

CLAY COUNTY (AREA) IN 1765

By Harley **Bonham**

It has been said that France and England fought four wars in the area of the United States and Canada, between the years 1689 and 1763. This was for the control of North America. The details are so scattered that it is hard to tell when one stops and the other starts. There was: King **Williams** War, Queen **Ann's** War, The War of Jenkins Ear and the French and Indian War. Some of these conflicts spread into Europe, with other nations becoming involved. The last conflict had its start far to the east of Illinois, when a young English officer of the Colonial Militia, ordered an attack on French forces at a place called "Little Meadows". The date was May 27, 1754 and the officers name was **George Washington**.

This war was destined to involve many Indian tribes and lasted until early 1763. One prominent Indian Chief who fought on the side of the French was an Ottawa Chief known as **OBANDIYAG** (pronounced **BOWN-DI-AK**) known in modern history as **Pontiac**. He held a General's rank in the French army, and when the French surrendered, **Pontiac** chose to continue the war. He did so successfully, with his Indian Army, for several months. He managed to capture several English posts in the Northwest Territory, but finally in early 1765, the fortune of war started to turn against this great leader.

Pontiac was forced to come to Illinois, trying to persuade other tribes to join his effort, and failing to do so, decided to give it up. Early 1765 he had visited Painkashaw-Town, which was located 3 miles N.W. of present Albion, IL and from there had went to the old French Fort at de Chartres. There the French garrison was still intact, with no English commander being able to enter this area, due to small hostile bands of Indians who maintained a blockade.

In February of 1764 a large force under an English officer Major Arthur **Loftus**, had attempted to come up the Mississippi to Fort de Chartres, but he was attacked by tribes from Arkansas and forced to turn back to New Orleans. On February 18, 1765, Lt. John **Ross** had sneaked in with a trader named Hugh **Crawford**, but he lacked any sort of manpower to take control of the Fort. The French commander **St. Ange** kept his presence secret from the many Indians who were living near the Fort.

It is believed that **Pontiac** arrived at Fort de Chartres, with his staff, sometime in April. Soon the Indians brought in an English officer as prisoner, Lt Alexander **Fraser**, and would have put him to death if **Pontiac** had not talked