

the Grand River <sup>21</sup> & I shall send a Vessell to Millwakee<sup>22</sup> in search of Corn. I have 150 Bushells already there & hope for more. I have about 200 here & I shall send a Batteaux to Detroit that will bring me at least 120 Bushells, this with my chance in the Vessell, I hope will answer my demands, my principle motive for giving you this information was, least the public Report of a Scanty [supply] might make you uneasy. I'm well provided with all the necessary Voytures<sup>23</sup> to pass your effects from hence to the Portage

FROM JOHN ASKIN TO COMMODORE GRANT<sup>24</sup> AT DETROIT,  
APRIL 28, 1778

The Ice being all gone I think we may in a very few days expect a Vessell or Boat from your Post. I therefore think it time to begin & answer the Letters I received this Winter. I was favoured with two of yours bearing date the 9<sup>th</sup> of Dec<sup>r</sup> & 2<sup>d</sup> of January last, which among other things brought

<sup>21</sup> There were two alternative routes by which goods might be transported between Montreal and Mackinac and the Lake Superior country: via Niagara, Detroit, and the lakes, and via the ancient French trade route of the Ottawa (or Grand) River to Lake Huron. The Ottawa River route was beset by numerous portages, and the vessels employed were, of course, canoes.

<sup>22</sup> To a greater extent than is commonly realized, the traders depended upon the Indians for their supplies of corn, an essential article in the conduct of the fur trade. The Ottawa of L'Arbre Croche (near modern Harbor Springs, Michigan) were relied upon for corn from a very early date. Askin's letters show that the Indians at Milwaukee were another source of supply. In the autumn of 1779, Captain Samuel Robertson was sent from Mackinac on a voyage around Lake Michigan, chiefly to gather up as much corn as might be procured. His journal, published in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, XI, 203-12, gives an interesting picture of conditions at Milwaukee at this date.

<sup>23</sup> A "voyture" might be any species of vehicle of transportation; here it necessarily refers to the boats under Askin's control.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Grant, born May 20, 1734, commonly known as the "Commodore," was a younger son of Patrick Grant of Glenmoriston, Inverness-shire, Scotland. Alexander Grant was "bred to the sea," but in 1757 he secured his transfer to Montgomery's Highlanders (the Seventy-Seventh Regiment) which was then being organized for service in America. He served in Forbes's campaign against Fort Duquesne in 1758, being wounded in Major Grant's disastrous rout at Grant's Hill, and in 1759 was with the army of General Amherst in the Lake Champlain region. Here he was appointed by Amherst to command a sloop on Lake Champlain, and the following year was given command of all the vessels on the lake. Thus was his further career determined. From 1763 until the Revolution he had the direction of the British naval establishment on all the lakes; in 1778 his field of authority was confined to the upper lakes (Erie, Huron, and Michigan), and he continued in command of the naval establishment on these lakes until January, 1812. In 1774 the Commodore