. 10

General Jesup's reply, too, vindicates the plans of Calhoun and Atkinson of 1819. He says:

The ill-judged economy which arrested the measures projected for the defense of the frontier in 1819, and broke down the army in 1821, has caused all the difficulties which have occurred with the Indians since. Had those measures been carried out and the force then in service retained, com-

petent garrisons might have been placed wherever necessary... bloodshed, devastation and consequent expense, attending three Indian campaigns might have been avoided... 11

The Secretary of War, Lewis Cass, sent a very long report to Senator Benton, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs. He gave a lengthy description of the proposed road connecting all the forts in a line, which he favored. He advised the adoption of a systematic plan for the protection of the frontier, a thing which had now become feasible as it was possible to draw a line of demarcation. Hitherto posts had been established as circumstances required, and positions were selected for geographical advantages following the uneven tongues of settlement as they pushed westward. 12

The letter sent to General Atkinson read:

From your thorough knowledge of the conditions of the frontier and the Indian and his character we should be happy therefore to be favored with your views on this subject at length. 13

L F. Linn
A. G. Harrison

General Atkinson's reply began; "being long familiar with the extent of our frontier and the number and character of the border Indians, I feel no hesitation in answering your inquiries, with a strong confidence in my judgment on the subject." There followed a description of the number and location of the tribes

12. Ibid., 150-152.
13. Ibid., 957.
son Barracks, he submitted simultaneous but separate reports to Major General Macomb, and to General William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs. 16

THE WINNEBAGO

The treaty with the Winnebago at the close of the Black Hawk War had stipulated that these were to remove west by June, 1833. "But fear of collisions with the Sioux, and Sauk and Fox parties then scouring the Neutral Ground in search of one another as well as the influence of the traders, had blocked all efforts to place the Winnebago in the Iowa country." 17 In November, 1837, a deputation of Winnebago chiefs and braves journeyed to Washington to make another treaty with the government. By autumn of 1839, in spite of all this parleying, only a few bands had crossed over the river. Most of them still clung to their old homes. Finally, in March, 1840, a resolution was passed by the Senate, asking the Secretary of War to explain why the Winnebago had not been removed to their reservation in Iowa. It was replied that the preceding month General Atkinson had al-

17. Mahan, 217.
ready been given orders to remove them to the Neutral Ground, by force if that became necessary.  

General Atkinson had under his command the Eighth Infantry under Colonel William J. Worth, a strong detachment from Fort Crawford under Brigadier General Brooks, and a troop of dragoons under Captain Edwin V. Sumner. Several bands were gathered at the Portage of the Wisconsin River and escorted to Prairie du Chien. Little or no difficulty was experienced with the greater number. With the exception of a few cases coercive measures were unnecessary. When they had crossed over the river, they pitched their tents on the banks of the river and expressed great aversion to going any further. General Atkinson humanely permitted them to remain until fall because an epidemic of dysentery added to their distress. They were in a pitiable condition. When autumn came, they were still averse to moving into the Neutral Ground. General Atkinson promised to carry all their property and their sick in wagons at government expense, but they were obdurate. Whiskey sellers and mercenary traders were one cause of their refusal to go to the Turkey River site. As a last resort, the Government refused to pay their next annuities anywhere except at their new agency. This was a potent factor in obtaining the

A force of 400 troops was stationed at a new military post in the Neutral Ground which was built the following summer on Turkey River, (now in Winneshiek County, Iowa). The post completed in the spring of 1841 was given the name of Fort Atkinson. There were rumors of a warlike attitude on the part of the Sacs and Foxes. General Dodge feared that the Winnebago would attempt to return to Wisconsin. He urged the sending of a mounted force to protect the Winnebago. Barracks and stable accommodations as well as forage would be needed. As it would be impossible to obtain the latter before the middle of May, General Atkinson ordered additional infantry troops from Fort Crawford to go there until provision could be made for the cavalry. The Fort was not fully completed until 1842. In 1843 negotiations were begun owing to the pressure of settlers pushing into the State of Iowa, to induce the Winnebago to move into a new home in Minnesota. This was effected by February, 1849. The need for Fort Atkinson was thus ended and after its short period of use-


fulness, the post was abandoned to a single caretaker. Today the site of the old Fort Atkinson is a state park.  

