

## Ranger Letters

There was so much trouble in different parts of the territory, especially in the southern part, that Governor Harrison determined to organize several detachments of scouts and rangers, hoping in that way to check the numerous raids of the Indians. There were already fifteen or twenty regular scouts constantly on duty, who reported at headquarters at Vincennes. There were also a number of friendly Indians belonging to the Piankashaws, Weas and Delawares who were used as messengers.

This information and letters were kept by Captain William Hargrove, commander of the first division. They include Governor William Henry Harrison's letters of instruction and orders by the Secretary of Indiana Territory, General John Gibson to Captain Hargrove who commanded a detachment of Rangers in 1807. A few of those letters are transcribed and included here.

Colonel William Hargrove, married and then moved as a young man to Princeton, Indiana in 1803. After coming to Indiana Territory he was twice in the Ranger service, first in 1807 and again in 1812. In 1811 he was the first man in Indiana Territory to raise a company for service in the Tippecanoe Campaign.

Vincennes, Indiana Territory  
April 16, 1807

Captain William Hargrove:

This will be handed to you by Ell Ernest, one of our scouts. Since you were here on Last Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> .., two of our scouts are in an dreport that last Sunday night, the 12<sup>th</sup> ... a band of roving Indians captured a white family on the old Indian road from this place to Clarksville this side of the mudhole (where Otwell, Indiana now stands) killed the man and took into captivity the woman and her five children. Governor Harrison and Adjutant General John Small are both away. The Governor... instructed me to write you that if it was possible without taking too many men out of your settlement, that you enlist at least 20 men for the Ranger service giving a preference at all times to men who have been on Indian campaigns, but not to leave any family without some able-bodied man to protect them, unless they are in block-houses. This should be done at once so that the men can be on duty in five days. Send in two days from the time you receive this by the same hand an answer. I will then send you instructions on your duty.

By order of the Governor, John Gibson, Secretary, Indiana Territory.

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Vincennes, Indiana Territory  
April 20, 1807

Captain William Hargrove:

Your report by the hand of Scout Ernest has been received. The Governor is much pleased at your promptness.... You will divide your force and form a squad of six men under a reliable man who will act as Sergeant to patrol the main traveled way from you settlement south to the Ohio River at Red Banks....You are to patrol the old Indian trace that leads from this place to Clarksville on the Ohio river, from a point where this old road cross White River and going as far as 35 miles east of the mudhole... Once every week send a report of your work to this office. It has been ordered that movers coming over the old Trace shall be held on the other end until a number of them are together. Then they will travel with the rangers as they are coming west on the trace. Any coming into your territory will be sent to a point out of danger by you....If they intend to form a new settlement; they must build a fort and stay in it until the season for raids is past. They can prepare houses where they intend to locate but they must remain in the blockhouses at night. If there should be extra men with the movers who have had experience as hunters or in Indian fighting enlist them if you can. I hope that your experience with Indian warfare will help you protect your men. The roving bands of Indians prowling over this unprotected country in the warm season aim to murder helpless people for their scalps and the capturing of prisoners for what they can realize from the sale of them for servants to the British posts on the lakes. They are not hunting for armed soldiers. A careful and vigilant scouting service will in a great measure do away with these prowling bands of Indians.

By order of the Governor, John Gibson, Secretary, Indiana Territory.

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Headquarters, Indiana Territory  
Vincennes, July 6, 1807

Captain William Hargrove, Commanding a Detachment of Rangers.

Last Saturday, the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. A number of friendly Indians were in to see the celebration of Independence Day. A half-breed Delaware Indian named "Swimming Otter" reported that there was likely to be a raid made by young Indian hunters on boats loaded with people and their plunder coming to this section by the Wabash or going down the Ohio river. He said that the band would be led by an Indian who lost his father in a battle with a boat crew near the Red Banks (now Henderson, KY). The scouts thoroughly interrogated the Indian and he has promised to let them know the time they are to start and the route they will follow. The raiders will not get started, so the half-breed says, in less than 10 days and that he will be here two or three days before they go. You will then be informed by a runner so that you can thwart their designs if they attempt to cross your territory. It is reported here by friendly Indians that a band of Miami Indians captured a boat on the Ohio river some 40 miles below Clarksville and captured the crew, killing two men and carrying two women and four children into captivity. You can do no better than you have. Thoroughly patrol the three traveled ways. You could not do any good by roaming over the wilderness unless it was to make a short cut to reach

a point on one of the other routes. The white people coming to this section are on the three traces or down the Ohio and up the Wabash River.

For the Governor, John Gibson, Secretary of the Indiana Territory.

