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The Fur Trade around Ft. Wayne

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The Fur Trade around Ft. Wayne

A dissertation presented as partial requirement
for the Degree of Master of Arts in
History

THE FUR TRADE AROUND FT. WAYNE

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Butler University

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PLAN OF PAPER

I. Introduction.
II. French control of Maumee-Wabash fur trade.
III. English-French struggle for control of trade 1700-1763.
IV. English-American struggle for control of trade 1763-1796.
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   1. Fur trade in general 1800-1830
   2. Struggle of the Ewing Brothers for control of trade 1830-1845.
Continuous Water Route
(Except Portage, marked + of 8 miles)
from the Atlantic Ocean to
the Gulf of Mexico.

MAUMEE—WABASH PORTAGE

Two factors have contributed to the important position
Fort Wayne has occupied in the political and economic
society:

first, the location upon the "Great American Waterway" and
second, the great number of waterways found along the streams
that flow from the interior, so that
portages assumed tremendous importance. Savages realized
this, and portages became the mainstays of their battles, just
as they became the points of contention on the part of the
white men later. The Wabash portage in particular
was significant, being the connecting link in the
second continuous water route from the Atlantic Ocean to
the Gulf of Mexico, from the Fort Wayne area south
across the Maumee to Lake Erie, up the St. Joseph
River and its branches northward to Michigan, or up the St. Mary's
southwardly, thence by portage to the Great Miami to the
Ohio River, or up the Wabash or Allegheny.

From the junction of the St. Joseph's and
Wabash was the annual journey across a seven mile
portage—launch a canoe in the Little River, a branch of
the Maumee, down to the Ohio to the Mississippi to the Gulf.

From a very early period the portage was to the Indians as
Little Turtle at the Greenville conference "the glorious
gate through which all the good words of our chiefs have had
Two factors have contributed to the important position
Ft. Wayne has occupied in the political and economic history
of North America—first, its location upon the "most famous
portage in North America," and second, the great abundance
of fur-bearing animals found along the streams and in the
forests of this region.

Until the nineteenth century inland rivers and lakes
alone provided highways of travel into the interior, so that
portages assumed tremendous importance. Savages realized
this, and portages became the scenes of their battles, just
as they became the points of contention on the part of the
white men later. The "Maumee-Wabash portage in particular
was significant, because it was the connecting link in the
shortest continuous water route from the Atlantic Ocean to
the Gulf of Mexico; from the Port Wayne cross roads one
could "go down the Maumee to Lake Erie, up the St. Joseph
and its branches northward to Michigan; or up the St. Mary's
southeasterly, there by portage to the Great Miami to the
Ohio to Pittsburg, or up the Monongahela or Allegheny.

----------or from the junction of the St. Joseph's and
St. Mary's (Ft. Wayne) southeasterly across a seven mile
portage——launch a canoe in the Little River; a branch of
the Wabash, down to the Ohio to the Mississippi to the Gulf.

From a very early period the portage was to the Indians as
to Little Turtle at the Greenville Conference "the glorious
gate through which all the good words of our chiefs have had
The streams reaching from the St. Marys portage into the bay of Lake Erie swarmed with salmon, the very name of which evoked the wonder of the American voyagers. These were the salmon of the American native tribe, and the Americans were in the midst of fish. The salmon were caught by the method of setting the farthestDr. J. W. M. M. C.

THE NORTHWEST TO 1800

From "Readings in Indian History" No. 14746.
to pass, from north to south and from the East to the West."

The streams reaching from the Ft. Wayne portage into the heart of the continent abounded in beaver and muskrat, the vast forests were filled with deer; raccoons, wild cat and bear; while mink and otter for luxury furs, could be trapped by the thousands—the abundance of such fur bearing animals proven by the fact that for over a century and a half after the introduction of the gun into the forests the fur trade was the central interest of the territory and was carried on to the point of extermination. Small wonder then, that the Indian, the Frenchmen, the English and the Americans realized the great advantage of the spot and fought for its control.

The first Indian settlement in the vicinity of Ft. Wayne was that of the Miamis who gave to their village the name Ke-Ki-onga, meaning blackberry patch. The Miami village extended principally along the St. Joseph and reached to within a short distance of the confluence of that river with the St. Mary's. Charles B. Leselle notes that "When the Miamis were first visited by the French authorities at Chicago in 1870, they were then a very powerful nation. Of all their villages, Ke-Ki-onga was considered by the Miamis as most important—as it was the largest and most powerful of their possessions and was situated near the headwaters of the Wabash, the Miami[Maumee] and the St. Joseph of Lake Michigan."

The first and best accounts of the Miamis comes undoubtedly from the Jesuit Fathers in the 'Jesuit Relations.' From that source it is learned that in 1855, from the Mission of
St. Michael (west shore of "Lake Michigan") came a report of a colony of 24,000 Miamis in southwest Michigan and northern Indiana. By 1682 the site of Ft. Wayne was occupied by the Miskas-ons and the Ottawas (Miami branches) for in a letter from Jean de Lamberville to Frontenac he fears the annihilation by the Iroquois of the Miamis and their neighbors on the headwaters of the Maumee.

The character of the Miami when free from the contamination of the white men seems to have been high. Father Claude Alloney refers to them as "gentle, sedate and affable, with language in harmony with dignity." They seldom disturbed the game in the forests until the coming of the hunting season, usually about the first of November; during the season they hunted beaver, raccoon, bear, deer and in the earlier days, buffalo, for food and for their skins. For authority that buffalo prevailed in the Maumee-Wabash region, Griswold cites a letter from Father Gabriel Marest in which he says "the quantity of buffalo and bear on the Oubache is incredible" and again from La Salle "The multitude of buffalo is beyond belief—I have seen 1500 of them killed in eight days by a single band of Indians." During the period of disputed possession of the Maumee-Wabash portage the Miamis were allies of the French and foes of the English—later they allied themselves with the English against the Americans. The fear of ultimate ruin made them unite themselves with fierce intensity against a foe whose western movement meant for the Indian, extermination.

Authorities differ as to when the white man first had knowledge of the portage and as to when he made his first settlement there. In Griswold's Pictorial History of Ft.
Wayne are copies of maps (taken from Windsor's Narrative and Critical History of America) which trace the growth of geographical knowledge of the region of the Ft. Wayne's rivers. On Champlain's map of 1632 the Maumee, St. Joseph and St. Mary's rivers appear. This does not mean, however, that Champlain ever visited these places—it is rather believed that he gained his knowledge of them from Indians, but their presence on the map certainly prove the importance of these rivers as a connecting waterway into the interior. Again, the Nicolas Sanson map of 1656 shows the Maumee River, the site of Ft. Wayne, Lakes Michigan and Huron, the St. Lawrence, Long Island, Cape Cod and the Chesapeake Bay. And finally in 1674 Louis Jollet's map (note included illustration) pictures in uncertain relation to each other, not only the site of Ft. Wayne, with its adjacent rivers, but also the Ohio and Wabash rivers, Lakes Ontario, Erie, Michigan, Huron and Superior, on to the Illinois, Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers to the westward. Authorities again differ as to the first French settlement on the site of Fort Wayne. That La Salle was acquainted with the portage is shown by a letter in 1680, in which he made a report to the Canadian government as follows: "there is, at the head of Lake Erie, ten leagues below the Strait (Detroit River?) a river by which we could shorten the route to Illinois very much." And in another letter, he speaks of a short cut route as "shortest of all." This statement however, is questioned by E. L Taylor of Columbus, Ohio, as probable, but not certain to be true. Judge Law in his Colonial History of Vincennes concludes
that the French made their first settlement there about 1710-1711. After taking into consideration the advantages of the portage for communication, the nearness of the point to the lakes and the abundance of game in the vicinity, Brice believes that a settlement was made at the confluence of the rivers (Ft. Wayne) prior to that of Vincennes—possibly a temporary post was established by 1682. This conclusion is based upon a statement (in Western Annals p.62-63) that La Salle "following along the watershed or divide which separates the streams that flow into the Ohio River from those that flow into Lake Erie," reached his destination in safety. From the same source Brice finds that La Salle spent the fall of 1679 in the erection of a fort at the mouth of St. Joseph's river, 'sounding the channel of that stream' and established "a depot for supplies and goods." 2. 

