

# That "Finished Scoundrel" — Gen. James Wilkinson

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

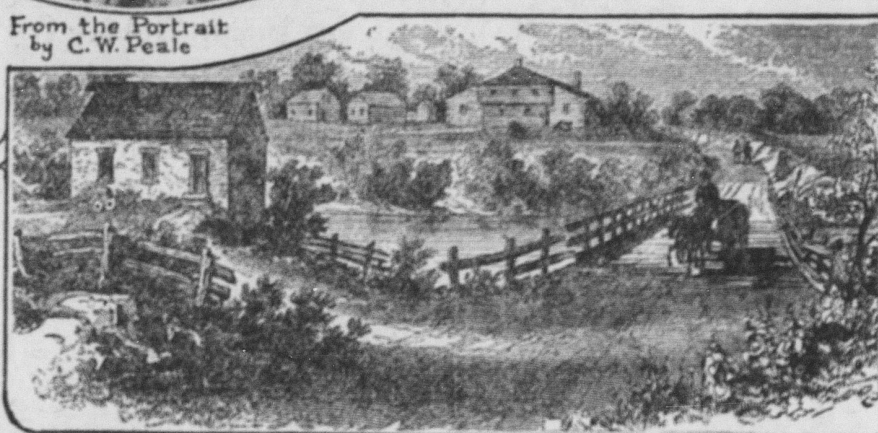
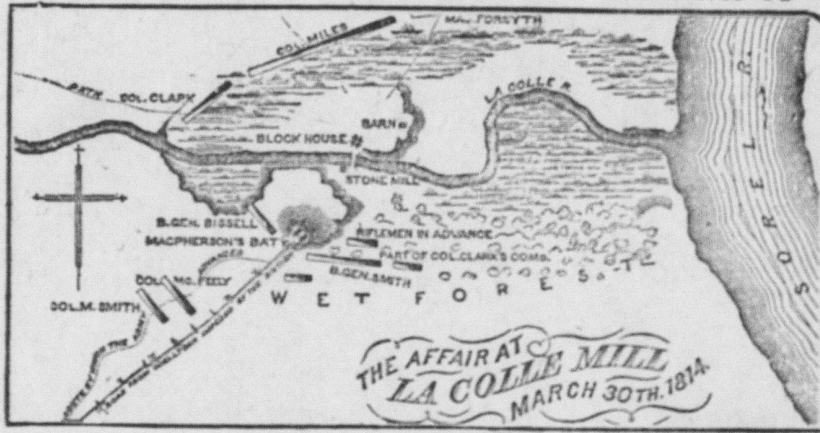
**Y**OU probably have never heard of the Battle of La Colle Mill which was fought 120 years ago this month just across the Canadian border from Rouses Point, N. Y. In that respect you're not much different from most of your fellow-countrymen, for this battle has never yet been considered important enough to win a place in our school histories. And even if you have read about it elsewhere, it's not likely that you care particularly to remember the story of that engagement. For it was just another in the long series of failures and disasters, brought about by blundering American generals, which makes the military history of the War of 1812, with but one or two exceptions, such dreary reading for those Americans who like to think that we, as a nation, have been uniformly successful in every war we have waged.

No, the Battle of La Colle Mill was not the sort of affair to foster much pride in the history of American arms. In it an army of some 4,000 Americans was held at bay by only 200 British until red-coated reinforcements came up, bringing their numbers up to about 1,000 men. But