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Headquarters Post Vincennes  
July 12, Sunday 1807

Captain William Hargrove, Indian Territory Ranger Service

This will be handed you by a Piankashaw Indian who is thoroughly reliable. He will remain with you until you send your next report. The half-breed Swimming Otter came in this noon and reported there were twelve in the band of Indian hunters and they will start Tuesday night, aiming to cross White river above White Oak Springs (now Petersburg IN) and go in a direction that will place them on the Ohio at the mouth of Green River. It is hard to determine where they will cross the old Indian road that you are on, but some place between the mudhole and the White Oak Springs fort. The people at that Fort must be advised. You have the authority to secure as many men for temporary service from the White Oak Spring fort as they can spare. You must have the section all along for 15 miles to the east thoroughly patrolled. There will be 30 mounted men from this Post sent to the south of you who will patrol along and near to the Patoka river with scouts at the different fords on that river. With all this vigilance I feel sure that the Indian band will be destroyed or turned back.

By the direct order of Wm H. Harrison, Governor of the Indiana Territory.

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Headquarters Post Vincennes  
July 17, Sunday 1807

Captain William Hargrove, Commanding a Detachment of Rangers:

Your report by the Pankashaw Indian is to hand. The service rendered by your scouts is of such value to the country that the nation should substantially reward you and your commands. The Piankashaw Indian is well acquainted with the White river for many miles east of the fork. The chastisement given this band of robbers and cut-throats will have a good effect on them and others who would have followed them if they had been successful. The Indian only learns as it is shot into him. There will be no more raids from that direction this season but it is only safe when we are prapered to meet them if they should attempt to come again. Say to young Hogue that the Governor will write him a personal letter complimenting him for the good shot he proved to be.

By order of Wm H. Harrison, Governor of the Indiana Territory,  
John Gibson, Sec'y of Indiana Territory.

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Vincennes, Indiana Territory  
July 23, 1807

Captain William Hargrove, in the Ranger Service:

Your report is to hand. The salt, meal and other supplies were sent by cart two days ago. The receipt paper I enclose to you. also 50 pounds of lead, 50 pounds of powder, 200 gun-flints, one bail of tow sent to White Oak Springs Fort in care of Woolsey Pride. The 10 men you enlisted for extra service should have a certificate something like the following:

“James Blank served 10 days on extra military duty with the Rangers under Captain William Hargrove, commanding, dated and signed.”

The rangers on the traveled way to the south need not make more than one trip each way every 10 days. The danger does not exist on that route that did some months ago but they will patrol to the east, south of the Patoka river a distance of 40 miles as the river runs, to a trace that crosses that river... You will want good axemen to make the traces plain by making blazes on the sides of the trees near the road so that it can be easily followed without a guide.

By order of the Governor, John Gibson, Sec'y of Indiana Territory.

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Headquarters, Indiana Territory  
Vincennes September 12, 1807

Captain William Hargrove, Commanding Rangers east of the Wabash River:

There has long been an old traveled way from this Post that crosses the White river near David Robb's place and the Patoka river at John Severns', thence in a southwest direction to the Wabash river near the point where the Little Wabash empties into the main river, thence across the main Wabash at that place which can only be crossed by canoes or check boats. This route is known by some as the the Salt Route. Salt has become so scarce and high priced that a number of settlers south of White River have petitioned the governor for an escort of soldiers to protect them whilst on the trail and at the salt works west of the Wabash river. This petition has been under consideration for several days. The Governor sent for Mr. Robb about this matter and it has been arranged that a meeting with the petitioners and other citizens would be held at Mr. Kimbles who lives on the site of the old Delaware Indian town 18-20 miles southwest... You will temporarily place your command in the hands of your ranking Sergeant and attend that meeting, taking two men and one scout with you. After due deliberation and consultation with the people present, if you think it best you can place two men on duty on the trail west of the river but their main camp must be on the east

side of the Wabash when there are no parties to guard at the salt works. The scouts will remain with the two soldiers doing regular scouting duties... the salt makers are to be instructed to have certain days to make salt and that they must go to the works in a body of not less than 15 men. One half of that number to be at all time ready for military duty, subject to the orders of the Sergeant which you place in command, to protect the others while the work is in progress. ...After the first of December there is but little danger of Indian raids. This side of the Wabash is considered sufficiently safe for so large a number of cautious men to travel at any time. After the meeting you will send a report of the proceeding to this office.

By directions of the Governor, John Gibson, Sec'y of Indiana Territory.