Again, Brice finds authority for his belief in the establishment of a post at Ft. Wayne in the 17th century, from Father Hennepin who in 1698 (States and Territories of the Great West, pp. 68-69) writes "the route by the Maumee and Wabash is the most direct to the great River." Also Father Hennepin gives an interesting account of the erection of a post within the territories of the Miami and connects the building of the post with the fur trade by recounting the difficulties met in the work of converting the Miami Indians---among which difficulties seem to have been "the traders who deal commonly with the savages to gain by their traffic-------they use all manner of stratagems to get the furs of the savages cheap. They
make use of lies and cheats to gain double if they can. This without a doubt, causes an aversion against a religion, which they see accompanied by the professors of it with so many artifices and deceits."

In 1684 M. de La Barre, Governor General of Canada, remonstrated to the English authorities at Albany because the Iroquois had been 'intermeddling' with the rights and property of French traders. Later in a council held with the Five Nations De La Barre accused the Iroquois of robbing and beating the French traders as they "moved westward." Thus, by the early days of the 18th century France had laid claim to all soil lying between Canada and New Mexico, and to give protection and impetus to the fur trade, then becoming extensive, together with a desire to convert the Indians, the French government had proceeded to erect forts and trading posts at points best suited for such. Dillon in his researches is authority for the statement, "The Miami villages which stood at the head of the river Maumee, the Wea villages near Ouiatene, on the Wabash and the Piankeshaw village (near where Vincennes is now) were, it seems regarded by the early French fur traders as suitable places for establishing trading posts. It is probable that temporary trading posts were erected on the sites of Fort Wayne, Ouiatene and Vincennes before the end of the year 1719. These points had, it is believed, been often visited by traders before 1700."
The dual nature (military and commercial) of the post is shown in the activities of the first commandant, Jean Baptiste Bissot, Sieur de Vincennes who probably came to the Maumee about 1697, at the time the Miamis were removed to the site of Ft. Wayne. In instructions received and to carry the merchandising from trading posts to the Bissot was ordered to keep the enemy from the post and to "think more about fighting than trading." Bissot apparently had been engaged in the forbidden trade in beaver, which trade was always reserved for the home government. The predominant interest of the early fur trade as an element of French occupation is also demonstrated by the purely commercial nature of the Cadillac post at Detroit which seems to have been occupied to "maintain the trade in beaver skins" for shipment to Montreal and thence to France. The extent of the fur trade can be measured by the fact that Cadillac offered 10,000 livres for the exclusive right for its control at Detroit. In records of this post it has been found that in 1702 twenty-thousand skins were shipped from the Wabash-Maumee region alone.

This early trade brought French traders to the Wabash region on missions of peace. To the Indians the French nature easily accommodated itself to the life of the forest. The first traders, (men who beheld America in its original wilderness) who bestowed themselves with this adventurous spirit and lived amicably with them. These adventurous spirits of the French came to live in the fact that the French could not fail to realize the immense profits and advantages from the traffic in furs.
The trade itself was carried on by means of men, called voyageurs, engagés, and coureurs des bois, who were hired to manage the small vessels on the lakes, and to paddle the canoes along the lake shores and the rivers; and to carry the merchandise from trading posts to the villages of the Indians, allied with the French. Coarse blue and red cloth, fine scarlet, guns, powder, lead balls, knives, hatchets, kettles, blankets, ribbons, beads, vermilion, tobacco and liquor were given in exchange for valuable furs, which were carried back to the place of deposit for shipment.

From 1683 to 1760 the French faced two problems, closely related to each other, one to keep back the westward movement of the English from the Atlantic seaboard, and second, to preserve the friendship of the Indians and avert an Indian-English alliance, always a danger to French profits in the fur trade. English interest in the territory and in the fur trade made them give earnest thought to driving out the French from the interior, and at the same time, to the gaining of the good will of the Indians. In the latter enterprise the English had definite advantages over the French. Their presents were more attractive and more abundant than were possible to the French; they could pay higher prices for peltries and they were able to offer cheaper prices for goods exchanged, due to the fact that the French could not buy bright Indian goods as cheaply as the English could make them, and also to the fact that the French companies were obliged to "pay a duty to the
king," which enabled the traders of New York to sell their goods to the Indians at half the price possible for the French in Canada. By 1724 British merchants in New York were paying double the price for beaver allowed by the French company in Montreal. The French were thus unable to keep the English, thoroughly alive to their trade interests in the 'Ohio country,' from contact with the Indians. The French were further handicapped in their attempts to hold the Great Lake region for trade through the defiance of the French coureurs des bois, whose reversion to barbarism, due to life of unbridled licentiousness among the Indians, had been rapid. Due to the prohibiting of trade to all except a few favored companies by the French government, and more and more rigidly enforced monarchical restrictions, these coureur des bois carried their skins and peltries to the English trading posts, a measure which caused additional apprehension to the French fur companies and to the royal government in France. Force proving unsuccessful, concessions were granted these free booters and they became guides and voyageurs for the French companies, thus depriving the British of this lucrative trade, and making them increase their efforts to extend the activities of their own traders further westward into the country of the Indians.

The Indians, of course, were the great source of the peltry supply, and competition for their friendship and trade became one and the same thing. The English and the French were both aggressive, and the Indians were fickle and treacherous. "The English and the Indians are in
good correspondence,” wrote Colonel Ingoldsby to the British Trade Commission, “but the French outdo us much in caressing them.”

So through seeking the trade of the Indians, England and France were kept in almost constant warfare in America throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. The British became more and more alive to the profits in fur to be obtained by trade with the Miamis, and sent traders into the Maumee-Wabash region with telling effect. The Miamis were outwardly loyal to the French, but could not resist the higher fur and lower goods prices paid by the English traders who sought to wean them away from their French allegiance. After 1733, slowly but surely, the English gained the friendship of the Eastern Indians and even made much headway among the Miamis that their friendship for the French became a doubtful asset. The strife in the Maumee-Wabash region showed the waning power of the French in America. The last great war, formally declared by England in 1756, caused mainly by rivalries in America, was the natural culmination of the years of continual hostilities and growing aggressiveness of the local nationalities. No great battle in this war was fought in the Maumee-Wabash region. The contest in this territory was a contest between English traders and agents among the Indians, and French agents and traders, each of whom sought to hold the Indians closely to the mercantile interest each represented—a reminder of the growing importance of the fur trade, the protection of which had brought these men into
these valleys. The frequent encounters between these rivals did not entirely cease, even with the fall of Quebec in 1760. However, the surrender of Detroit, on September 29, 1760 threw the whole Maumee-Wabash region into the hands of the British and a formal transfer of the Miami post in December began British control of the fur trade around Fort Wayne. and to all "our subjects" was