This post, like many others which were established prior to the Civil War and until the frontier disappeared from American history, was of a temporary character. All these forts were built of local material by soldier labor and with little cost to the government. Many of them endured, however, long after the need for them had passed. From a military standpoint their retention was unwarranted. In many cases local influence prevented their abandonment. The troops were a source of revenue which the communities in which they were stationed were loath to give up. Again and again came up the question of the abolition of posts whose raison d'etre had long since vanished. In 1915, the Government was no nearer to action on the subject. Had such posts disappeared with the necessity which brought them into being, we should probably have no such list as that given in the Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army of posts named in honor of General Atkinson. These are:

Atkinson, Fort, Fla. — — — — On Suwanee River
Atkinson, Camp, Ga. — — — — At Atlanta
Atkinson, Fort, Iowa — — — — On Turkey River near mouth of Spring Creek, Winneshiek County; now town of that name.
Atkinson, Fort, Kans. — — — — On Arkansas River, in Ford County. (24)

Years after Fort Atkinson, Nebraska, was abandoned, a dispute arose as to its exact location. Father De Smet, that old traveller of Indian trails, was appealed to for information. "In 1839," he wrote, "I stood on the bluff on which the old fort was built in 1819; some rubbish and a few remains of the old fort were still visible, and some remaining roots of asparagus were still growing in the old garden." Father De Smet came too late on the scene ever to have visited the fort in its heyday. But it had been assigned to his Brother Jesuits as a base of operations when they reentered western territory in 1823 after an absence of fifty years.

Calhoun counted on their beneficial influence over the Indians. Their jurisdiction, however, by its very vastness, and the rapid growth of Catholicism, was destined to be as short lived as the Fort.

The site of the Fort which is now the town of Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, is some three miles inland. The fickle Missouri which

at that time moored steamboats at the landing below the fort now flows three miles to the eastward. It is interesting to note that the first steamboat to sail past the landing on a journey north, the Yellowstone, did not make the trip to Fort Union until 1832. Maximilian, the accurate and discriminating recorder of travels, visited the ruins in 1833. He says: "At present there are only the chimneys, and, in the centre, a brick storehouse under roof. Everything of value had been carried off by the Indians. He was not repeating idle rumor when he said that the situation was much more favorable than that of Fort Leavenworth for observing the Indians. This statement is corroborated by General T.S. Jesup. After giving the distances from the Fort to the various tribes, he goes on to say in a report to the Commanding General in 1836:

During the whole time it was held by our troops scarcely an instance occurred of difficulty between the Indians enumerated and our traders or other citizens. From the number of tribes it may control, I consider it the most important military position on the Missouri; and whether we establish other posts or not, it should be seized and maintained.  

Like most of the advice of the army officers of those days the

recommendation was evaded. The post was never re-occupied. Later it became known as Fort Calhoun, why no one seems to know. For another Fort Calhoun was in building in Virginia when the town now built on the site was so designated.

Fort Atkinson, Iowa, on Turkey River, and Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, at the head of Lake Kosh-ko-nong, can still be found on the map. Yet none of the posts bearing the name do adequate honor to it. One does not grudge General Leavenworth the fort that is named after him, but it would be more fitting that a greater man, General Atkinson, should have had a more enduring, more recognized monument. Strange as it may seem, there stands in the Rock River country, which Atkinson freed for the white settlement, not a statue of the deliverer, but one of Black Hawk, as an ironical reminder of the deeds of the past by which he was divested of his lands. There is no accounting for historical freaks.

Note: When Colonel Benjamin Walker Atkinson, grandson of the General, returned from the Marne in France, the Secretary of War ordered him to go to Fort Omaha to speak at the Centenary Celebration held in honor of the building of Fort Atkinson. It was a fitting eulogy, that of the grandson who had seen overseas service and was soon to die of its effects, coming to give tribute to his illustrious grandfather; and his own son, disobeying orders, fled from college at the outbreak of the World War. He entered the Marines, though he was still a boy, to carry on the military tradition of his family - Captain Benjamin Walker Atkinson, now stationed at San Diego.
The last years of General Atkinson seem to have been comparatively uneventful, if a judgment may be based on the absence of recorded incidents. Just before leaving for the Indian country in 1840, the General had made his will. It, too, reveals the man, his care for his beloved wife, and his thought for his son's future:

Being about to visit the Indian country and knowing the uncertainty of human life... I give to my wife, Mary B. Atkinson and to my son Edward Graham Atkinson the whole of my real and personal estate to be equally divided between them when my son, Edward Graham Atkinson, shall become twenty-one years of age, during his minority my wife, Mary B. Atkinson shall receive and be entitled to the whole income of the estate arising from rents, interest on money, and hiring of negroes, she being subject out of the same to pay the sums necessary to give my son a good classical education and good and sufficient clothing and subsistence. At the age of 16 it is my desire that he be placed at the Military Academy, West Point, to finish his education, when he is to be allowed to choose his own profession in life... Given under my hand at Jefferson Barracks, this 14th day of April, 1840. 32

Henry Atkinson.

Witnesses: S.G. DeCamp
            R.H. Graham

Four days before his death on June 14th 1842, it is known from Richard H. Graham's testimony that the General became delirious. More than that cannot be learned of the last year and last days of his life. 33

32. Recorded in Will Book C, St. Louis Probate Court, 50.
33. From material supplied by Mr. W. J. Ghent.
On June 16, 1842, the obituary notice appeared in the Missouri Republican. It contained absolutely no biographical data.

