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The Prairie Potawatomi Removal of 1833

R. David Edmunds*

Vacillation and lack of efficient administration has generally characterized American Indian policy. The three decades following the War of 1812 were no exception. Early governmental attempts to convert the Indians to an agricultural way of life failed, and by the 1820s officials in Washington became convinced that their only recourse was to remove the Indians beyond the Mississippi. In Indiana and Illinois reports from Indian agents who were pessimistic in their appraisals of the Indians' ability to adjust to the increasing white settlement and who warned that the tribesmen were being victimized and debauched by unscrupulous white frontiersmen buttressed this decision.¹

Among the Indians who still occupied lands in Illinois and Indiana following the War of 1812 were the Prairie Potawatomi. Early French explorers had encountered these tribesmen in Michigan and western Wisconsin, but during the first half of the eighteenth century they had migrated onto the prairies of north central Illinois and western Indiana. Scattering their villages from the headwaters of the Kankakee to the north fork of the Sangamon, these Indians had remained loyal to the French through Pontiac's Rebellion.² During the American Revolution they divided their loyalty between the British and the Americans, but after the American victory the Prairie Band became increasingly pro-British. Many of them were active followers of Tecumseh, and during the War of 1812 a Prairie Potawatomi war party was responsible for the Fort Dearborn massacre.³

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¹ A good general discussion of early American Indian policy can be found in Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962). For examples of agents' reports see John P. Hedges and Jacob Leephart to John Tipton, February 11, 1828; John Tipton to Thomas McKenney, January 31, 1830, Nellie Armstrong Robertson and Dorothy Riker, eds., *The John Tipton Papers* (3 vols., *Indiana Historical Collections*, Vols. XXIV-XXVI; Indianapolis, 1942), II, 19, 243-44.

² Frederick Webb Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (2 vols., Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin 30*; Washington, 1907-1910), 289-91, 303; Alanson Skinner, *The Mascoutens or Prairie Potawatomi Indians* (*Bulletin of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee*, Vol. VI, No. 1; Milwaukee, 1924), 9-15. Both Hodge and Skinner offer brief historical sketches of the Prairie Band. There is no extended survey of the band's history. The Prairie Potawatomi occupied the area from western Indiana through northeastern to north central Illinois. They seem to have frequented the area along the Kankakee and Iroquois rivers, roaming westward to the Illinois River and southwestward to the headwaters of the Sangamon. It is impossible to locate their homeland with precision.

³ Louise P. Kellogg, *The British Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison, 1935), 286.

The years following the War of 1812 continued to be troublesome for this band of Potawatomi. In 1819 the Kickapoo ceded their lands in central Illinois and western Indiana to the United States.⁴ The Potawatomi claimed much of this region, but the Kickapoo cession enabled white frontiersmen to settle legally upon the Potawatomi hunting lands. Increasing American settlement depleted the game supply, and white traders plied the Indians with whiskey.⁵ The Prairie Band also contributed to the problem. They continued to hunt throughout the newly settled parts of the state, and white farmers charged that the Potawatomi frequently killed domesticated farm animals.⁶ The Prairie Band was also accused of collaborating in the Winnebago uprising of 1827. They committed no hostilities, but their refusal to act as spies for the Illinois militia caused suspicion among their white neighbors.⁷

As public resentment of the Prairie Band increased, state officials in Indiana and Illinois urged the federal government to remove this portion of the Potawatomi. In 1829 seven chiefs of the Prairie Band informed John Tipton, an Indian agent at Logansport, Indiana, that they were interested in selling part of their lands in Illinois, and Tipton frequently attempted to prod federal officials into action.⁸ In April, 1831, he advised the War Department in Washington:

This is the most favorable time to remove these Indians, that has been, since I have been their agent,—if you commence before they plant their corn, which will be in June. The deep snow, and cold of last winter killed many of their horses . . . and caused great suffering amongst the Indians; and they will remove to the new country, if there is game and fish—and grass for their horses, especially if it be a little south of where they now live.⁹

Although increasing settlement, pleas by government officials, and Indian dissatisfaction all contributed to conditions leading to the Potawatomi removal, the Black Hawk War was the catalyst that made such removal possible. American settlers, enraged by the conflict, indiscriminately blamed all Indians for the hostilities, and

⁴ Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (5 vols., Washington, 1904-1941), II, 127-29. The Kickapoo ceded a small area in Benton, Warren, and Vermillion counties in extreme western Indiana at this time.

⁵ Thomas McKenney to the War Department, June 12, 1826, Donald J. Berthrong Collection (Division of Manuscripts, Bizzell Memorial Library, University of Oklahoma, Norman). The Berthrong Collection consists of photostatic copies of letters and other manuscripts from the Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75 (National Archives, Washington).

⁶ Ninian W. Edwards, *History of Illinois, from 1778 to 1833; and Life and Times of Ninian Edwards* (Springfield, 1870), 225.