The end of the French and Indian War brought the English face to face with the problem of control of the fur trade in the Indiana region, a problem of serious concern in British politics. The imperialists, on one hand, wished full control of the traffic in skins and furs to be placed in the hands of royal officials, preferably superintendents of Indian affairs, while the traders, on the other, cried aloud for the decentralized system of the English colonies, where the royal governors, supposedly, were the regulators of the trade. To hold the Indians as allies, in case of a break with the American colonies, became a matter close to the hearts of official England, which feared an Indian colonial alliance and a loss of both territory and trade. This fear led Sir William Johnson to ask the English government to strengthen and re-occupy the post at the Miami Village. He noted two posts—"St. Joseph, a post on the St. Josephs which flows into Lake Michigan and the Miami's"—neither of which had been re-established; "The former is of less consequence for the fur trade than the latter, which is a place of some im-

"
England's first attempt at regulation of the western fur trade came through the Proclamation of 1763. This edict reserved all land west of the proclamation line to the Indians and forbade white purchases, thus closing the door to colonial expansion on the one hand, while offering a bid for Indian allegiance on the other. Free trade with the Indians to all "our subjects" was granted, on condition that the trader took out a license in the colony in which he resided and gave bond to obey all royal regulations for control of trade. The purpose sought by the Proclamation, that of fur trade regulation, failed completely, partly because the colonial authorities were too busy to pay attention to the trade, and partly because the traders saw no reason for taking out licenses, nor for taking heed of the "fair price and no liquor selling" royal regulations. So the Maumee-Wabash region teemed with unlicensed traders, mainly French, an idle lazy lot, often times worse than the Indians themselves; they attended all Indian Assemblies, making the Indians drunk and securing trading articles over again, in payment for more liquor—and the superintendents of Indian affairs were unable to stop them. Evil conditions prevailed—the traders treated the Indians brutally—the Indians begged the government unsuccessfully, to help them. The British traders lost in the battle for the fur profits—the French traders from Canada continued to prosper.
interfered little in the affairs of the western regions; traders went where they could, selling rum and trinkets for what furs they could buy—the Indians were ravaged by famine and disease and had few furs to sell. In the later years of the war, an attempt was made to restore order through regulation of trade by the establishment at Detroit of "The General Store," an association of Montreal and Mackinac merchants, which was to have a practical monopoly of the fur trade under supervision of post commanders, and which did control the trade of the Maumee Valley and Maumee town, although it never restored the British fur prosperity, once held on the lower Wabash. These men

After the Revolution the efforts of the British merchants in Canada were concentrated on holding control of the fur trade south of Detroit, in the region of the Northwest Territory south of the lakes, a region whose most important key communication was the portage at Maumee town. Their success in this endeavor is shown by the fact, that the Maumee-Wabash region remained British, until the building of Ft. Wayne, sixteen years after the brilliant Clark expedition in the Northwest Territory. The value of the trade is shown that in one year, at Detroit, were sold furs equal to $500,000 and all paid for in British goods. The British government complaisantly backed up the fur trade interests, the forts remained in the hands of the British and the furs continued to go to Detroit.

At Miamitown the residents were nearly all French—all were now warm friends of their former enemies, the British and for a mercenary reason. The utter discouragement of the Americans in their attempt to occupy these
fruitful valleys, meant in the long run, preservation of
the fur trade to the French in residence there. They
bought furs from the Indians, sold them at Detroit for
Montreal and European merchants. Anything that turned
the Indians from trapping to fighting destroyed their
hopes for profits, hence the desire of the French resi-
dents at Miamitown to preserve the status quo.

During this period new merchants and great ones began
trading on the Maumee. Two of the leaders of the business
among the newcomers were David Gray and George Ironside,
who concentrated their efforts at Miamitown. These new
men, in company with such traders as Jacques Lasselle and
Peter La Fontaine, who had come to the town under British
license during the Revolution, had practical control of
all the traffic in peltbres, which passed over the portage
through Miamitown to Detroit to increase the profits of
the Montreal merchants.

Besides these merchants the village consisted of a
cluster of French homes and the villages of the Miamis
and the Shawnees, creating a semi-civilized situation,
and making the village the heart of the Anti-American
hatred and conspiracies. Something of the situation in
Miamitown in this period (1784-1795) is shown in the
Journal of Henry Hay of Detroit who reached the village
in 1789 as an employee of George Leith, a Detroit merchant.
He writes as follows, "Almost every individual (except
the engages) is an Indian trader----every one tries to
get what he can either by 'fowl' play or otherwise, that is by traducing one another's characters or merchandise---in short, I cannot term it in better manner than calling it a Rascally scrambling Trade."

The methods of trading during this period are illustrated in the trade of John Askin, who at this time was located at Detroit. A large number of traders were sent among the Indians to obtain peltries. The prices offered were high enough to keep out the American traders from the East, and the Spanish from the Mississippi. The traders bought on commission and competed among themselves, which led to buying all kinds of furs—the poorer qualities failing to sell for profit abroad. Askin shipped his furs to Todd and McGill in Montreal, who in return furnished Askin with all kinds of trading goods, advanced cash to him and sold his furs. In this business the commissions and interest charges on advances must have absorbed a good percentage of returns. Todd and McGill shipped collected furs to a London firm where charges and commissions equalled 30% of the sale price.

In the years 1784-1795 the trade was poor and apparently becoming poorer. The merchants in Detroit and at Miamitown faced the constant danger of losing the export trade to the port of New Orleans. The Indians, always uncertain, became at times actually hostile. They believed that the Americans wanted to rob them of their lands, and under British influence, resisted American occupation.
This continued unrest on the part of the Indians, coupled with the military efforts of the Americans to gain the Wabash region, had a disastrous effect upon the fur trade. The contents of the Lasselle letters published in the Indiana Magazine of History in December 1882, many of which passed between David Gray and George Ironsides, in Detroit and Maimetown, present a graphic picture of conditions prevailing in the Wabash valley during the decade following the close of the American Revolution. The letters reveal the unrest, even hostility of the Indians, the dearth of peltry for shipment, bankruptcy of firms supplying merchandise, and the possibility of Detroit breaking off trade with the Indian posts, due to increasing dangers of transportation. Even the weather added to the increasing financial gloom of the traders, for in one letter the writer laments "the snow has not been upon the ground above eight days the whole winter."

Since there could be no furs while the Indians fought, at one time after Harper's campaign, 1790, the British merchants, seeing little hope for peace, with the Indians assembling in heat of hatred and revenge at their ruined villages, petitioned the British government for protection of their fur trade. "Southward of Detroit wherein we are very largely interested——the traders suffered considerable loss last year in consequence of the burning of the Miami villages. The loss of their houses and goods has been severely felt." The Petition ended with an appeal.
that the British government take action in bringing about peace between the Indians and the Americans, in order to restore trade conditions to some degree of stability.

However, in St. Clair's defeat (1791) the British merchants saw a chance to push the Americans out of the Maumee-Wabash region; they hoped to establish a great Indian Country south of the "sakes, free from "nerican authority, with the British government holding the forts for protection of the fur business. Therefore, to this end they offered such mediation between the Indians and the Americans—a mediation which the United States government emphatically refused.

