

drawn from what they have left on record. But this will be more fully discussed hereafter. As to the second proposition, I will say that what was *supposed* to have been a French fort *was* burned during the Revolution. But I will presently explain why it was that what was burned was thought to have been a fort.

Here, let me again invoke the law of historical criticism. No traveler visiting "Prairie des Chiens" during French domination in the Northwest mentions any French fort either on the "prairie" or in any portion of what is now Crawford County—and that domination lasted, as we have already stated, from 1671 to 1761. There is not extant any official or unofficial document giving any account of the supposed French fort of 1755. No one has ever put it on record that he has ever seen any such fort. No one has placed on record that he had been told by one claiming to have seen such a fort, that it was in existence there, either in 1755 or later.<sup>1</sup>

No list of names of any officers or privates said to have been stationed there is in existence or, so far as is known, ever has been. No map of 1755 or later has upon it any such fort. There was a terrible war raging in the West at this very date between France and England for possession of this country, the incidents of which war have been carefully written by a number of able writers; yet not one of them mentions the existence of such a fort. Now, in view of all this, the impartial historian declares he would not be justified in saying that such a fort had ever existed, even though there was a tradition (be it ever so positive, but simply a tradition) to the contrary. To offset all this, what have we? Only a tradition, and an exceedingly vague one,

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the tradition upon which both my critics rely, the supposed fort was erected in 1755 and destroyed by fire in 1776—the second year of the Revolution. During that period, Jonathan Carver, an exceedingly close observer and careful writer, visited (in 1766) the "prairie." Can any one for a moment suppose that so striking an object as a fort on that low and level expanse, and particularly a *French* fort (for Carver was English, and this was soon after the close of the Old French War) would have escaped his notice? But Carver mentions no fort of any kind there.