

= George Rogers Clark =

George Rogers Clark ( November 19 , 1752 ? February 13 , 1818 ) was a surveyor , soldier , and militia officer from Virginia and the highest ranking American military officer on the northwestern frontier during the American Revolutionary War . He served as leader of the Kentucky ( then part of Virginia ) militia throughout much of the war . Clark is best known for his celebrated captures of Kaskaskia ( 1778 ) and Vincennes ( 1779 ) during the Illinois Campaign , which greatly weakened British influence in the Northwest Territory . Because the British ceded the entire Northwest Territory to the United States in the 1783 Treaty of Paris , Clark has often been hailed as the " Conqueror of the Old Northwest " .

Clark 's military achievements all came before his 30th birthday . Afterwards he led militia in the opening engagements of the Northwest Indian War , but was accused of being drunk on duty . Despite his demand for a formal investigation into the accusations , he was disgraced and forced to resign . He left Kentucky to live on the Indiana frontier . Never fully reimbursed by Virginia for his wartime expenditures , Clark spent the final decades of his life evading creditors , and living in increasing poverty and obscurity . He was involved in two failed conspiracies to open the Spanish @-@ controlled Mississippi River to American traffic . After suffering a stroke and the loss of his leg , Clark was aided in his final years by family members , including his younger brother William , one of the leaders of the Lewis and Clark Expedition . Clark died of a stroke on February 13 , 1818 .

= = Early years = =

George Rogers Clark was born on November 19 , 1752 in Charlottesville , Virginia , near the home of Thomas Jefferson . He was the second of ten children of John Clark and Ann Rogers Clark , who were Anglicans of English and Scots ancestry . Five of their six sons became officers during the American Revolutionary War . Their youngest son , William Clark , was too young to fight in the Revolution , but later became famous as a leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition . In about 1756 , after the outbreak of the French and Indian War ( part of the worldwide Seven Years ' War ) , the family moved away from the frontier to Caroline County , Virginia , and lived on a 400 @-@ acre ( 1 @.@ 6 km2 ) plantation that later grew to over 2 @,@ 000 acres ( 8 @.@ 1 km2 ) .

Little is known of Clark 's schooling . He lived with his grandfather so he could attend Donald Robertson 's school with James Madison and John Taylor of Caroline and received a common education . He was also tutored at home , as was usual for Virginian planters ' children of the period . Becoming a planter , he was taught to survey land by his grandfather .

At age nineteen , Clark left his home on his first surveying trip into western Virginia . In 1772 , as a twenty @-@ year @-@ old surveyor , Clark made his first trip into Kentucky via the Ohio River at Pittsburgh . Thousands of settlers were entering the area as a result of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix of 1768 . In 1774 , Clark was preparing to lead an expedition of ninety men down the Ohio River when war broke out with the American Indians . Although most of Kentucky was not inhabited by Indians , several tribes used the area for hunting . The tribes living in the Ohio country had not been party to the treaty signed with the Cherokee , which ceded the Kentucky hunting grounds to Britain for settlement . They attacked the European @-@ American settlers to try to push them out of the area , conflicts that eventually culminated in Lord Dunmore 's War . Clark served in the war as a captain in the Virginia militia .

= = Revolutionary War = =

As the American Revolutionary War began in the East , settlers in Kentucky were involved in a dispute over the region 's sovereignty . Richard Henderson , a judge and land speculator from North Carolina , had purchased much of Kentucky from the Cherokee in an illegal treaty . Henderson intended to create a proprietary colony known as Transylvania , but many Kentucky settlers did not recognize Transylvania 's authority over them . In June 1776 , these settlers selected Clark and John Gabriel Jones to deliver a petition to the Virginia General Assembly , asking Virginia to formally

extend its boundaries to include Kentucky . Clark and Jones traveled via the Wilderness Road to Williamsburg , where they convinced Governor Patrick Henry to create Kentucky County , Virginia . Clark was given 500 lb ( 230 kg ) of gunpowder to help defend the settlements and was appointed a major in the Kentucky County militia . Clark was just 24 years old , but older settlers such as Daniel Boone , Benjamin Logan , and Leonard Helm looked to him as a leader .