⁷ Alexander Wolcott to James Barbour, July 25, 1827, Berthrong Collection.

⁸ John Tipton to John Eaton, April 29, 1829; John Tipton to Thomas McKenney, September 2, 1830, Robertson and Riker, *Tipton Papers*, II, 161, 329-31.

⁹ John Tipton to John Eaton, April 5, 1831, *ibid.*, 400-401.

public opinion demanded the acquisition of tribal lands in Illinois and Indiana. The Prairie Potawatomi actually took little part in the conflict although a few disaffected tribesmen may have briefly joined the Sac chief, Black Hawk.¹⁰ Sac envoys carried invitations to war as far east as Indiana,¹¹ but Potawatomi chiefs refused their overtures and advised the Sac against hostilities.¹² The Prairie Band villages in northern Illinois sent a deputation of chiefs to Chicago to assure American officials of their good intentions. These Indians reported that they were afraid the Sac would come among them and cause trouble with their white neighbors.¹³ Other members of the Prairie Band warned the whites of approaching Sac war parties¹⁴ or volunteered to help American forces drive the hostiles away from the settlements.¹⁵

These actions were unsuccessful in persuading the settlers of the Prairie Band's peaceful intentions. Panic stricken by the American defeat at Stillman's Run, near the Rock River in northern Illinois on May 14, 1832, an officer in the Illinois militia fabricated a report that the entire frontier had been "invaded by a powerful detachment of Indian Warriors of the Sac, Fox, Winibago, and Potawatomi and part of the Kickapoo Nations."¹⁶ In an isolated incident three Potawatomi murdered a family of settlers in central Illinois, and although they were soon in the custody of the local sheriff, Governor John Reynolds issued a proclamation that the Winnebago and Potawatomi had joined the Sac.¹⁷ This proclamation greatly alarmed the settlers of the Illinois and Indiana frontier, and both states organized volunteer militia groups to protect their citizens from the supposed Indian menace.¹⁸

¹⁰ Steven Mason to Lewis Cass, June 8, 1832, Berthrong Collection. Good general accounts of the Black Hawk War can be found in William T. Hagan, *The Sac and Fox Indians* (Norman, 1958); and Frank E. Stevens, *The Black Hawk War* (Chicago, 1903).

¹¹ William Marshall to unknown correspondent, July 6, 1832, Berthrong Collection.

¹² William Clark to Lewis Cass, May 8, 1832, Roll 750, "St. Louis Superintendency, 1832-1835," National Archives Microcopy 234, "Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881," Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

¹³ Thomas J. V. Owen to Elbert Herring, May 12, 1832, Berthrong Collection.

¹⁴ Alta P. Waters, "Shabonee," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, XVII (October, 1924), 383.

¹⁵ Thomas J. V. Owen to Elbert Herring, June 3, 1832, Berthrong Collection.

¹⁶ James Strode to Lewis Cass, May 22, 1832, *ibid.*

¹⁷ John Reynolds to Lewis Cass, May 22, 1832, *ibid.*

¹⁸ William Marshall to Lewis Cass, June 5, 1832, *ibid.* The settlers of eastern Illinois and western Indiana were panic stricken by the outbreak of hostilities and circulated greatly exaggerated accounts of imminent danger in their areas. State officials reacted to these reports by mustering militia groups and attempting to patrol the area between Vincennes and Chicago. Correspondence regarding these events can be found in Robertson and Riker, *Tipton Papers*, II, 615-18; and Dorothy Riker and Gayle Thornbrough, eds., *Messages and Papers Relating to the Administration of Noah Noble. Governor of Indiana, 1831-1837* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XXXVIII; Indianapolis, 1958), 105-13.

Black Hawks' defeat on the Bad Axe River in Wisconsin on August 2, 1832, did not terminate the malevolent attitude of the settlers toward the Prairie Potawatomi. Although a later investigation absolved these Indians from any charges of organized hostilities, many whites were convinced that they had aided the Sac.¹⁹ Congress reacted by authorizing the appointment of a commission of three members to "extinguish Indian title within the states of Indiana, and Illinois and the Territory of Michigan."²⁰

The commissioners, Jonathan Jennings, John Davis, and Marks Crume, met with certain members of the Prairie Band at Camp Tippecanoe, Indiana, in October, 1832. On October 20 the Prairie Potawatomi ceded to the United States their lands in northeastern Illinois, which lands comprised over 782,400 acres²¹ and encompassed an area bounded by the Illinois-Indiana state line and the Illinois, Kankakee, and Vermillion rivers.²² The Wabash, St. Joseph, and Michigan bands of the Potawatomi tribe also met with these officials, and by October 27 they had concluded treaties in which they gave up all claims to lands in Illinois and ceded certain areas in northern Indiana and Michigan.²³

