

became evident, that our further stay therein would be productive of very serious consequences: I saw that the delay of even a few days, would afford time to the Indians to assemble from all quarters, and, having strong and sufficient reasons to apprehend hostility from some of them, in effecting a removal from Fort McKay, I, with the advice and concurrence of Captain Anderson, senior officer of the Indian Department, decided upon evacuating that post, whilst it was in my power to do so, with safety to the Garrison. Aware of the heavy responsibility attached to such an unauthorized measure, I hesitated, till convinced that, by a longer delay at Fort McKay, I only hazarded the lives of my detachment; without, in the least, benefiting the service. I have the honor to enclose a communication from the officer acting at the head of the Indian Department, upon this important subject.

I withdrew from Fort McKay on the 24th May; bring[ing] off the public stores of every description, that could be removed; including the guns, etc., captured therein, in order that they might be restored to the American Government at Michilimackinac; it being impracticable to send them to Saint Louis; of which circumstance, as well as the necessity which compelled me to retire from the Prairie du Chien, I informed the American Government, in a letter addressed to Governor Clarke, on the 23rd May.

The day after my departure from the Mississippi, I had the honor of receiving your despatches of the 1st and 5th May: I also received the Batteaux of Indian presents, which I caused to be distributed to the Saulks, and the Indians about Prairie du Chien.

I have not the smallest doubt, from the perusal of the Treaty of Ghent, and from no demand being made by the American Government, for the restitution of Fort McKay, that the Prairie du Chien is considered by them as lying within the Indian boundary, and not to be occupied by either nation. Be this, however, as it may; it is certain, that an attempt to restore it to the American troops, would have proved fatal to the British garrison.