= = = Illinois campaign = = =

In 1777 , the American Revolutionary War intensified in Kentucky . Armed and encouraged by British lieutenant governor Henry Hamilton at Fort Detroit , Native Americans waged war and raided the Kentucky settlers in hopes of reclaiming the region as their hunting ground . The Continental Army could spare no men for an invasion of the Northwest or the defense of distant Kentucky , so its defense was left entirely to the local population . Clark participated in several skirmishes against the Native American raiders . As a leader of the defense of Kentucky , Clark believed that the best way to end these raids was to seize British outposts north of the Ohio River , thereby destroying British influence with the Indians . Clark asked Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia for permission to lead a secret expedition to capture the nearest British posts , which were located in the Illinois country . Governor Henry commissioned Clark as a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia militia and authorized him to raise troops for the expedition .

In July 1778 , Clark and about 175 men crossed the Ohio River at Fort Massac and marched to Kaskaskia , taking it on the night of July 4 . Cahokia , Vincennes , and several other villages and forts in British territory were subsequently captured without firing a shot , because most of the French @-@ speaking and American Indian inhabitants were unwilling to take up arms on behalf of the British . To counter Clark 's advance , Henry Hamilton reoccupied Vincennes with a small force . In February 1779 , Clark returned to Vincennes in a surprise winter expedition and retook the town , capturing Hamilton in the process . The winter expedition was Clark 's most significant military achievement and became the source of his reputation as an early American military hero . When news of his victory reached General George Washington , Clark 's success was celebrated and was used to encourage the alliance with France . Washington recognized his achievement had been gained without support from the regular army in men or funds . Virginia capitalized on Clark 's success by laying claim to the whole of the Old Northwest , calling it Illinois County .

= = = Final years of the war = = =

Clark 's ultimate goal during the Revolutionary War was to seize British @-@ held Detroit , but he could never recruit enough men to make the attempt . The Kentucky militiamen generally preferred to defend their homes by staying closer to Kentucky rather than making a long and potentially perilous expedition to Detroit . In June 1780 , a mixed force of British and Indians , including Shawnee , Delaware , Wyandot and others , from Detroit invaded Kentucky with cannons , capturing two fortified settlements and carrying away hundreds of prisoners . In August 1780 , Clark led a retaliatory force that won a victory at the Shawnee village of Peckuwe , at what is now called George Rogers Clark Park near Springfield , Ohio .

The next year Clark was promoted to brigadier general by Governor Thomas Jefferson , and was given command of all the militia in the Kentucky and Illinois counties . He prepared again to lead an expedition against Detroit . Although Washington transferred a small group of regulars to assist Clark , the detachment was disastrously defeated in August 1781 before they could meet up with Clark , ending the campaign .

In August 1782 , another British @-@ Indian force defeated the Kentucky militia at the Battle of Blue Licks . Although Clark had not been present at the battle , as senior military officer , he was severely criticized in the Virginia Council for the disaster . In response , Clark led another expedition into the Ohio country , destroying several Indian towns along the Great Miami River in the last major expedition of the war .

The importance of Clark 's activities in the Revolutionary War has been the subject of much debate

among historians . As early as 1779 he was called the Conqueror of the Northwest by George Mason . Because the British ceded the entire Old Northwest Territory to the United States in the 1783 Treaty of Paris , some historians , including William Hayden English , credit Clark with nearly doubling the size of the original Thirteen Colonies by seizing control of the Illinois country during the war . Clark 's Illinois campaign ? particularly the surprise march to Vincennes ? was greatly celebrated and romanticized . Other historians , such as Lowell Harrison , have downplayed the importance of the campaign in the peace negotiations and the outcome of the war , arguing that Clark 's " conquest " was little more than a temporary occupation .

= = Later years = =

Clark was just thirty years old when the Revolutionary War ended , but his greatest military achievements were already behind him . Ever since Clark 's victories in Illinois , settlers had been pouring into Kentucky , often illegally squatting on Indian land north of the Ohio River . From 1784 until 1788 Clark served as the superintendent @-@ surveyor for Virginia 's war veterans and surveyed the lands granted to them for their service in the war . The position brought a small income , but Clark devoted very little time to the enterprise . Clark helped to negotiate the Treaty of Fort McIntosh in 1785 and the Treaty of Fort Finney in 1786 with tribes north of the river , but violence between Native Americans and Kentucky settlers continued to escalate .