To obtain the Prairie Potawatomi cession the government agreed to pay an annuity of \$15,000 for twenty years. The commissioners also agreed that the government would assume a debt of \$28,746 which this band owed various traders. Merchandise valued at \$45,000 was given the Indians at Camp Tippecanoe, and another gift of merchandise worth \$30,000 was to be made during the next year at Chicago. Twenty-one Prairie Potawatomi warriors who had served with American forces during the Black Hawk War received \$1,400 for horses that they claimed were lost during the conflict. Thirty-seven and one half sections scattered over the ceded lands were reserved for individual Indians, and the Prairie Band was given hunting rights on government lands in the Sangamon and Wabash river valleys.²⁴

The commissioners submitted a report to Washington stating that their expenses had been greater than anticipated because of the large number of Indians who claimed lands in the ceded areas and who had attended the conference. The agents also complained that the different bands of Potawatomi claimed overlapping areas in

¹⁹ Report of Colonel S. C. Christy to Illinois Governor John Reynolds, April 28, 1833, copy, Berthrong Collection. Documents designated as copies are contemporary transcriptions made by secretaries or clerks.

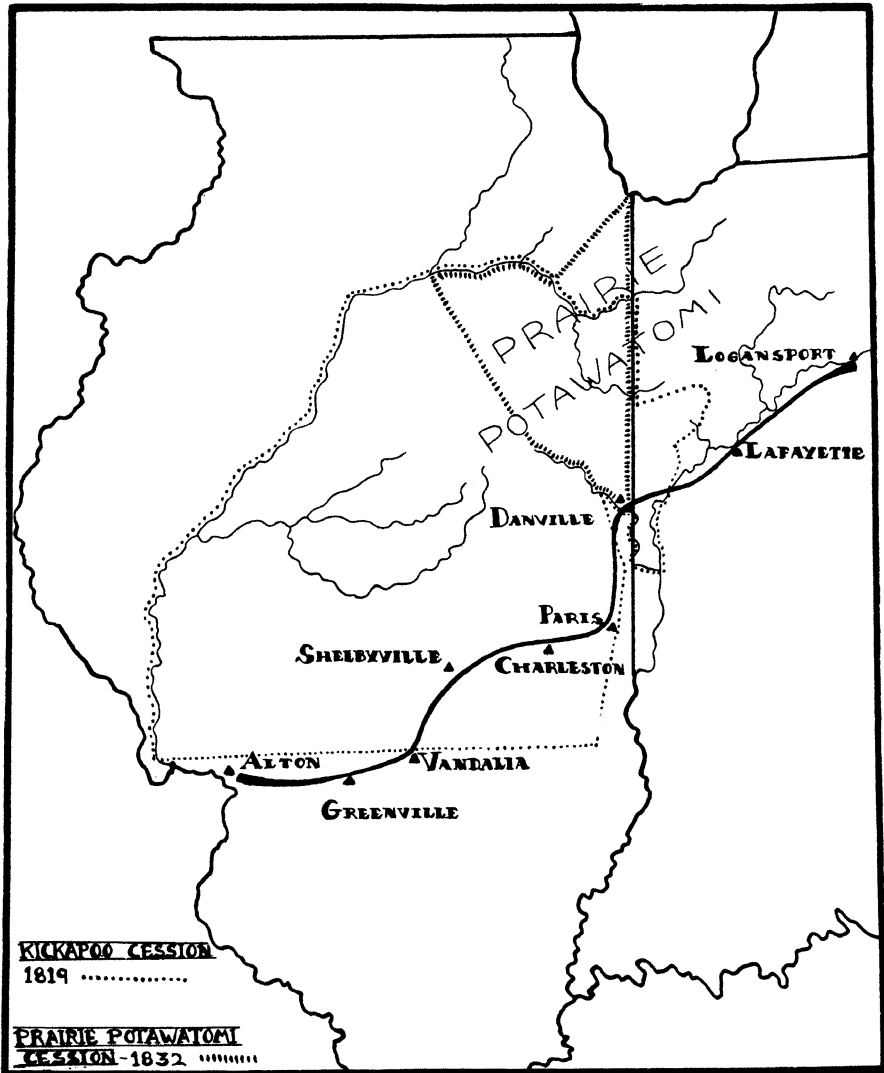
²⁰ Lewis Cass to Jonathan Jennings, John Davis, and Marks Crume, July 14, 1832, *ibid.*

²¹ Mary Helen O'Connor, "Pottawatomie Land Cessions in the Old Northwest" (M.A. thesis, Department of History, Cornell University, 1942), 88.

²² Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, II, 353-56.

²³ *Ibid.*, 367-70, 372-75.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 353-56.



Map compiled from information in Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (5 vols., Washington, 1904-1941), II, 128, 256; Lewis Sands, "Journal of Occurrences [sic] in the Pottawatomie Removal under the Direction of Lewis Sands, Asst. Agent.,"; William R. Montgomery, "Lieut. W. R. Montgomery's Journal during the Emigration of Pottawatomies in the Summer of 1833." Berthrong Collection (Division of Manuscripts, Bizzell Memorial Library, University of Oklahoma, Norman).