The need of a great leader brought General Wayne out of retirement and made him the commander against the savages in the Northwest. His defeat of the Indians at Fallen Timber was hailed with joy when the news reached the American settlements. Roosevelt has declared that "Wayne's victorious campaign was the most noteworthy ever carried on against the Indians," because it "brought the first lasting peace on the border and put an end to the bloody turmoil of forty years fighting. It was one of the most striking and might feats in the Winning of the West." Thus, the Treaty of Greenville (1795) at which Little Turtle strove so vainly to obtain for his people "that glorious gate" the portage at Miamitown, ended the power of the Indians in the Northwest and prepared the way for the downfall of the British control of the fur trade.
After the quieting of the Indians in the Northwest territory the Congress of the United States established an Indian department, with a Superintendent of Indian affairs, very closely planned after the old British model, a system of control in which the traders were to have licenses and obey definite regulations. In a letter to the President in 1794, Secretary of War, Knox included the Miami village (now Fort Wayne) as among locations to be made Indians agencies. (At first a distinction was made between the factor as a financial and commercial representative of the government, and the agent as the political representative but since the functions overlapped the titles were used indiscriminately, and later, agency and agent took place of factory and factor. This plan of having a resident representative among the Indians was also inherited from the British system of Indian control. Under the new system of government regulation, John Johnston, who had seen long service as a representative of the government in Pennsylvania, Indiana and Ohio, was made agent at Ft. Wayne, at an annual salary of $1,000 from the National Treasury and $365 for subsistence, paid from funds received at the agency from trade. Under his management, thousands of dollars worth of supplies came in for the garrison, and in gifts and annuities for the Indians, and in return, thousands of dollars worth of furs and peltries purchased from the Indians, went eastward from the agency. "Always careful and conscientious he has left
in the lifeless figures of his account book" a valuable economic record of the fur trade and other commercial conditions along the Maumee-Wabash portage, from 1802-1811.

It is from his record and from the researches of C. B. Lasselle (a life time student of the history of the valley) that the story of the fur trade around Ft. Wayne during the first decade of the nineteenth century is made known. From a list of traders licensed by General Harrison, in the possession of C. B. Lasselle, (the original document in the hand writing of John Rice Jones, Clerk for John Gibson, Secretary of the territory) we find the following licenses granted:

1. Louis Boure, November 30, 1801, who was licensed to trade with the Potawatimie nations at their town of Couer de serf (Wks Heart) on Elk Heart River. Afterwards in 1803-1809, he was licensed to trade at Ft. Wayne and "kept pack horses and a warehouse for the deposit of merchandise and peltries in transit at the portage between the Miami and the Wabash." Apparently traders deposited goods with him, during their absence from Ft. Wayne--for which he issued receipts and paid off charges and duties at the post. The traders would buy goods in Montreal, summer and fall, bring them in pirogues to Ft. Wayne, and on to respective trading stations. In the spring they returned with furs, to be sold in Detroit or Canada. Louis Boure acted as a middleman in both transactions, in addition to his own traffic in peltries.
2. Hyacinth Laselle was licensed to trade with the Miamis at their town of Mississi­nomi, 1801. He was born in Ke-Ki-on-ga in 1777, son of James, who fled at the com­ing of La Balme in 1780. The father returned in 1795--in 1801 his son, Hyacinth took over the business of trading at a station near Peru. He had great capacity as a trader and was held in high esteem by the Indians, especially by the Miamis who gave him, due to his birth among them, the name of Xi-Xi-ah or "Little Miami."

3. Benoit Besayon 1801 was licensed to trade with the Pottawatomies at their town of Fel Creek. He also traded with the Miamis as late as 1807.

The traders mentioned above, in addition to those already resident in Ft. Wayne carried on the trade in furs and peltries at the time of John Johnston's agency there. Under Johnston's supervision the Ft. Wayne Agency became one of the most important in the United States. It dispensed large annuities to the Indians for land sessions and financed an extensive purchase of land at Ft. Wayne. It brought from the Indians tremendous quantities of furs and pelts which were shipped to Philadelphia and New York for auction. (Until 1809 export by government agencies was forbidden.) It dealt in supplies, supplementing those furnished the garrison by the war department, and its business therefore amounted to thousands of dollars. In a statement showing the amount of estimated gain and loss on each of the United States Indian Factories from the 31st of December 1807 to the 30th of September 1811, submitted to the House of Representatives, January 15, 1812 by the Secretary of War, "the Ft. Wayne Factory
showed a profit of $10,502.77 the largest profit of any of the ten factories then operated."

(Typical Indian merchandise for sale and exchange by Indian agent at Ft. Wayne is shown by John Johnston in his record book as follows:

1. 20 dozen scalping knives
2. assortment of garden seeds for vegetables, with the comment "these will be very necessary in promoting our plan of civilization"
3. 40,000 gray or purple wampum
4. 6,000 white and black wampum
5. 16,000 large and small brooches
6. 500 small crosses
7. sewing silk all colors."

(Wampum was Indian money. In 1795 Colonel Hamtramck wrote to General Wilkinson, "I am out of wampum. Will be very much obliged if you will send me some, for speaking to an Indian without it, is like consulting a lawyer without a fee!")

An interesting list of the furs and pelties forwarded by John Johnston, U. S. Factor from Ft. Wayne, from 1805 to 1811, is found in the record book of the Agency included in Griswold's "Ft. Wayne, Gateway to the West." The lists and the accompanying recapitulation may be used to draw certain conclusions about the fur trade in Ft. Wayne prior to the War of 1812. Beaver skins seemed to have been scarce while raccoons and deer, wild cat and other
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Paks</th>
<th>Hides forwarded</th>
<th>Hides</th>
<th>Pike skins</th>
<th>Racoon skins</th>
<th>Beavers</th>
<th>Cats, foxes, and minks</th>
<th>Nashwau</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Raccoons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>1286</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>2946</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2052</td>
<td>7894</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>94 47</td>
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<td>157</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>26859</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>85 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>5421</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>22 37 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>1227</td>
<td>2441</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>29 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>2420</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2715</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* peak

Page torn away. Totals computed by pelts.

Colonel John Johnston's Indian Agency Account Book 1802-1811
Charles T. Samsberry, Anderson, owner
Taken from Ft. Wayne, Gateway of the West 1802-1813
Garrison Orderly Books, Indian Agency Account Book, edited by Bert. J. Griswold—published by Historical Bureau of Indiana Library and Historical Department, 1927
Recapitulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Price per Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racoon</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>860.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deerskins (B and D)</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>612.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskrat</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>114.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cats, Foxes, and Fishers</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>30.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otters</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>58.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mink</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>160.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moles</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressed Skins</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>56.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair Fine Moccasins</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair Fine Moccasins</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow Moccasins</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: $1,922.00

Small animals were quite plentiful. Luxury furs, otter, mink, etc., were present in small quantities. Private traders as well as the government, factory engaged in the business of furs and peltries. Eventually, many of these traders obtained furs by hunting boys with the Indians or traders, with whom they were paid in goods as double the cost of production and trade. Some of the prices noted at the time were:
small animals were quite plentiful. Luxury furs, otter, mink and so forth were present in small quantities. Private traders as well as the government factory engaged in the business of furs and peltries. Eventually, that is, after 1815, these private traders monopolized the business entirely. Many of these traders obtained furs by sending buyers with the Indians on their hunts. Prices paid for furs were nominal, and were paid in goods at double the cost of production and trade. Some of the prices noted at the time are:

**Deer, buck** -- $1.25  
**doe** -- 1.00  
**Raccoon** -- .50  
**Bear** -- 3.00 to 5.00

The furs were sent down the Maumee to Lake Erie, thence to Detroit, to be purchased usually, before 1815, by the American Fur Company.

After the War of 1812 a period of confusion developed in the region of Fort Wayne and other Maumee-Wabash trading centers. Many of the old traders had left the country; some, English, were forbidden to trade after 1816, and others, American, had offended the Indians during the war and were unable to regain their old influence with them. New traders, both American Fur Company men and independent traders, entered the field to engage in competition between themselves and with the older traders who remained after the war. The fur business became the principal industry there-
fore, of Ft. Wayne for years following 1820; in fact the trade brought great gain to traders, even as late as 1833 when the Portawattomies migrated west of the Mississippi river. In truth, so extensive did the business become, pelts became the currency of the region, gold and silver became rarely seen, notes were made "promises" to pay in skins and peltries," and used to buy goods of various kinds to be sold at exorbitant prices to the Indians for more furs for shipment. Great quantities of these hides and peltries arrived in packs, on horses or by water, across the portage from the Wabash, and by biregues were shipped to Detroit and other points below. The boat landing at Ft. Wayne was just below the post (Brice says "about where the Maumee bridge is at present") and apparently it was no uncommon thing to see biregues and flat boats laden with whiskey, flour, furs and other goods, load and unload at this point.