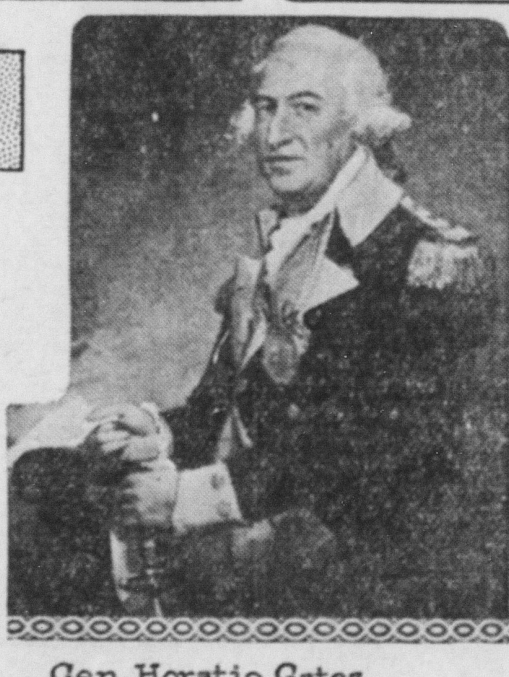
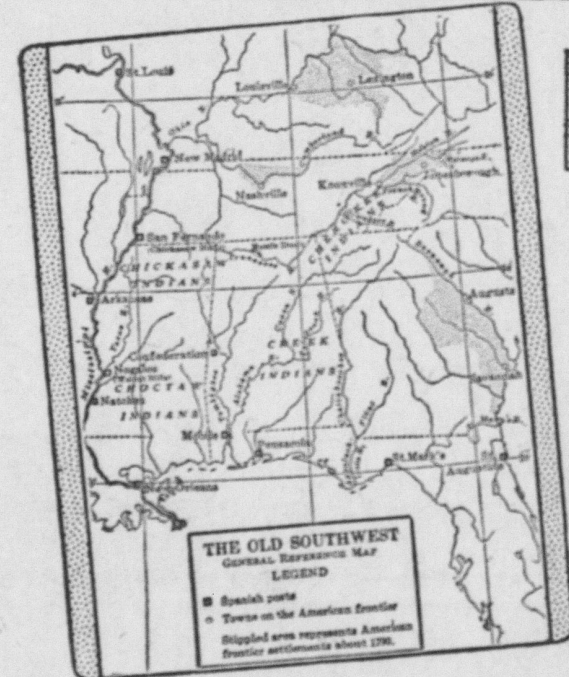


Gen. James Wilkinson

Aaron Burr



La Colle Mill and Block-house



Gen. Horatio Gates

which seem to prove that Wilkinson was an agent of the king of Spain, paid by him to influence Kentucky to secede from the Union and become a Spanish ally.

If he was in the pay of Spain it evidently wasn't enough to support his family for he went back into the American army, was advanced to colonel and within a year to the rank of brigadier-general and in 1796 he became commander of the army.

Then followed that amazing period in his career when, holding the highest military office in the land, he was still, there is good reason to believe, in the pay of Spain. Soon afterwards he was involved in the Burr conspiracy. Like the Spanish Conspiracy the Burr plot is still something of a mystery with many angles as yet unexplained. Recent historical research has uncovered evidence which indicates that Wilkinson, instead of Burr, was the arch-conspirator and that Burr was only the tool of the unscrupulous commander-in-chief. According to one theory Wilkinson was Jefferson's secret agent all along, giving Burr enough rope with which to hang himself before exposing the plot. According to another, Wilkinson used Burr for his own ends, then double-crossed him at the last to save his own skin.

In the light of his past career, it would seem reasonable to believe that Wilkinson was up to his old tricks—playing both ends against the middle and quite capable of betraying anyone to further his own ambitious projects. But whatever the truth of the matter, the fact remains that although Wilkinson narrowly missed indictment on a charge of treason he managed to come through the whole affair without bearing his just share of the disgrace that engulfed poor Aaron Burr and continued on his way of playing a part in important historical events.

As commander of the army he sent Lieutenant Pike off upon the exploring expeditions that won fame for that young officer. He was one of the commissioners who received the Louisiana Purchase from the French and at the outbreak of the War of 1812 he won a bloodless victory by capturing Mobile and ousting the Spanish garrison there. Then he went north to the Canadian border to add to his laurels, but succeeded only in wrecking what little military reputation he had left.

Still the stormy petrel of the army, he became involved in a series of jealousies and bickerings with other American generals who were, if anything, more incompetent than he. The result was the utter failure of his proposed expedition to capture Montreal, an expedition which had every prospect of success had it been carried through intelligently.