Illinois and Indiana and that their negotiations had been handicapped by a large number of traders whose presence among the Indians seemed detrimental to the government's position.²⁵

Although Potawatomi removal had been discussed at the negotiations, it had not been included in the terms of the treaty. The Prairie Band, therefore, still occupied their former lands in Illinois. The Illinois settlers were not happy with the continued occupation, and their ill feelings toward the Prairie Potawatomi were also buttressed by hardships incurred during the winter of 1832-1833. During the previous summer settlers had been kept from their fields by the threat of Indian attack, and their harvest had been small.²⁶

Once again rumors of Potawatomi hostility spread across the Illinois prairies. After American travelers passing near a Potawatomi camp on the Iroquois River reported that they had been intimidated by a group of warriors, settlers in the area asked the federal government for troops.²⁷ Frontier newspapers printed dubious reports of Indian hostility,²⁸ and farmers in the Illinois River Valley expressed plans to desert their homes at the first sign of impending Indian trouble.²⁹

Governor Reynolds' actions reflected his constituents' alarm. Displeased that members of the Prairie Band were still occupying their former lands in Illinois, Reynolds had earlier written to Secretary of War Lewis Cass and emphasized that the citizens of Illinois wished to be rid of these Indians. He further stated: "I feel it my duty to lay this subject before you and to observe that I will do all in my power to effect so desirable an object."³⁰

Reynolds was true to his word. In December, 1832, reports reached him of alleged Potawatomi depredations in central Illinois. He dispatched a hand picked commission to investigate these charges with instructions to meet the Indians. Not surprisingly the commission reported that

Menacing attitudes and threats, repeatedly assumed and made by the Indians, have incited the fears of the citizens It is the opinion of reflecting men whom we consulted, and in whose opinion we entirely concur, that unless suitable measures be taken to drive these Indians to their own country, or to awe them into

²⁵ "Report of the Commissioners who Negotiated the Miami and Pottawatomi Treaty, October, 1832," Berthrong Collection.

²⁶ Ninian Edwards to Elias Kane and I. M. Robinson, June 5, 1832, quoted in Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 369-72.

²⁷ Nicholas Boulvire to Lewis Cass, December 10, 1833, Berthrong Collection.

²⁸ John Kinzie to Elbert Herring, March 22, 1833, Roll 696, "Prairie du Chien Agency, 1824-1833," National Archives Microcopy 234, "Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881," Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

²⁹ William Clark to Lewis Cass, December 9, 1832, Berthrong Collection.

³⁰ John Reynolds to Lewis Cass, October 25, 1832, Roll 696, "Prairie du Chien Agency, 1824-1833," National Archives Microcopy 234, "Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881," Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

peaceful behavior, some seriously hostile steps toward the whites, in the course of the present winter may be foreboded.³¹

Reynolds followed the commission's recommendations. He quickly requested that a detachment of United States troops be sent to meet the Indians, urging the commander of these forces to give "all the protection within your power" to the citizens of the area.³²

The appearance of troops only compounded the Prairie Band's problems. As winter swept across the Old Northwest, the Indians found themselves in dire straits. Increasing white settlement had greatly depleted the game supply, and the Prairie Band's cornfields had been burned by settlers during the Black Hawk War. Facing starvation, and now threatened by a military force, a large group of Prairie Potawatomi fled into Indiana. Led by their chief, Quiquito, these Indians arrived at the Indian agency near Logansport late in December.³³ The Potawatomi remained at this location during the rest of the winter. Indian Agent William Marshall supplied them with a small quantity of food which they supplemented by hunting. Describing the Potawatomi as "very industrious," Marshall reported that they were friendly and well received by the white citizens of the area.³⁴

During the winter Quiquito informed Marshall that his followers were ready to move beyond the Mississippi. He assured the agent that the Prairie Band would be willing to leave as soon as the grass was high enough to sustain their horses. The chief asked for an interpreter to accompany the Indians and for a few more horses with which to make the journey.³⁵ Marshall relayed this information to Washington and the War Department promptly appointed Colonel Abel C. Pepper, an Indian agent residing at Rising Sun, Indiana, to facilitate the removal. Pepper was instructed to proceed to Logansport and to meet with the Potawatomi. There he was to assemble a deputation of not more than seven Indians who would accompany him on an exploratory trip into the lands the federal government had made available for Indian relocation. After his Indian deputation had selected their new home in the West, Pepper was to return

³¹ Report of Samuel Whitesides, Hiram Curry, William Moore, and Thomas Reynolds to Illinois Governor John Reynolds, December 13, 1832, copy, Berthrong Collection.