Major Stephen Long, U.S. typographical engineer on an "expedition to the sources of the river St. Peter" gives his impressions of the fur activity at Ft. Wayne as follows: "The village is exclusively supported by the fur trade, and will probably continue to thrive as long as the Indians remain in any number in this vicinity. It has, however, declined from year to year, owing to the gradual diminution of the Indian population. The traders seldom leave the town, but they have a number of Canadians in their service, known by the appellation of Engages, who accom-
pany the Indians during their summer hunts, supply them with goods in small quantities, and keep an eye upon them, so that they shall not defraud their employers by selling to others the produce of their hunts. The furs brot here consist principally of deer and raccoon skins; bear, otter and beaver have become very rare. The skins when brot in by the Indians are loosely tied and rolled; they are separated, folded and made into packs three feet long and 18 inches wide, which are exposed to a heavy pressure under a wedge press."

This trade, according to the Lasselle list of traders licensed after 1815 was in the hands of the following men and companies:

1. John B. Richardson 1815-1836
2. Alexis Coquillard 1821-1835
3. Francis Comparé 1821-1835
4. Hollister and Hunt 1820-1838
5. John R. Godfrey 1820-1838
6. James Peltier 1820-1838
7. Wm. G. and G.W. Ewing 1822-1828

(trade continued at Ft. Wayne and Logansport to 1845)

8. John D. Dowse 1822-1838
9. Francis A. Lasselle 1828-1836
10. Allen Hamilton 1828-1838

(co-incident with the Ewing carried on trade more extensively than other traders.)

11. Wm. S. Edsall (Huntington) 1834-1837
Jean Baptiste de Richardville, of whom Erice speaks as 'a late chief of the Miamis,' was the son of Joseph Brézet de Richardville, who came to Fort Wayne attracted by the fur trade of the Maumee-Wabash valleys. He married Tah-cum-wah, the daughter of the reigning Miami chief—a sister of Little Turtle, sometimes called "the greatest Indians of all times," Henry Hay in his Journal in 1789 mentions the younger Richardville as "the young man who is so bashful that he never speaks in council—his mother, who is very clever, is obliged to do it for him."

Clever she certainly must have been to rule "with a sway and a power no other woman of the nation ever attained;" her business capacity reflected itself in the business life of her son, since through her influence, he gained a start in the fur traffic, which made him eventually the wealthiest Indian of the Northwest. He practically monopolized for a time the fur trade across the portage through which he accumulated a fortune estimated by Schoolcraft to be about $200,000 in specie, much of which he had buried in the earth so long that the boxes were decayed and the silver rusted and blackened. That Richardville's trade prosperity continued throughout the thirties is shown by the discovery of one of his old day books used in 1832. In August 1928, the Huntington Herald of Huntington, Indiana issued a centenary edition. In this issue was an account of the old day book of Richardville, which shows the variety of furs and the current prices paid for them.
in 1832. Under the date, October 6, 1832 is noted a shipment of furs to John B. Bruno of Ft. Wayne, and includes, among others, the following articles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Price each</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>bear skins</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>cubs</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>muskrat</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>wild cats &amp; foxes</td>
<td>.37½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1300</td>
<td>good raccoon</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>bad raccoon</td>
<td>.21½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>495</td>
<td>red deer skins</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>gray and blue deer</td>
<td>no price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>muskrats</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>495</td>
<td>wolf</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mink</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The American Fur Company, recognizing the admirable situation of the portage in relation to fur collection and transportation, established an important branch station at Fort Wayne in 1832. The Company organized its business in this region in two groups:

(a) an upper Wabash outfit, with Ft. Wayne as headquarters
(b) a lower Wabash outfit, centering its activities at Vincennes.

The two outfits controlled about 15 posts in all. The small traders sold mainly to the Astors, while such large
outfits as those of Allen Hamilton and Cyrus Tabor, sold only partly to the settlers but remained friendly to them at all times. Of the licensed traders mentioned in Lasselle's list, Alexis Coquillard and François Comparé were American Fur Company agents at Ft. Wayne. In company with Benjamin Kercheval and John Duret they maintained the business of the company in Indiana and bore their part in the intense rivalry and competition of the Ewing brothers with the American Fur Company later.

After 1820 the most important independent fur traders were the Ewing brothers, George W. and William G. Ewing, who were sons of Alexander Ewing, an Indian trader who came to Ft. Wayne in 1822 to engage in the fur business. An old receipt dated 1823 for $9.00 for services as a 'hand on a 'pirogue from this place to Detroit' from Alexander Ewing to John Gerva show that the Ewing fur business had already taken root in the town, where the name Ewing was to remain associated with furs, land deals and other businesses for a half century or more.

There are but few of the earlier papers in the Ewing Collection prior to 1826, which bear directly upon the fur interests of the company. From letters written between members of the family it is evident that Alexander Ewing Sr. took his sons George and William G. Ewing into partnership in 1825 and that they engaged in buying and shipping furs; sometimes dealing directly with the market, oftentimes selling to the American Fur Company. An old fur
June 17, 1825 notes the receipt by John Blood, from Alexander Wing of "1 pack of fur, containing 110 raccoon and 153 muskrats and mink; 2 foxes all in good order" which the said John Blood promises to deliver at "Ft. Meigs to Mr. Hunt in like good order."

By 1826, as before mentioned, Alexander Wing had taken the two sons (G. W. and W. G.) into partnership. His failing health (noted in a letter from a son in Cincinnati; somewhat lacking in supposedly old time filial respect, "I was sorry to hear of the 'old gents' condition but am glad of the way in which he disposes of his property") resulted in the death of the father and the beginning of the joint operations of the two brothers of the business willed to them under the title of Wm. G. and George W. Wing, who agreed that by "Their articles of co-partnership, all their estates of any name and nature become and will continue to be, the common property of the firm." They Wing fur business at Ft. Wayne from 1825 to 1836 was therefore carried on by the brothers under the above title and articles of partnership.

In 1826 the Twings used the fur market of New York for shipment and the services of Boyd and Sydham of that city as business agents who furnished trading goods for them, received, sold on market, or shipped to foreign markets their hides, skins, and peltries, honored Wing drafts on fur security, kept the Twings in formed of market conditions at home and abroad, and in general looked after the interests of the Twings and other fur dealers.
Later this firm (Boyd and Suydam) gave way to the firm of Suydam and Sage, whose letters to and from the Twings form the major part of the Twing collection of papers, in relation to the fur trade at Ft. Wayne, since even with those.

In December 1826, Boyd and Suydam advised the Twings that the fur market was dull, and had been for some time, that the market was overstocked already with muskrat, due to the unusually large collection of the year before, and that there was practically no demand for raccoon at all.

Papers as "they will not do to ship and have got a good deal out of use.

But by April 1827 the fur business was apparently looking up since Boyd and Suydam wrote, "the advice having been received from different places that the collection of muskrats would be short this season, has caused some persons to buy up different lots on market, en speculation and at the sale of the American Fur Company today they went up much higher than was expected.

Papers ----we believe the article should be high this year as it will be to the interest of the persons who have been in speculation to keep prices up.----------get your furs in this season as early as possible!" 2:

The desire of the Twings to take advantage of the favorable muskrat situation shows itself in various letters to David Stone in Detroit and other dealers, in relation to the collections of such skins and their sales at a better price for the Twings than they would get from the Astorians to whose interests it would be to buy.