According to a 1790 U.S. government report , 1 @,@ 500 Kentucky settlers had been killed in Indian raids since the end of the Revolutionary War . In an attempt to end these raids , Clark led an expedition of 1 @,@ 200 drafted men against Indian towns on the Wabash River in 1786 , one of the first actions of the Northwest Indian War . The campaign ended without a victory : lacking supplies , about three hundred militiamen mutinied , and Clark had to withdraw , but not before concluding a ceasefire with the Indians . It was rumored , most notably by James Wilkinson , that Clark had often been drunk on duty . When Clark learned of the rumors he demanded an official inquiry be made , but his request was declined by Governor of Virginia , and Virginia Council condemned Clark 's actions . Clark 's reputation was tarnished , he never again led men in battle , and he left Kentucky , moving into the Indiana frontier near Clarksville

= = = Life in Indiana = = =

Clark lived most of the rest of his life in financial difficulties . Clark had financed the majority of his military campaigns with borrowed funds . When creditors began to come to him for these unpaid debts , he was unable to obtain recompense from Virginia or the United States Congress because record keeping on the frontier during the war had been haphazard . For his services in the war Virginia gave Clark a gift of 150 @,@ 000 acres ( 610 km<sup>2</sup> ) of land . The soldiers who fought with Clark also received smaller tracts of land . Together with Clark 's Grant and his other holdings , his ownership encompassed all of present @-@ day Clark County , Indiana and most of the surrounding counties . Although Clark had claims to tens of thousands of acres of land resulting from his military service and land speculation , he was " land @-@ poor " , meaning that he owned much land but lacked the means to make money from it .

With his career seemingly over and his prospects for prosperity doubtful , on February 2 , 1793 , Clark offered his services to Edmond @-@ Charles Genêt , the controversial ambassador of revolutionary France , hoping to earn money to maintain his estate . Western Americans were outraged that the Spanish , who controlled Louisiana , denied Americans free access to the Mississippi River , their only easy outlet for long distance commerce . The Washington Administration was also seemingly deaf to western concerns about opening the Mississippi to U.S. commerce . Clark proposed to Genêt that , with French financial support , he could lead an expedition to drive the Spanish out of the Mississippi Valley . Genêt appointed Clark " Major General in the Armies of France and Commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the French Revolutionary Legion on the Mississippi River " . Clark began to organize a campaign to seize New Madrid , St. Louis , Natchez , and New Orleans , getting assistance from old comrades such as Benjamin Logan and

John Montgomery , and winning the tacit support of Kentucky governor Isaac Shelby . Clark spent \$ 4 @, @ 680 ( \$ 59 @, @ 161 in 2009 chained dollars ) of his own money for supplies . In early 1794 , however , President Washington issued a proclamation forbidding Americans from violating U.S. neutrality and threatened to dispatch General Anthony Wayne to Fort Massac to stop the expedition . The French government recalled Genêt and revoked the commissions he granted to the Americans for the war against Spain . Clark 's planned campaign gradually collapsed , and he was unable to convince the French to reimburse him for his expenses .

Due to his growing debt , it became impossible for Clark to continue holding his land , since it became subject to seizure . Much of his land he deeded to friends or transferred to family members where it could be held for him , so that it would not be lost to his creditors . After a few years , the lenders and their assignees closed in and deprived the veteran of almost all of the property that remained in his name . Clark , once the largest landholder in the Northwest Territory , was left with only a small plot of land in Clarksville , where he built a small gristmill which he worked with two African American slaves . Clark lived on for another two decades , and continued to struggle with alcohol abuse , a problem which had plagued him on @-@ and @-@ off for many years . He was very bitter about his treatment and neglect by Virginia , and blamed his misfortune on the state .

The Indiana Territory chartered the Indiana Canal Company in 1805 to build a canal around the Falls of the Ohio , near Clarksville . Clark was named to the board of directors and was part of the surveying team that assisted in laying out the route of the canal . The company collapsed the next year before construction could begin , when two of the fellow board members , including Vice President Aaron Burr , were arrested for treason . A large part of the company 's \$ 1 @. @ 2 million ( \$ 60 @. @ 5 million in 2009 chained dollars ) in investments was unaccounted for , and where the funds went was never determined .