Funeral of General Henry Atkinson will take place this morning (Thursday, June 16th) from his residence at Jefferson Barracks, to the family burying ground in the vicinity... The Volunteer Companies will attend the funeral. There are but a small number of U.S. Troops at the Barracks and we are pleased to see the alacrity with which the Volunteer Companies have turned out to pay the respect due to the memory of one so known and so honorably identified with the military of the country.

It is proper to remark that the Steamboat Lebanon, lying at the foot of Market Street, will go down to the Barracks today and return after the funeral. Persons who wish to avoid the dust and fatigue of going by land will find this a comfortable means of being present. She takes down the military.

The Dictionary of American Biography summarises his life-work in terms which, lacking the fulsomeness that connotes insincerity, ring true to the facts as history has preserved them:

He was highly regarded by those who knew him, and his funeral was largely attended by volunteer companies and private friends from St. Louis. He is praised by Chittenden for his uniform exhibition of practical good sense... His name is inseparably connected with the earlier period of the conquest of the frontier, and the part he bore is equalled in importance by that of no contemporary with the possible exception of William Clark.

"Military renown and glory seldom follow our frontier soldiers"

34. Missouri Republican, June 16, 1842.
   Billon, 428, 429.
over their western trails." The life and death of General Atkinson attest this. But between the terse unemotional official notices one reads the virile character of the man who consistently merged his own identity in his duty to his country. The line of forts that bore his name is in itself a noble epitaph. His memory has no stain upon it.

Men of his mettle embody more than any other pioneer type the conserving influence of law and order. This is how and why they accomplished these Herculean tasks and safeguarded the struggling young nation. Exploration, protection of surveying parties, guardianship of wagon trains, building forts, maintenance of garrisons in remote wilds, rescue of endangered settlers; these are the things they accomplished on the frontier, inconspicuous, but vital. The orders that came from headquarters at Washington were passed onward and downward through the department commanders. They were unflinchingly executed by those whom they reached no matter what this execution might cost in life or hardship. The criticism of local politicians or distant government officials never deterred them from duty.

The letter from Headquarters given in full below exemplifies


the truth that reserve in speaking of a man's achievement may be the highest praise:

Head Quarters of the Army,
Adjutant General's Office,
Washington, June 25th, 1842.

General Orders)
No. 37 )

After a brief interval, it has become the principal duty of the General in Chief to announce to the Army the death of another of its most valued and distinguished members—Brevet Brigadier General Atkinson departed this life at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis—the 14th inst.—at the end of a long career of usefulness and honor.

The deceased entered the Army, a captain, in 1808, in contemplation of the war with Great Britain that followed and in which he served with zeal and credit. By the mere force of merit, he became a general officer in 1820—in which capacity he was often employed on special missions requiring enterprise, skill, gallantry and judgment, and always with perfect success. In the Black Hawk war his fine qualities as a commander, were strikingly displayed,—as well in the final battle, as in all the previous arrangements and operations.

The eminence here briefly sketched, had, for its foundation, every virtue of the good citizen—high patriotism, integrity, honor, manliness and devotion to the political institutions of his country.

The loss of so much public and private worth cannot fail to be long mourned by the whole Army.

As appropriate military honors to the memory of the deceased, each separate post within his late geographical department, will fire minute guns, and also display at half staff the national flag, from meridian to sun-down, on the day next after the receipt of this order.

The usual badge of mourning has, no doubt, already been adopted by the troops late under the command of the deceased.

By command of Major General Scott.

(Signed) R. Jones
Adj. Genl.

Official J.C. Reid
A.W. Camp
(illegible, third name)

38. Photostat Copy of General Orders No. 37. Supplied by the Army War College.

PRIMARY SOURCES:


American State Papers. 1789-1837; First series, twenty-one volumes; Second series, seventeen volumes.
- "Claims", one volume.
- "Commerce and Navigation", two volumes.
- "Finances", five volumes.
- "Foreign Relations", 1789-1828, six volumes.
- "Indian Affairs", 1789-1827, two volumes.
- "Military Affairs", 1789-1838, seven volumes.
- "Miscellaneous Affairs", two volumes.
- "Naval Affairs", four volumes.
- "Post-Office Affairs", one volume.
- "Public Lands", 1789-1837, eight volumes.

"The two volumes on Indian Affairs... selected and edited by Walter Lowrie and Walter S. Franklin under the authority of Congress and published by Gales and Seaton, are the most valuable printed source of information about the Indians during the early years of the United States Government... For the student of Indian political relations with the United States Government the American State Papers are not only a primary, but also an original source, since many of the papers from which their contents were copied or extracted seem to have disappeared entirely." Abel, 414.


Watkins, Albert (Editor). "First Steamboat Trial up the Missouri." Publications of the State Historical Society. Lincoln, Nebraska: Published by the Society, 1913. Vol.XVII. 162-200. This article contains many direct quotations from old newspapers and from the Atkinson letters published as documents in the case of claims against James Johnson.

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