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Headquarters, Indiana Territory  
Vincennes, Sunday, October 4, 1807

Captain William Hargrove, in command of Rangers:

The Governor wishes to assure you of his appreciation of your successful work in gathering so many of the unfortunate refugees at points near the Yellow Banks and other traces and the large colony which you have gathered on the new trace crossing the Yellow Banks road. This is a very desirable place to have a strong fort. In making the building be sure that it is strongly put together, made out of large logs and that a stockade 10 feet high be built that will enclose one acre of ground. In this enclosure can be erected a number of strong buildings that will safely protect 50 people. This will be a rallying point for all who may come later to that section. The times are very unsettled. The Indians are continually grumbling because the white people are in this country and threatening that unless their lands are restored they will drive them back across the Ohio river. North of the White river they could easily concentrate in such numbers that should they find our people unprepared could overrun the most of your territory. It is hard to tell anything about what an Indian will do when he has the advantage. They are the most treacherous, cunning rascals on earth and the most brutal as well. The only safe way is to keep the advantage on our side and put the Indians on the defense. Then they know that your position makes one white man equal to 10 Indians there is no danger of an attack...

William H. Harrison, Governor of Indiana Territory. Per John Gibson, Secretary.

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Headquarters, Indiana Territory  
Vincennes, October 12, 1807

William Hargrove, Captain Commanding in Ranger Service:

Your report and the man you sent in under guard, are here. You did the right thing in arresting this man. All such suspicious cases as this should be investigated. What this

man is has not yet been found out and it is doubtful if it ever is. If this country were at war with a white race it would evidently be determined that he was a spy locating the military strength and positions of our army. It may be that he is doing that work for the British. He evidently is not what he claims to be. A prisoner for two years among the Indians would not have such clean underwear beneath his buckskin suit. This his hair has been recently cut by a barber. ....

By order of the Governor. John Gibson, Secretary of Indiana Territory.

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Headquarters, Indiana Territory  
Sunday, October 18, 1807

Captain William Hargrove, Commanding Rangers:

...The statement of the Delaware Indian that he has seen the prisoner whom we are holding as a spy at Clarksville, two moons ago, is noted.

The old Trace that runs near the Ohio River crossing the Wabash and on the saline regions of the Illinois has been a regular pass way for Indians from time when none knew....You are to make an official visit to chief Setteedown. Bailey Anderson understands their language and will act as interpreter. Before leaving the old Chief invite him to bring some of his young men and visit Governor Harrison at this Post. Have him set the day as early as he will. You will then proceed east on the trace until you come to where it crosses the road running to the north that comes to the Ohio river just west of the mouth of blue river. Thoroughly familiarize yourself with this route. In returning note well the topography of the country. Return the two men to their stations and report in person to this post.

By direction of Wm. H. Harrison, Governor of Indiana Territory. John Gibson, Secretary

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Headquarters, Indiana Territory  
October 28, 1807

William Hargrove, Captain Commanding Rangers:

Chief Settedown and his young men have returned to their homes. He assured the governor that the Indians gathering in his neighborhood were very peaceably inclined toward the white people and gave as a reason for their being there that game was more plentiful than across the Wabash and that they intended to stay only a short while. In answering the inquiry why he did not want to keep all the game for himself and people, said that there was much more than he wanted. Finally said that in less than one moon they would all go back over the Wabash. It is hoped that this will be true....

By order of the Governor, John Gibson, Secretary of Indiana Territory.

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Post Vincennes  
November 4, 1807

Captain Wm Hargrove, Commanding a Detachment of Rangers:

The location for the refugees is no doubt a good one. Plenty of water is very desirable. The Governor is favorable to your suggestion. It certainly would be to the advantage of the new emigrants for them to prepare a little cabin inside of the stockades and to remain in it during the winter. If they prefer to go to some other place in the spring they can do so. The advantage of being with a number of people during the cold season in hunting and the social advantages is recompense enough for all the trouble they would be at to erect the little cabin.

The supposed spy has been sent to Fort Washington with a statement of the evidence and the affidavit against him. There will be no further need of hunting evidence in that case. Without a doubt he is a spy for the British and will be held as such for an indefinite time unless direct evidence of his guilt should be secured. Then he will be summarily dealt with.

You should now have four roads or traces running to the east that can be easily found and traveled...between the Ohio and White rivers. Also you have four roads or traces running north and south dividing your territory in that direction from near the Wabash on the west to Blue river on the east, thus enabling you to give much better protection to settlers now there and to the emigrants coming into your territory....The most important thing that you can do is to see that the blockhouses are so located that they will be accessible to those in the surrounding country if danger should come.... The English on the north are doing all that they can to cause trouble between the Indians and the pioneers, using the treaties which have been made as a pretext claiming that it was fraudently obtained.