= = = Return to Kentucky = = =

In 1809 Clark suffered a severe stroke . Falling into an operating fireplace , he suffered a burn on one leg so severe as to necessitate the amputation of the limb . It was impossible for Clark to continue to operate his mill , so he became a dependent member of the household of his brother @-@ in @-@ law , Major William Croghan , a planter at Locust Grove farm eight miles ( 13 km ) from the growing town of Louisville . During 1812 , the Virginia General Assembly granted Clark a pension of four hundred dollars per year , and finally recognized his services in the Revolution by granting him a ceremonial sword . After a second stroke , Clark died at Locust Grove , February 13 , 1818 , and was buried at Locust Grove Cemetery two days later .

In his funeral oration , Judge John Rowan succinctly summed up the stature and importance of George Rogers Clark during the critical years on the Trans @-@ Appalachian frontier : " The mighty oak of the forest has fallen , and now the scrub oaks sprout all around . "

Clark 's body was exhumed along with the rest of his family members on October 29 , 1869 , and reburied at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville .

Several years after Clark 's death the state of Virginia granted his estate \$ 30 @, @ 000 ( \$ 568 @, @ 853 in 2009 chained dollars ) as a partial payment on the debts that they owed him . The government of Virginia continued to find debt to Clark for decades , with the last payment to his estate being made in 1913 . Clark never married and he kept no account of any romantic relationships , although his family held that he had once been in love with Teresa de Leyba , sister of Don Fernando de Leyba , the Lieutenant Governor of Spanish Louisiana . Writings from his niece and cousin in the Draper Manuscripts attest to their belief in Clark 's lifelong disappointment over the failed romance .

= = Legacy = =

On May 23 , 1928 , President Calvin Coolidge ordered a memorial to George Rogers Clark to be erected in Vincennes . Completed in 1933 , the George Rogers Clark Memorial , built in Roman Classical style , stands on what was then believed to be the site of Fort Sackville , and is now the

George Rogers Clark National Historical Park . It includes a statue of Clark by Hermon Atkins MacNeil . On February 25 , 1929 , to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the surrender of Fort Sackville , the U.S. Post Office Department issued a 2 @-@ cent postage stamp that depicted the surrender . In April 1929 , the Paul Revere Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Muncie , Indiana erected a monument to George Rogers Clark on Washington Avenue in Fredericksburg , Virginia . The marker doesn 't identify the connection between General Clark and Fredericksburg , so this choice of location is currently a mystery . In 1975 , the Indiana General Assembly designated February 25 George Rogers Clark Day in Indiana . Built in 1929 , the George Rogers Clark Memorial Bridge ( Second Street Bridge ) carries U.S. Highway 31 , over the Ohio River at Louisville , Kentucky .

Other statues of Clark can be found in :

Metropolis , Fort Massac , Illinois , by sculptor Leon Hermant , placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in the early 1900s .

Louisville , Kentucky , by sculptor Felix de Weldon , at Riverfront Plaza / Belvedere , next to the wharf on the Ohio River .

Springfield , Ohio , by Charles Keck at the site of the Battle of Piqua .

Charlottesville , Virginia , by Robert Aitken on the grounds of the University of Virginia .

Quincy , Illinois , in Riverview Park , on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River .

Indianapolis , Indiana , by sculptor John H. Mahoney , on Monument Circle .

Places named for Clark include counties in Illinois , Indiana , Kentucky ( home to George Rogers Clark High School ) , Ohio ( home to Clark State Community College ) , and Virginia , and communities in West Virginia ( Clarksburg ) , Indiana ( Clarksville ) , and Tennessee ( also Clarksville ) . Clark Street in Chicago , Illinois is named for him , as is a campsite in the Woodland Trails Scout Reservation , Camden , Ohio .

Schools named after Clark include :

George Rogers Clark College in Indianapolis , Indiana ( closed 1992 )

George Rogers Clark Elementary School in Clarksville , Indiana ( closed 2010 )

George Rogers Clark Middle / High School in Hammond , Indiana

George Rogers Clark High School in Winchester , Kentucky

Clark Middle School in Winchester , Kentucky

Clark Elementary School in Charlottesville , Virginia

George Rogers Clark Middle School in Vincennes , Indiana

George Rogers Clark Elementary School of Chicago .

George Rogers Clark Elementary School in Paducah , Kentucky