In March, 1814, he launched another campaign to "vindicate" himself. "But instead of success and vindication, he achieved only ignominious defeat in the insignificant battle of La Colle Mill." That was the end of James Wilkinson. He was relieved of his command and ordered to Washington under arrest to await court-martial. "The wait was long. The harassed administration attempting to wage war without money, without ships, almost without soldiers, and with generals who achieved disaster with monotonous regularity, had not time to waste on the trial of one of its failures." Perhaps if he had been tried it would have been with the usual result. For during his career he had been before three courts of inquiry on charges ranging all the way from neglect of military duty to treason and each time he had managed to escape with a coat of whitewash.

Instead of being tried he was allowed to slip quietly into obscurity. He spent the next few years writing his "Memoirs," a voluminous and verbose alibi for all the things that had ever been charged against him, and managing his plantation on the Mississippi below New Orleans. Then we find him in Mexico City also adjusting claims of American citizens entrusted to him and in trying to obtain a grant of land on what is now the site of Galveston, Texas, from the Spanish "in recognition of services rendered."

He died in 1825 and was buried beneath the Church of San Miguel in the Mexican capital. The exact site of his grave is unmarked and unknown—an appropriate end, perhaps, to the man who received so much from his country and gave so little in return.

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## Fifty Famous Frontiersmen

By

ELMO SCOTT WATSON

### Rising Wolf, White Blackfoot

**T**HE blood of French nobility and of English aristocracy flowed in his veins. He was fair-haired and blue-eyed and white-skinned, but to this day he is revered among the Blackfoot Indians as "Rising Wolf," one of their own greatest and best-loved. Hugh Monroe was his name and he was born at Three Rivers, Quebec, in 1708, the son of Capt. Hugh Monroe of the British army in Canada and Amelle de la Roche, daughter of a noble family of French emigres.

When but sixteen years of age he persuaded his parents to let him enter the service of the Hudson's Bay company, the lords of the empire of fur and that spring he started west with a flotilla of their canoes. The next year he was at Mountain Post on the Saskatchewan. Around the fort were camped thousands of Blackfeet, come there to trade for the white man's goods. But as yet the company had no Blackfeet interpreter and the H. B. C. factor at the post, impressed with the intelligence of young Monroe, detailed him to live and travel with the Pikuni (Piegan) tribe of the Blackfeet until he should learn their language and be able to influence them to return to Mountain Post each year to do their trading.

Young Monroe succeeded beyond the wildest hopes of the H. B. C. factor. The first thing he did, quite by chance, made a deep impression upon the Indians. He lighted the medicine man's pipe of tobacco by holding a burning glass, concealed in his hand, over it and the Blackfeet, awe-stricken by his apparent link with their great deity, the sun, thereafter regarded him as "great medicine." Later he strengthened the bond by marrying Sinokpi, or Fox Woman, the daughter of Lone Walker, a great chief of the Pikuni.

During his long years with the Hudson's Bay company and later with the American Fur company, for which he became post hunter at Fort Benton in Montana and as a free trapper, Monroe extended his influence over the Blackfeet to other tribes as well until he was probably the best-known and best-liked white man among the tribes of the Northern Plains.

Rising Wolf and Fox Woman were the parents of two sons and two daughters John, Francois, Lizzie and Amelia. The latter married Thomas Jackson, a Virginian, and they had two sons, Robert and William Jackson. Monroe had a great deal to do with the training of these two grandsons who became noted as scouts for Gen. George A. Custer and Gen. Nelson A. Miles in the Sioux war of 1876-77.

### "The Father of Oklahoma"

**C**ONSIDER the paradox of Capt. David L. Payne. He was the "father of Oklahoma," yet he was a native of Indiana; he was given his first name because of an event which took place in far-away Texas; he died and is buried in Kansas, which state has steadfastly resisted attempts to remove his body to Oklahoma; and the latter state has given him no official recognition beyond naming one of its original counties after him.

Born in Fairmont, Ind., December 30, 1836, his mother, who was a first cousin of Davy Crockett, named him David in honor of the frontier relative who had died gloriously at the fall of the Alamo a few months before. At the age of twenty-one Payne moved to Kansas and took up a claim near Atchison. He served in the Civil war in the Fourth Kansas regiment until 1863 when he was discharged. Then he became a member of the state legislature and postmaster at Fort Leavenworth.