³² John Reynolds to Major Henry S. Dodge, December 13, 1832, Evarts B. Greene and Clarence W. Alvord, eds., *The Governors' Letter-Books, 1818-1834* (*The Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, Vol. VI; Springfield, 1909), 221.

³³ William Marshall to George B. Porter, February 25, 1833, Berthrong Collection; Gurdon S. Hubbard to John Tipton, January 27, 1833, Robertson and Riker, *Tipton Papers*, II, 792-93.

³⁴ William Marshall to George B. Porter, February 25, 1833, Berthrong Collection. John Tipton was elected to the United States Senate in 1831, and William Marshall was appointed to succeed Tipton as Indian Agent in February, 1832. Marshall had earlier served as a United States marshal in Indiana.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

with them to Indiana. He was then to supervise the removal of the entire band to its new location.³⁶

Pepper arrived at Logansport on April 11, 1833. He found that Quiquito's band was composed of 256 Indians but that other Indians were also assembling at the agency.³⁷ Many of the Wabash Kickapoo had intermingled with the Potawatomi, and members of both tribes had accepted the faith of the Kickapoo Prophet.³⁸ The Kickapoo and Potawatomi from the Wabash Band began to swell the ranks of the Indians awaiting removal. A group of sixty Wea living nearby also expressed interest in the planned journey to the West. The Indian agency at Logansport was rapidly expending its supplies; therefore, Pepper advised many of the Indians to return to their hunting lands but to reassemble during the first week of June. The agent then wrote to Washington and requested that the government quickly provide the money and materials needed for the Prairie Potawatomi removal.³⁹

Officials in Washington were favorably impressed with Pepper's request, but they were slow in answering it. The commissary general of subsistence, General George Gibson, waited until May 28 to appoint Lieutenant William R. Montgomery, who had acquired previous experience in financing Indian removal in the South, as the federal disbursing agent for the removal. Montgomery's orders, which provided \$20,000 for removal expenses, did not reach him until June 17; by June 20 he was on his way to Indiana.⁴⁰

Montgomery had hoped to be in Logansport by July 1, 1833, but he became ill shortly after leaving Washington and was forced to stop in Cumberland, Maryland. After a convalescence of several days he proceeded to Cincinnati where he found no room on the stage to Indianapolis. He was forced to wait for a stage leaving later in the week and finally arrived in Indianapolis on July 14. In this city he was informed that Pepper had already left for the West with the small deputation of Prairie Potawatomi who were to select the

³⁶ Lewis Cass to Abel C. Pepper, March 6, 1833, copy, *ibid.* Pepper, an active political supporter of the Democratic party in Indiana, received the title of "Superintendent of Pottawatomi Emigration."

³⁷ Pepper to General George Gibson, April 11, 1833, *ibid.*

³⁸ Clint Clay Tilton, "Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard and Some of His Friends," *Illinois State Historical Society Transactions for the Year 1933* (Springfield, 1933), XL, 130. Kannekuk or the Kickapoo Prophet was a Wabash Kickapoo who originally lived near Danville, Illinois. He formulated a new Indian faith from various tenets and practices of Roman Catholicism, frontier Protestantism, and native Indian religions. Utilizing carved wooden prayer sticks in place of a rosary, his followers chanted oral prayers to the Great Spirit and abstained from alcoholic beverages. One of George Catlin's paintings illustrates a Kickapoo warrior holding a prayer stick.

³⁹ Pepper to General George Gibson, April 11, 1833, Berthrong Collection.

⁴⁰ William R. Montgomery to Gibson, June 20, 1833; Acting Commissary General of Subsistence J. H. Hook to Montgomery, July 26, 1833, *Senate Document 512, Correspondence on the Subject of the Emigration of Indians Between the 30th November, 1831, and 27th December, 1833*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess. (1834), I, 774-75, 283.

Indians' new lands. Without bothering to investigate the situation at Logansport, Montgomery settled down in Indianapolis to await Pepper's return.⁴¹

While Montgomery was making his journey to Indiana, Pepper was assembling the Prairie Potawatomi for removal. The War Department had appointed two Indiana citizens, Rudolphus Schoonover of Salem and Colonel Lewis Sands of Greencastle, to aid Pepper. They had arrived at Logansport in the early summer and had helped Pepper supervise the growing community of Indians.⁴²

The removal agents were ignorant of Montgomery's late departure and erroneously expected him to arrive at Logansport during the first week of June. They were dismayed when he did not appear. The population of the removal camp had increased to approximately 400 Indians, and they were impatient with the delay. As early as May 7 Pepper had written to General Gibson warning that the Potawatomi were anxious to leave and stating that they threatened to go by themselves if the government did not begin their removal by the middle of June.⁴³ Quiquito's band had received an invitation from the Kickapoo Prophet to settle among his followers.⁴⁴ This band of Kickapoo had just acquired lands near Fort Leavenworth and wanted other members of their religious faith to settle nearby.⁴⁵ The invitation seemed to assure the Prairie Band a warm reception in the West and accelerated their demands for prompt removal.