Hence continued, although the firm Suydam seemed con-
at low prices. Stone, an aggressive and strong independent dealer, doubted the "quantity of muskrat would be diminished" as much as was expected, since even with less number of skins collected per trader there were a greater number of traders after the skins. "I presume," wrote Stone, "the American Fur Company will do as well for your interests as any one." Thus in 1827 the Flwings, while on good terms with the American Fur Company, selling to, and buying goods from them, were already dissatisfied with doing business with the monopoly and were seeking other connections, possibly with Stone, the shrewdest of independents.

In the years 1828, 1829 and 1830, the reports from Boyd and Suydam showed little encouragement to the fur dealers at Ft. Wayne. The sales of the American Fur Company showed that that organization governed the prices of all kinds of furs—prices remained low and the market continued dull. The fur dealers in the West were either unwilling or unable to give opinions as to any season's prospects. The general depression over the country reflected itself in a note from B. Rousseau at "Helk Hart" to the Flwings in which he says "to tell the truth I have not 20 dollars worth of furs yet and the season is so unfavorable for the Indians to hunt that I am afraid if it continues that all that we have taken in is nearly all that we will make this season." Even in 1831 the dullness continued, although Boyd and Suydam seemed con-
vinced that muskrats would do better the next season since low prices have brought them much into use.

Also the troubles in Europe were expected to cause a

definite and active demand for deer skins. The dis-
couragement of several bad years caused the Twings to
seriously consider, even at the expense of giving up a
good business, leaving Ft. Wayne and establishing them-
selves in business farther west. (Throughout their whole
business career, their letters show a curious tendency
towards great indolency in the face of bad fortune to
themselves—a disposition to blame the place, their rivals,
their surrounding, anyone and anything but themselves
for the turn of the wheel against them—an attitude most
curious when viewed in the light of their boldly aggres-
sive, ambitious and oftentimes unscrupulous speculations.)

Apropos of their reaction to the business depre-
sion is the following letter from William Barbee to whom

George Twing had written in regard to their projected
change of business location: "You speak of leaving Ft.
Wayne, on this subject I dare not hazard an opinion—
—-but I lay it down as a good General rule that it is
not best for a man in business to make frequent moves."

----------So are you now situated in Ft. Wayne, the
prospects there are not perhaps as flattering as some
other places, but recollect, thriving places have their
disadvantages—a stranger has to meet powerful com-
petition and do business on a small profit. No man in
business has made money faster than you have, then why should you leave the friends and place that have thus prospered you? We should not deplore, because a dull or dark day appears——again, you are surrounded with real property, no doubt sufficient to support you, then should you not do so much business for a time, you are at no expense to live and to leave it would be to make a sacrifice."

And again in November Barbee begged the Eng to pause before deciding to move westward. A dense population around Ft. Wayne was not likely for some time he urged and while the Indian trade would undoubtedly decline, it was not likely to affect Ft. Wayne for years to come——"recollect you have been extremely fortunate in business where you are, perhaps none have done better anywhere"——That such arguments prevailed, we know, since the Ewing enterprises remained an important feature in Ft. Wayne business during the whole of the Middle Period.

Between 1830-1840 a definite change for the better took place in the fur business in the whole Maumee- Wabash region and this change naturally affected the condition of the fur traffic in Ft. Wayne. Muskrat gave way to nutria as a material for cheaper hats, in America and in Europe, and silk hats became the mode instead of beaver ones on both continents. Thus muskrat and beaver (already scarce) declined in price, at a time when raccoons and minks were going up. The Wabash-Maumee river valleys abounded in raccoon, and the hunt for raccoon
skins became the central interest of the fur traders in Indiana. Ft. Wayne, due to its fortunate situation in relation to transportation again assumed a position of great importance in this industry. It was during this decade that the Twing Brothers made their great effort to break the hold the American Fur Company held upon the traffic in furs, and attempted to monopolize the fur trade, not only in the vicinity of Fort Wayne, but throughout the great region drained by all the adjacent river systems. As a part of their rivalry to the American Fur Company the Twings enlisted the services of traders at St. Josephs, Elkhart, Muncie, Vincennes, Peru, Logansport and other depots for the collection and shipping of furs. They established business relations with many important agents, J. B. and C. Rousseau at Elkhart and St. Josephs, James Avarline, William Godfrey, A. M. Drouillard and William Gilbert at Muncie, Isaac Covert of Wells County as well as with Nicholas D., Glover, W. S. Hissel and George Walker whose activities took them many places.

Letters from these agents to the Twings and from the Twings in return, and between Suydam, Sage and Company and the Twings register the story of the rivalry from its inception in the early thirties to its somewhat disastrous ending in the forties. The actual rivalry between the great monopoly and the Twing brothers really started about 1831 as is shown by the following excerpt from a letter from James Avarline, a Twing agent to George H.
Twing, December 31, 1831, in which he writes: "With regard to the price of skins, I have no doubt but they are falling. Comparé is taking two Raccoon for 4$ from Indians, he denies giving so much but I am convinced it is true; I had much difficulty with an Indian today who was indebted to us and was compelled to take his skins for 60¢ each—it was an old friend and customer and I took the skins at regard, but will wait for advice from you before I take any more at that price, as I am satisfied they are falling———

My dear Sir, you complain of dull times there, but I assure you we have had our full share here."

However the great battle for control of the fur business in the central west reached its greatest intensity from 1836 to 1840. In 1837 the Twings contracted with Suydam and Sage and Company of New York to act as commission men for the Twings, an act which seemingly brought them into open rivalry with the American Fur Company. By the contract made at this time Suydam and Sage agreed to furnish the Twings with trading goods, to honor Twings drafts on security of fur collections, keep the Twings informed of market conditions, sell the Twings furs in American and European markets, on a 3½% commission on gross sales, coupled with an interest charge on all advances of goods and capital.

During these first years of the competition, the Twings showed themselves men of ability in handling fur on the part of their adversary—and in order to hold some of the ambitious traders to themselves, under the active
traders and employees in the business. In all the correspondence George W. Wing shows himself to be the dominating character—his letters to his brother are filled with plans, sometimes scrupulous, oftener not, by which their rivals are to be confounded and through which the Twings are to push through to an always righteous victory. These plans even included membership by Colonel George Wing in the state legislature, where laws were to be made disconcerting to the American Fur Company. Colonel Wing showed a real, if cynical, appreciation of the lack of discernment upon the part of the electorate, when, in discussion of his campaign he wrote to his brother William "Talk of buildings and all that sort of thing—disguise our real intention." (to tamper the American Fur Company's efforts by a tax on their operations in Indiana,) "all of our opposition proceeds from the malevolence and hatred of our personal enemies."