It is thought best that you make a personal inspection of all the block houses that are now built and the several that are being constructed at the different stations in your territory and see that they are securely built and good, strong, durable stockades surround them that will have sufficient room for the construction of from six to ten small cabins. Someone must be placed in command and it must be understood that he is to obeyed by all of those who will use that fort as a place of refuge.

Have them select by lot the man they want, but advise those interested that the most efficient men they have should be chosen. You will make a careful inspection of their arms and ammunition and should you find them deficient in either you can make a requisition on the ordinance office at this place through these head-quarters for the needed supplies....

By direction of W.H. Harrison, Gov. of Indiana Territory. John Gibson, Secretary

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Vincennes, Indiana Territory  
November 12, 1807

Captain Wm Hargrove, Commanding first division of Rangers, east of the Wabash river:

Your report enclosing a letter from FuQuay...were fully considered by the Governor. That there would be some excuse made for the Indians to remain during the winter months has been suspect. The fact that they are building such secure tepees warrants that suspicion, but their attempt to be adopted into the tribe of the Shawnees was unlooked for. The governor directs that you have a vigilant watch kept on their actions....Better have Bailey Anderson interview the old Chief and in their talk remind him of his promise to the Governor that they would be gone in one moon. FuQuay and Anderson it seems found out that the Illinois Indians on the visit are Kickapoos and that they have one of their sub-chiefs in command of them. This looks suspicious....

If you should learn any new dangerous developments, send immediately to this headquarters a report of it. If it should become necessary, one hundred men can be sent from this Post to any point which you may think best to place them....

The Pianashaw Indian, named Yellow Bird, has just returned from a visit to Indian friends on the west fork of White river. He said to one of our friendly Indians that the Indians on White river were grumbling about the treaties and threatening to drive the Americans back over the Ohio. That there is a great unrest among the Indians is not doubted by those whose business it is to know what is going on outside of the settlements. What it may terminate in is uncertain. It is best for our people to be well on their guard and be ready in the event war should come.

By order of the Governor, John Gibson, Secretary of Indiana Territory.

Post Script: The Governor directs that you ascertain how many able-bodied men you have in your district that would be able to bear arms.

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Vincennes, Indiana Territory  
November 18, 1807

Captain Wm Hargrove, in the Ranger Service:

The men will be sent in two hours from the time your runner arrives if they will be needed. If you think that 50 men will be sufficient, that number will be sent. It is best to have all that will be needed.

At a point some miles below the mouth of White river, there has been some trouble between the settlers and the Indians who had a few wigwams some distance to the east of the Wabash river. Two Piankashaw Indians are here today. They say that their people were driven away across the Wabash river and their tepees, skins and plunder burned.

It is directed that you go and investigate this matter and see what can be done about obtaining a satisfactory adjustment with the Indians. Everything has been done here to allay the ill feelings of the two Indians. The Governor ordered some tents, blankets, and



kettles to be sent to those who lost their property. If you find out who the white people were you will remind them that such conduct as this must not occur again. This Territory is in no shape for a race war with the Indians, which they be only too glad for an excuse to engage in. It might be best that you take David Robb and some other of your best informed citizens with you when you make the investigation. The Indians who were driven away are with another band of Piankashaw Indians west of the Wabash several miles below the mouth of the White river.

By order of Wm Henry Harrison, Governor of Indiana Territory, John Gibson, Secretary.

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Vincennes, Indiana Territory  
November 27, 1807

William Hargrove, Commanding the Western Division of Rangers east of the Wabash river:

The Governor directs that you discharge the men who are on patrol duty except those who are on duty on the trace east of White Oak Springs Fort. The patrol over that route need not go for that trace but once in every eight days. The scout and the two friendly Indians will patrol the section of White river from the forks up to as far as 25 miles east of the Mudholes. There is more danger arriving from stray bands of Indians attempting to come into the settlement for the purpose of stealing horses than there is of an attack on the settlers.

In discharging the men, any whom you find who wish to remain in the service, you will enlist for regular soldiers and order them to report to these head-quarters with a copy of their enlistment papers.... Visit every portion of your Territory and notify the people at the Blockhouses and the settlements that they must keep a vigilant lookout, as the Rangers will be withdrawn. After visited all the stations, return to White Oak Springs and discharge all but two of the men and Sergeant Hogue who you will place in command with instructions to carefully watch the section east of the Mudholes on his patrol; and for him to report by the hand of one of the friendly Indians to these Head-quarters once every two weeks. When you have finished this work you will report to this Post...

By order of the Governor, John Gibson, Secretary of Indiana Territory.