In 1867 he was elected captain of a Kansas cavalry troop formed to fight the Indians and campaigned actively in the western part of the state. During the next two years he served with Gen. George A. Custer and his Seventh cavalry and, as the boon companion of the famous California Joe and actor in many a hairbreadth escape from death, won great renown as the "Scout of the Cimarron."

The year 1870 found him back in politics again, as a member of the state legislature of Kansas, as an unsuccessful candidate for the state senate in 1872 and finally as doorkeeper of the house of representatives in Washington where he remained until 1879. During his service as a scout for Custer, Payne had seen for himself the richness of the land in Oklahoma and in Washington he made the discovery, as he believed, that the lands in the western part of Indian territory, which had been ceded by the Creek Indians to the government for occupation by the other Civilized Tribes and by freedmen, in reality belonged to the public lands of the United States.

So Payne became the first "Oklahoma boomer" and the leader of no less than six of the eight expeditions of homeseekers, all of which tried to settle there and were expelled from the disputed territory by federal troops. Payne died suddenly in Wellington, Kan., November 27, 1884—"poisoned by his enemies," so his friends declare—five years too soon to see the realization of his dream of "the home of the red man" open to white settlement.

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## On the Funny Side



### IN MUSIC, TOO

A pianist of exceptional ability was visiting an Indiana city and was asked to play for the pupils of a junior high school.

The children were thoroughly appreciative and spent some time after the concert in discussing the art and the selections that had been played. "Miss S— puts so much expression in her music," said one.

"Yes, she certainly puts the right expression in," said another, "but the thing that interested me most was her wonderful technocracy."—Indianapolis News.

### Here's a Laugh

The pretty girl sat in the corner of the compartment next to her young man, her niece on her knee. The train dashed into a tunnel, and suddenly the other passengers heard the little girl exclaim: "Kiss me, too, Auntie Violet!"

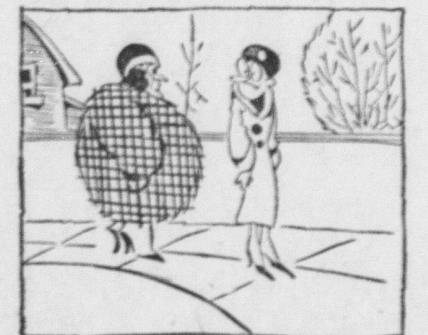
"Mavis," said Aunt Violet, quickly, "you should say 'Kiss me twice.' Kiss me two is not good grammar."

### Interrupted

Prisoner—Judge, I don't know what to do.

Judge—Why, how's that?  
Prisoner—I swore to tell the truth, but every time I try, some lawyer objects.—Labor.

### STILL IN THE BLACK



"How can she marry him, knowing that he's dissipated?"  
"But his fortune isn't."

### Roll Call

Barrister—How many children have you?

Man—Let's see—Tom, Bill, Nelly, Harry—

Small Boy at the Back of the Court—Don't forget me, father.—Dexhill Guide.

### Consolation

Author—Did you see Whittier's criticism of my latest novel? It was awful! He gave it a terrible hammering.

Friend—Oh, don't worry about him. He hasn't an idea in his head. He just says what everybody else is saying.—Moustique.

### Turkey's Many Names

When you want turkey in France, you ask for "dindon" or "coq d'Inde"; in Germany, "trutt hahan"; and in Spain, "pavo." Over here it's "bring on the bird," or the gobbler.—Pathfinder Magazine.

### Cure for Extravagance

"Are you saving any money since you started your budget system?"

"Sure. By the time we have balanced it up every evening it's too late to go anywhere."—Christian Register.

### Power of Print

"Why did you throw the pot of geraniums at the plaintiff?"  
"Because of an advertisement."  
"What advertisement?"  
"Say it with flowers."

### He Draws

"So arguments between you and your wife usually end in a draw?"  
"Yes, I draw the check."

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