

Transcribed Excerpts from Letter from George Rogers Clark to Patrick Henry, April 29, 1779

Kaskaskia Illinois Apl: 29th. 1779

Dr. Sir,

A few days ago I received certain intelligence of William Morris my express to you being killed near the falls of Ohio news truly disagreeable to me as I fear many of my letters will fall into the hands of the Enemy at Detroit... I do not doubt but before the receipt of this you will hear of my late success against Governor Hamilton at post St. Vincenne. That gentleman with a body of men possessed himself of that post on the 15th. of December last repaired the fortifications for a repository and in the spring means to attack this place...

Destruction seemed to hover over us from every quarter detached parties of the Enemy in the neighbourhood every day but afraid to attack. I ordered Majr. Bowman to evacuate the fort at the Cohas and join me immediately which he did. Having not received a scrape of a pen from you for near twelve months I could see but little probability of keeping possession of the country as my number of men was too small [to] stand a seige (sic) and my situation too remote to call for assistance.

I made all the preparations I possibly could for the attack and was necessitated to set fire to some of the houses in Town to clear them out of the way, but in the height of the hurry a Spanish merchant who had been at St. Vincenne arrived and gave the following intelligence. That Mr. Hamilton had weakened himself... that he had not more than eighty men in garrison three pieces of Cannon and some swivils (sic) mounted that he intended to attack this place as soon as the winter opened and made no doubt of clearing the western waters by the fall. My situation and circumstances induced me to fall on the resolution of attacking him before he could collect his Indians again. I was sensible the resolution was as desperate as my situation but I saw no other probability of securing the country...

In the mean time I marched across the country with 130 men being all I could raise after leaving this place garrisoned by the militia. The inhabitants of the country behaved exceedingly well... I marched the 7th of February altho so small a body it took me 16 days on the route. The inclemency of the season high waters &c. seemed to threaten the loss of the expedition. When within three leagues of the Enemy it took us five days to cross the drowned lands of the Wawbash river having to wade often upwards of two leagues to our breast in water. Had not the weather been warm we must have perished. But on the evening of the 23d we got on dry land in sight of the Enemy and at seven O'clock made the attack before they knew any thing of us. The Town immediately surrendered with joy and assisted in the siege.

There was a continual fire on both sides for eighteen hours. I had no expectation of gaining the fort until the arrival of my artillery. The moon setting about one o'clock I had an intrenchment

thrown up in rifle shot of their strongest battery and poured such showers of well directed balls into their post that we silenced two pieces of Cannon in 15 minutes without getting a man hurt. Governor Hamilton and myself had on the following day several conferences but did not agree until the evening when he agreed to surrender the garrison...

But what crowned the general joy was the arrival of William Morris my express to you with your letters which gave general satisfaction. The Soldiery being made sensible of the gratitude of their country for their services were so much elated that they would have attempted the reduction of Detroit had I have ordered them. Having more prisoners than I knew what to do with I was necessitated to discharge a greater part of them on parole. Mr. Hamilton his principal officers and a few soldiers I have sent to Kentuckey under convoy of Capt. Williams in order to be conducted to you: After dispatching Morris with letters to you treating with the neighbouring Indians &c. I returned to this place leaving a sufficient garrison at St. Vincenne... We are proud to hear congress intends putting her forces on the frontiers under your direction. A small army from Pittsburgh conducted with spirit may easily take Detroit... There can be no peace expected from many nations while the English are at Detroit... I shall always be on my guard watching every opportunity to take the advantage of the Enemy... Your instructions I shall pay implicit regard to and hope to conduct myself in such a manner as to do honour to my country.

I am with the greatest respect
your hbl. servant,

G R Clark