Meanwhile, Pepper assembled four chiefs or headmen who wished to accompany him on his reconnaissance of the lands in the West. Pepper had hoped to converse with the disbursing agent before he left on his journey, but the agent's failure to appear and the growing restlessness of the Potawatomi forced Pepper into action. On June 19, 1833, he reported to the War Department that "If a disbursing agent does not reach this place within ten days, I shall deem it my duty to start with the exploring party, and leave Colonel Sands and General Schoonover in charge of the emigrating band, with instructions to await the arrival of the disbursing agent"⁴⁶ Eleven days later, on June 30, 1833, Pepper and the four Potawatomi left for the West.⁴⁷

Pepper planned to cross the Mississippi at St. Louis; however, while crossing the Illinois prairies, his expedition was informed that a cholera epidemic had broken out in Missouri. On July 5, within fifteen miles of St. Louis, his Indian companions refused to go any

⁴¹ Montgomery to Gibson, September 10, 1833, Berthrong Collection.

⁴² Lewis Cass to Pepper, March 6, 1833, copy, *ibid.*

⁴³ Pepper to Gibson, May 7, 1833, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Pepper to Gibson, May 25, 1833, *Senate Document* 512, I, 800.

⁴⁵ Arrell M. Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border* (Norman, 1963), 109-10.

⁴⁶ Pepper to Gibson, June 19, 1833, *Senate Document* 512, I, 801.

⁴⁷ Pepper to Gibson, August 12, 1833, Berthrong Collection.

further. After unsuccessfully attempting to persuade them to enter the city, Pepper instructed them to remain in camp while he and an interpreter visited St. Louis. He hoped that his safe return would allay their fears of contracting the disease, but when he returned to camp, their desire to return to Logansport had increased. His interpreter agreed with the Indians, and Pepper decided to return. On July 7, 1833, the party started back to Indiana. In the afternoon of the same day Pepper contracted "bilous fever" and was forced to send the Indians home alone. He eventually returned to his residence in Indiana, where a relapse of his illness prevented him from resuming his duties at Logansport.⁴⁸

Before Pepper had left on this abortive venture, he had appointed Sands to supervise the removal. Sands was to wait for the disbursing agent and then proceed with him and the Indians to the West. As the days dragged into weeks and no evidence of the awaited departure was apparent, the Indians lost their earlier fervor for removal. Food and provisions purchased by Pepper were gradually diminishing, and some of the Indians began to wander away from Logansport.⁴⁹

On July 4 another group of Prairie Potawatomi straggled into the camp at Logansport. Four days later Sands and Schoonover moved their tent into the Indian encampment, hoping that their proximity would dissuade the tribesmen's dissatisfaction with continued waiting. To conciliate the Indians extra provisions were purchased and distributed. Unfortunately these actions did not achieve the desired purpose, for on Wednesday, July 10, approximately 200 Indians left the removal center and returned to their former homes. Six days later, after hearing that the exploring party had encountered cholera near St. Louis, thirty more Indians broke camp and moved away.⁵⁰

While the agents at Logansport were striving to placate the Indians and to assure them of the federal government's good intentions, Montgomery remained in Indianapolis. Local residents informed him that Indian Agent Marshall had recently passed through their city and had stated that since some of the Indians had dispersed, the emigration had been abandoned. Evidently believing such statements to be true, Montgomery decided to wait in Indianapolis until he personally could discuss the situation with Marshall. He remained in the city five days before encountering a traveler from the Logansport area who indicated that Sands and a large number of Indians were still awaiting his arrival. He then left for the removal camp.⁵¹

Montgomery finally arrived at the Indian encampment on July

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Lewis Sands to Gibson, June 26, 1833, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Lewis Sands, "Journal of Occurrences [*sic*] In the Pottawatomie Removal under the Direction of Lewis Sands, Asst. Agent.," *ibid.*

⁵¹ Sands to Pepper, July 25, 1833, copy, *ibid.*

20, and a dispute soon arose between the disbursing agent and Sands over who should assume control of the removal.⁵² At the start of his journey to Indiana Montgomery had written to Gibson stating that he hoped Pepper was aware of the extent of his authority "which some citizen agents are apt to suppose only limited by an ill-regulated discretion."⁵³ Accordingly, upon arrival, the disbursing agent informed Sands that since Pepper was absent, he, Montgomery, would assume authority over the emigration.⁵⁴ Although the two men finally agreed to cooperate, the continued friction was reflected in their correspondence to superiors. In a letter to Pepper, Sands denounced Montgomery and adamantly stated: "Had this officer been here when he was eating his 4 of July dinner in Cincinnati or during the five days he spent in Indianapolis, the Emigrants would have been at least two hundred stronger."⁵⁵