The years 1837, 1828 and 1839 mark the peak of the rivalry between the two companies. William Brewster, the American Fur Company agent at Detroit, with advance information of new demands, with plenty of capital supplied him by the monopoly, at first bought carefully and made good profits for the company. He seems to have been less able in his handling of men than were the Twings, because through lack of tact he angered some of the Company's best traders, including James Abbott, Comparat and Coquillard, into independent buying. Site, and with the full backing of the Twings took advantage of every unfortunate movement on the part of their adversary—and in order to hold some of the ambitious traders to themselves, under the active
competition in which they found themselves, they formed a
number of other companies such as Ewing, Edsall and Com-
pany, and Ewing, Walker and Company whose names figure
largely in the correspondence of these years. Some of the
American Fur Company's best buyers—George Hunt and Wil-
liam Sellers—were induced to buy for the Ewings rather
than for the Monopoly—and other buyers, not of the Com-
pany, were induced to sign contracts to buy exclusively
for the Ewings. The Ewing papers (1837-1842) have in them
many of such contracts, an example of which (that of Horat-
io Curtis) serves as a description of all of the others—
"Horatio Curtis agreed to "traverse country for furs and
peltries, and to make contracts with merchants for their
collection." He was to receive $50 per month and to de-
vote all his time and attention to the "interests of the
Ewings"—his traveling expenses to be paid by the Ewings.
That the buyers were busy in 1838 shows itself in the re-
cords of the shipments of the Ewing companies of that
year. The year 1837 had been an uncertain one, for various
reasons—the land speculations resulting in the panic of
1837 had made money scarce and business men wary—a Ger-
man buyer, Hötte, in Detroit began buying independently,
and the Hudson Bay Company imported large numbers of pel-
tries from Canada which, as expected, lowered prices. But
in 1838, the American Fur Company had broken up the com-
petition of the German Hötte, and with the full backing
of the resources of the monopoly, Brewster at Detroit, pushed
up the price of furs and skins and proceeded to go after
all of the peltries of the Maumee-Wabash region. It was at this point that the open warfare began. The Ewings, aided financially by Suydam, Sage and Company, made a real bid for control of the fur business. Receipt after receipt for skins, contract after contract with buyers, record after record of shipments of furs, mainly deer and raccoon skins with some mixed packs, are included in the papers of these years of rivalry. A copy of the bill sent to W. G. Ewing by Samuel Rushman in 1838 is but one of the many in the Ewing collection of 1838-1842.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 packs</td>
<td>prime raccoon skins</td>
<td>$12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pack</td>
<td>mixed (15 cat, 11 fox, 6 mink)</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>poor 'rackoons'</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 packs</td>
<td>good deer (120)</td>
<td>72.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pack</td>
<td>poor deer (13)</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>fawn skins</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$206.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Competitive businesses were opened up by the Ewings at Evansville, Vincennes and St. Louis; buyers were sent into Michigan to bring the competition to the very doors of Brewster, the American Fur Company's agent, himself. By 1839 the struggle grew more grim and determined. The prices of furs went higher and higher, the furs bought in many cases were poorer and poorer. The American Fur
Company was tired of the rivalry of the Fwings and became determined to break the independents and to forestall, in this way, competition in the future. Phillips quotes a letter from Crooks to Brewster in which the agent is told to go ahead and "kill them your own way." The struggle, while not so hard on the monopoly as on the Fwings, was not an easy one at best. The nearness to the panic year (1837) made capital scarce and cash hard to get—and it was cash that the buyers and traders wanted. Interest rates were high and furs cost more than they would bring, when the amount of interest on money necessary to buy them, was taken into account. Both sides had spent enormous sums in the competition. At this point a compromise agreement to end the struggle was contemplated, but the matter ended without the agreement going into effect, and the warfare continued. In the early days of 1839, Hunt, who had been induced to leave the American Fur Company the year before, was sent to St. Louis with instructions to "see all the traders up the Missouri, and the principal traders on the Kansas and on the Platte—the Arkansas trip is a secondary concern— if you have time after navigation opens up, well and good— our principal object is to secure the Missouri trade. Do get the Indian skins.------ Try the traders at Rock Island and Prairie de Chine in the spring. Make St. Louis your headquarters— from there go wherever you can best succeed in getting Indian skins!"

The growing rivalry became more and more a source of anxiety to the Fwings and their associated partners, "d-
sall and Walker. The heart breaking competition of 1839 was beginning to tell upon the independents. Many letters reflecting the strain of business rivalry passed between the various partners—in illustration, is the following extract from Edsall to Ewing Brothers early in 1839:

"You have no idea the exertions that are being made on all hands to get skins. Hollister is bidding 70c to 80c for coon and says Curtis shall not have a skin for less than 80c. Curtis is doing all he can—he has expended all our money and $500 of his own. Curtis will, if supplied with funds, do all he can do. Hollister's men have gone by this place to do all they can on White River. McClure will no doubt receive a high bid from those fellows. Davis at Curtis' town has a fine lot of about 1000 of the finest coon I ever saw—all Indian handled—Hollister says we must pay 81c for them or not get them." (Indian handled skins were apparently much more desirable than those prepared by white men. From the letters from Suydam, Sage and Company to the Ewings, it is evident that the white man handled skins were neither dried nor packed carefully—the packs upon being opened oftentimes revealed skins entirely ruined by worms.)

As 1839 progressed the rivalry spread farther and farther afield. The partners themselves, Edsall of one company and Walker of another made business trips to far away depots to bid for skins with the buyers for the monopoly. Sometimes the independents got the skins—oftentimes they lost to the superior "war chest" facilities of
their rivals. Fdsall's letters register, sometimes encouragement as "I have this day purchased the whole Edfer Collection, 1380 skins in all--about 900 good coons;" again deep depression as "All is gone--the dog is dead! I have done my best, but cant buy D and E's skins; upon second examination after getting the offer I cannot go it! I have this afternoon got through, after a perfect hell of 2 or 4 days--skins are too high in my judgment for us."

That at times the partners were somewhat optimistic over a satisfactory outcome of the competition is revealed in a letter from George Walker to the Twings in which he writes as follows: "It is reported that Russian and English governments have ordered the raccoon caps for soldiers--if so prices will keep up----------showing that our purchases are large and liabilities great no time should be lost."----------"W.G.W. thinks our opposition is some discouraged and will not stand it more than one yr. more. Our cuts at St. Louis and other places make them feel very sick--and if those high prices we have been paying don't make us feel a little squeamish I will be satisfied--but from your information and prospects ahead I think we have nothing to fear."

The success of the dozens of buyers for the Twings is measured by the shipment records for the summer of 1839:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indiana Shipment</th>
<th>1839</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In June they sent forward for sale in the West:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2917 deer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12,200 raccoon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>July 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otter</td>
<td>1226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mink</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildcat</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large bear</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small bear</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer skins</td>
<td>2993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raccoon</td>
<td>6172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey fox</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rat</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badger</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indiana Shipment---In July**

- 2993 deer skins
- 6172 raccoon
- 254 wild cat
- 29 grey fox
- 109 wolf
- 374 otter
- 55 mink
- 194 beaver
- 20 bear
- 33 rat
- 6 badger

**Indiana Shipment---In August**

- 2851 deer
- 3840 raccoon
- 3 fishers
- 83 wild cat
- 35 fox
- 87 wolf
- 2083 mink
- 80 bear

In a letter from George (whom we ever took the Indiana Shipment---In business affairs) he says, "Walker will make 1200 skins for us among the white people---he will do what have unpolished, but for letters--we will of set our affairs and should be content;' but Walker (whence partnership of course had been the principal, no experience! he is now so complimentary, "Get rid of wall can easy if you can, but let us keep free from such ---3 cancers and ups and down all I say. I want no word parties---but in a letter to his we you must be patient and do it and called "imaginable, or as to retain our good feelings."
128 otter
72 fawns

Indiana Shipment—In September

581 rat
7 marten
4 elk
5 bear (large)
2 bear (small)
6 mink
8 deer
22 raccoon

The efforts of 1839 brought the stock of Walker high
with the Twings—but reduced that of Edsall to a mini-
mum. In a letter from George (who as ever took the ini-
tiative in business affairs) he says, "Walker will make
the greatest exertions for skins among the white people—he
will no doubt have opposition, but no matter—we will
get our share and should be content;" but Edsall (whose
partnership of course had been due entirely to expediency)
he is not so complimentary, "Get rid of Edsall easy if you
can, but let us keep free from such d---d cancers and
ulcers upon our hard earned business—to hell with such
upstarts as Edsall I say. I want no such partner—but
in getting rid of him you must be prudent and do it ami-
cably, if possible, so as to retain his good feeling."