By the last week of July there were only 145 Indians left at Logansport.⁵⁶ These tribesmen were composed primarily of the Prairie Potawatomi who had fled Illinois with Quikito. Montgomery spoke with their leaders and denied their request for additional horses to use on the removal. He told them that they would be transported in wagons and further admonished them to "banish every idea of presents—that they had applied to go west, and that they would be transported there by such means as the Government thought proper, and be supplied with sufficient provisions, and nothing more."⁵⁷ The Indians then asked him to include their former home on the Iroquois River in the removal itinerary, stating that they had left certain personal possessions there which they wished to take to their home in the West. Montgomery again gave them a negative reply but promised that he would allow some of them to go to that location and retrieve all of their belongings if they would then join the removal expedition near Danville, Illinois.⁵⁸

Early on Saturday morning, July 27, 1833, Sands loaded the remaining Indians into freight wagons and prepared to start the journey to the West. Once again Montgomery was late. Sands and the Indians waited throughout the morning and finally at 11:00 A. M. decided to leave without him.⁵⁹ Montgomery overtook the party four miles west of its former camp. They stopped that night thirteen miles from their starting point.⁶⁰

As the party passed through western Indiana, Montgomery

⁵² Sands, "Journal of Occurrences in the Pottawatomie Removal," *ibid.*

⁵³ Montgomery to Gibson, June 20, 1833, *Senate Document* 512, I, 774-75.

⁵⁴ William R. Montgomery, "Lieut. W. R. Montgomery's Journal during the Emigration of Pottawatomies in the Summer of 1833," Berthrong Collection.

⁵⁵ Sands to Pepper, July 25, 1833, copy, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Sands to Montgomery, July 22, 1833, *Senate Document* 512, I, 902-903.

⁵⁷ Montgomery to Gibson, July 27, 1833, *ibid.*, 776.

⁵⁸ Montgomery, "Montgomery's Journal," Berthrong Collection.

⁵⁹ Sands, "Journal of Occurrences in the Pottawatomie Removal," *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Montgomery, "Montgomery's Journal," *ibid.*

complained that the Potawatomi were traveling too slowly.⁶¹ The Indians replied that their slow pace was caused by a lack of wagons in which to transport their goods. Angered by Montgomery's prodding, the Potawatomi forbade the disbursing agent to enter their part of the nightly camp.⁶² On August 1, 1833, the expedition camped within one half mile of Danville, Illinois. At this location the Indians expected to meet Schoonover and approximately seventy Potawatomi who had gone to the Iroquois River to retrieve their personal property. On July 25 Schoonover had left Logansport with a handful of warriors who were to help him transport the Indians' property to Danville. Shortly thereafter a large group of Potawatomi defied Montgomery's orders and followed Schoonover to the Iroquois. When the agent appeared at Danville, however, only three Indians accompanied him; the rest of the group had remained on the Iroquois River. Some of these Prairie Potawatomi had become ill, and their friends stated that they would not join in the removal until the sick Indians could travel. Evidently other motives also prompted this group of Potawatomi to stay in Illinois. Sands reported to Gibson that

The treaty and payments come on at Chicago in September. In the first instance, this band has an interest: they own considerable land which is proposed to be bought at this treaty. In the second, they wish to get their annuity before they go. All this has been made known to them by the traders and others who wish this emigration to fail.⁶³

Much to Montgomery's dismay Sands waited at Danville for two and one half days, hoping that some of the Potawatomi on the Iroquois would change their minds and return to the removal. Such waiting was in vain, and at noon on August 3, 1833, the party left its camp near Danville and traveled southwestward across Illinois towards St. Louis.⁶⁴

The expedition arrived at Alton, Illinois, on the east bank of the Mississippi River north of St. Louis on August 13.⁶⁵ Three days earlier, on August 10, Montgomery had left the expedition and proceeded to St. Louis to acquire steamboat accommodations to Fort Leavenworth. He was successful in chartering the steamboat *Otto* for \$1,000.⁶⁶ This boat was being repaired, but its captain assured the disbursing agent that it would be serviceable by August 15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Sands, "Journal of Occurrences in the Pottawatomie Removal," *ibid.*

⁶³ Sands to Gibson, August 3, 1833, *Senate Document* 512, I, 896-97. The treaty negotiations at Chicago are discussed in Foreman, *The Last Trek of the Indians*, 103-105; and in Anselm J. Gerwing, "The Chicago Indian Treaty of 1833," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, LVII (Summer, 1964), 117-43.

⁶⁴ Montgomery, "Montgomery's Journal," Berthrong Collection.