A few days later despondency has again overtaken
George Twing and once more he writes to his brother in
regard to the Edsall partnership: "I cannot but sometimes
fear that we may ever reach ourselves. Your Indian opera-
tion, at last, is the best one. Nor is it worth while trying to make money off the whites—they will eat it up.

"The skin business is good if we can hold on to it but here I am---half worn out---want a partner, yet dare not have one. If I shake off this Edsall, his drive will be to the American Fur Company and push at skins and lands—I fear he would be in your way---and I own fear—that Edsall may go to the Co. he is the most energetic of them all.

"I am confused and confounded---want such a man as Wm. Edsall---yet am afraid to keep him!" These letters anticipate the dissolution of the partnership of EWing Edsall and Company, in 1841, after great losses had been sustained by all parties concerned.

The correspondence of 1840-1841 show the EWings brothers ready to retire from the struggle with the American Fur Company in the Maumee-Wabash region. The most interesting letters during this period are between the EWings and Suydam Sage and Company and those between the EWings and George Hunt, who was representing them as a buyer in the Des Moines region. The Hunt letters show how far afield the struggle had carried the EWings, southwest as far as Westport Missouri, and northwest into the Iowa country. Hunt seems to have been a likeable sort of rascal, always optimistic, always sure that he was on the eve of securing the most wonderful collec-
tion of skins, and upon being worsted, always sure that the new plans suggested would "do the trick for us, and the Company can't help themselves." Toward the end of the Hunt correspondence, Hunt's double dealing becomes manifest. It becomes evident that the earlier coup of the Twings in alienating Hunt from the American Fur Company was something in the nature of a boomerang, since the letters to him from the Twings become more and more accusatory, his, more and more explanatory until he is finally dismissed from the Twings employ.

The letters passing between Suydam, Sage and Company and the Twings mark the beginning of the end of the Twing attempt to monopolize the fur business in the Northwest. Suydam and Sage wrote earnestly, urging prudence in business transactions, curtailment of business on a large scale and in poor skins, cite the money still to be made in careful and honest business. "The times are out of the ordinary," wrote the commission men in 1840, "this year it will be impossible to advance money before the furs arrive--------as to bank facilities you speak of, there is no dependence upon such things this year---the Banks take care of themselves and the merchants have to depend upon their own resources."

Again in August 1840 Suydam and Sage made a report of the business affairs of the Twings for the year up to that date. The shipments up to August 1st, were of 835 packs containing in all 102,201 skins---the major number being of raccoons (46,529) deer (44,688) mink
(4150) cats and foxes (2784) Rat (1132) and the remainder, mixed of martin, fishers, bears, beaver, otters, foxes, wolves, badgers, etc. The amount of acceptances for the different firms amounted to thousands of dollars, and were for such large amounts and covered such long periods that the commission men were well within their rights when they complained plaintively—"You will observe that this foots up to a large sum and we don't think you have any reason to say that we have not stood by you, or fail to show any amount of confidence in you."

Apparently the Wrights were influenced, either by the admonitions of Suydam and Sage, or the more potent argument of $150,000 owed to the commission men, to change their plans of operation, because they replied in an amicable way to this letter, and outlined their business operations in such a way that the approval and backing of the New York Company was restored to them with the message "we are glad that you will act prudently in the future and will push only for good skins--------that is the way that money is made!"

The plan of operation for 1841 was outlined by George Wright to his brother William in November 1840. The following excerpts show what the business operations of the Wrights were to be in the future:

1. To avoid as far as possible investing in furs and skins, especially deer skins until those on hand were released, and to restore the Wrights to their former limited and prosperous business by

   a. quitting all purchase at Detroit, "let Griggs as heretofore purchase a few skins in Michigan
and Canada"
b. Quit all purchases on the Ohio River and
make none south of Greenville.
c. Quit business entirely at St. Louis—"they
are not Indian handled skins, as are supposed,
and only a shade better than those of the Ohio
River." Avoid Brewster and Chouteau at their
own door, but send outfits to the frontier.
d. Give more definite orders to Ewing, Fdsall
and Company—"your people must curtall let
country merchants purchase to $5000 instead of
$10,000 as they do now. Avoid engagements by
clerks and runners where the market will per-
mit—avoid deer skins unless 1st and 2nd quali-
ties."

"All this is in our power to do," wrote George
Ewing and "we must do it and get back to our old business
in good skins and Indian goods to a reasonable amount.
After Hunt arranges the Western outfit let him leave St.
Louis and return to Vincennes or go home to Detroit to
help in the North."

Not withstanding the great losses of 1840, the Twings
continued buying on a smaller scale in 1841. Their in-
structions to Hunt, still in their employ, show their
transactions to have reached out into the Iowa country with
headquarters at Des Moines. The financial negotiations
continued between the Twings and Suydam, Sage and Company,
the commission men assuring the Twings that they knew that
Papers the Fwings 'would do everything in their power to relieve the situation,' and congratulating them upon the curtailment of their operations to a more prudent and legitimate business. That curtailment showed itself in the breaking up of the partnerships formed in the days of the great competition. Wing, Barlow and Company dissolving in July, and Wing, Edsall and Company in August, 1841.

The last chapter in the story of the Fur Trade as an important factor in the history of Ft. Wayne and the Maumee-Wabash valleys is found in the letters and papers of the Fwings from 1842-1845. The American Fur Company failed, due to hard times and another attempt to corner the market in raccoon skins in 1842, the price of which had risen, due to a scarcity on the market. This failure gave rise to small competitors among whom the Fwings were able to hold their own, and made a fair profit in 1843.

The pessimistic strain of many of the letters presages a change to other lines of business. To George Walker, in December, 1842, in final settlement of their business relations, George Wing wrote, "We have been driven from post to pillar like slaves the last three years--------I meet with nothing but losses and adversity in our business.-------------We shall have little left out of the wreck and the destructive result of the Miami treaty, the heavy losses, the decline in property, taken into connection with our enormous expenses."

And closing the long chapter of correspondence with
Hunt, after dismissing him from the Wing employ, George Wing again strikes a pessimistic note in writing, "Nothing but the greatest economy and retrenchment in every branch of our business will right the Wings from their losses in the skin business. I am sorry to say that the fur and skins have gone down to almost nothing---------we are doing nothing but settling and closing with all our hands. We wish to bring our affairs to a close and get out of this dangerous scene. The whole country is threatened with bankruptcy."

The Wings were able to make satisfactory terms with Suydam, Sage and Company and rehabilitated their fortunes along other lines of business endeavor, with such marked success that at the time of the deaths of each, William Wing left an estate of $750,000 and George W. Wing, one of over a million dollars. With their withdrawal from competition in the fur business as their main activity, the story of the real fur trade of the Maumee-Wabash portage comes to an end. The real Indian trade ended in 1842 with the migration of the Miami Indians across the Mississippi. The Indians were all gone, the hunters and trappers were seeking new homes or new occupations. The advance of settlement made had made farms out of forests, and the destruction of fur bearing animals had decreased the supply of furs and peltries. Fashions changed, woolens were used instead of furs, and cattle skins took the place of deer skins. Many of the trappers became farmers---and
as farmers remained trappers—they trapped during the
fur season and sold to buyers or local merchants who in
turn shipped to St. Louis or other markets. Years of
extermination failed to rout entirely the fur bearing
animals from their old haunts. Red fox, muskrat, rac­
coon and mink are still hunted and trapped in Indiana,
but the glory of the fur trade, around its most impor­
tant center, Ft. Wayne, ended with the withdrawal of the
forges from the fur traffic in the 'Forties.'