⁶⁵ Sands, "Journal of Occurrences in the Pottawatomie Removal," *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Montgomery to Gibson, August 15, 1833, *ibid.*

Montgomery therefore contacted Sands and instructed him to assemble the Indians on the river wharf at Alton on the afternoon of the appointed day.⁶⁷

Following Montgomery's instructions, Sands mustered the Potawatomi on the wharf and waited throughout the afternoon of August 15. The steamboat failed to appear. In the evening the Indians carried their baggage and led their horses back to camp. The boat did not arrive during the following day, and the camp retired for the night. Finally, late on the evening of August 16, the steamboat landed at Alton; and in the early morning darkness the Indians, agents, horses, and luggage were loaded aboard. On August 17, 1833, the *Otto* set out for Fort Leavenworth.⁶⁸ The voyage from Alton to Fort Leavenworth proceeded without difficulty. Although several of the agents on board contracted a fever, the Indians remained healthy and evidently enjoyed their excursion. The steamboat arrived at its destination on the evening of August 24, and the Potawatomi were unloaded on the following morning.⁶⁹

Among the tribesmen who finally completed the removal to Fort Leavenworth were many members of Quiquito's band. The large number of Indians who had originally assembled near Logansport had gradually wandered away. From the agents' reports, which listed the number of Indians leaving the camp before removal, it would seem that during June, 1833, there were at least 400 Indians in the camp in Indiana.⁷⁰ Of this number, only sixty-seven tribesmen completed the removal.⁷¹

Both Sands and Montgomery realized that the removal had met with only limited success, and both attempted to blame the other for the small number of Indians that eventually arrived at Fort Leavenworth. Sands charged that Montgomery's late arrival at Logansport and his subsequent relations with the Indians alienated the Potawatomi and caused them to desert the removal.⁷² Montgomery replied that Sands and other local officials were uncooperative. He also insisted that the majority of the Indians actually did not want to leave Illinois and Indiana and that local traders and others who could exploit the Indians counseled the tribesmen against removal.⁷³

Regardless of blame, the removal of the Prairie Potawatomi

⁶⁷ Sands, "Journal of Occurrences in the Pottawatomie Removal," *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ This figure is calculated from statements found in Sands, "Journal of Occurrences in the Pottawatomie Removal" and from information in a letter by Sands to Gibson, June 26, 1833. All this material is in the Berthrong Collection.

⁷¹ "Muster Role of a Company of Potowomy Indians Emigrated West of the Mississippi under the direction of Col. Sands and now on the Kickapoo Land west of the state of Missouri and near Fort Leavenworth as taken in the Quarter Ending the 30th day of June," *ibid.*

⁷² Sands to Gibson, September 4, 1833, *ibid.*

⁷³ Montgomery to Gibson, September 10, 1833, *ibid.*

during 1833 was characteristic of various Indian removals during this period. Plagued by poor planning and inefficiency, these forced migrations are studies in misadministration and failure. Several factors combined to cause the failure of this specific venture. Pepper's promises to the Indians that they would be removed during the first week in June may have been sincere, but he could not guarantee that such pledges would be honored. When the removal was not initiated at that time, the Prairie Potawatomi became increasingly restless and dissatisfied with remaining in the removal camp. The failure of the government to respond promptly to Pepper's request to prepare for the removal added to the difficulties. Montgomery was not appointed as the federal disbursing agent until May 28, and his orders did not reach him until June 17, over two weeks after the Indians expected to start their journey. Therefore, Montgomery's late arrival at Logansport caused many Indians who had earlier been interested in removal to change their minds and desert the debarkation camp. Undoubtedly some would have reneged upon their earlier promises to remove beyond the Mississippi even if the disbursing agent had arrived in June, but his late appearance facilitated discontent and allowed the tribesmen ample time to reconsider their decision. Obviously, Montgomery's delayed arrival was not entirely his fault, for his late orders were compounded by illness and transportation difficulties over which he had little control. Yet his acceptance of hearsay evidence that the removal had been abandoned and his subsequent five day sojourn in Indianapolis added to his late arrival and caused even more Indians to leave the removal camp. The exploring party's encounter with cholera also was detrimental to the Prairie Potawatomi removal, and Pepper's attempt to minimize the seriousness of the epidemic was not sustained by his sudden illness upon his return from St. Louis. Finally, the Prairie Potawatomi had been promised cash and trade goods at Chicago in the autumn of 1833; the federal government had also announced that it wished to secure the remaining Potawatomi lands in Illinois at that time, and many of the Indians were unquestionably anxious to participate in this new treaty. Although Montgomery assured the Prairie Band that they would receive their share of all money and goods distributed at Chicago after the Indians arrived in Kansas, his late arrival and denial of Indian requests did not contribute to their opinion of his veracity. Therefore, the Indians who had accompanied Schoonover to the Iroquois River stayed to await events at Chicago. Many of these Potawatomi took part in the treaty proceedings at that location during the autumn of 1833. They were finally removed beyond the Mississippi five years later.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Gerwing, "The Chicago Indian Treaty of 1833," discusses this treaty in detail. Foreman's *The Last Trek of the Indians* includes a chapter on Potawatomi removal.