Postscript from Robert Lytle, included in book *"Mackinac Passage: Pirate Party"*

Postscript (Include maps of NW territory and boat diagrams)

In the story, what is real and what is made up?

The Cincinnati Row kids are real, but I've changed their names–somewhat. Pete Jenkins (me) is real, but Pete did more in one summer than I did in a dozen. Pete's parents and sister are real, and Will Drake was a real person, but the character he portrays is not.

Robert Dickson and Chief Red Thunder are real and did take part in the attack as in the story, but Ojeeg and Leelinau are names that I took from Henry Schoolcraft's *Indian Legends.* Their names and meanings are real but the characters they portray are imaginary. Their place in the story is to make a link to other historic events, which are real. Their moods and attitudes might be that of people like them at that time.

The names Moneypenny and Skaggs are fictitious, but a man whom I chose to call Mr. Moneypenny did captain the *Caledonia* for the British-owned North West Fur Company and brought orders from General Isaac Brock to Captain Charles Roberts at Fort St. Joseph's in the St. Mary's River. Brock very likely sent a soldier, someone like Skaggs but whose real name is lost in antiquity, to complete that mission for the British general.

Lieutenant Porter Hanks, Michael Dousman, Robert Dickson, and Captain Charles Roberts all did, in real life, what was related in the story.

What became of them?

After the capture of Fort Mackinac, Lieutenant Porter Hanks and the other American soldiers were ordered by Captain Roberts to board two captured American vessels, the *Mary* and the *Selina.* On July 26, 1812, they were taken to Fort Detroit, which for the moment, was still in U.S. hands. By the gentlemanly rules of war at that time, they were sworn to remain out of active service to their country and not take up arms against the British. On August 16, a month after the attack, Porter Hanks was in a Fort Detroit courtroom being questioned about the surrender at Michilimackinac. While he was sitting on the stand, a British cannonball, shot from Windsor across the Detroit River,

tore through the wall and struck him dead. Later that day, General William Hull, in a highly controversial decision, surrendered Fort Detroit to the enemy.

Michael Dousman enjoyed a long, productive and interesting life. A shrewd politician and an astute businessman, Mr. Dousman's efforts to protect the Mackinac Island citizens, however were not without detractors. Some Islanders regarded his acts as totally self-serving or even worse, treasonous. Such people accused him of selling out to the British. As evidence, they pointed to the fact that the new British commander of the fort, Charles Roberts, allowed Dousman to remain on Mackinac Island without forcing him to declare allegiance to the Crown, as was required of the other American sympathizers. Dousman also was allowed to travel freely within British areas and continued his fur-trading activities. He also acquired–by, to some, questionable means–several tracts of land both on and off Mackinac Island.

On the other hand, to Michael Dousman's credit, he *did* save the lives of every Mackinac Islander, military and civilian, from certain massacre. Also, he was a family man with a wife, a daughter and a son. His actions on the night and morning of July 16 and 17, 1812, did indeed change the course of Mackinac Island history.

Michael Dousman's business accomplishments included his fur-trading ventures, his farm on the island and ownership of a lumber mill (Mill Creek) south of Mackinaw City. Also, he must have been highly regarded by the community because he was elected president of the Mackinac Island Village Council in 1824-25 and probate judge from 1833-40. He died a wealthy man on August 24, 1854.

Robert Dickson, *Mascotapah* to his Native American friends, lived, in real life, the events depicted in the story. It's hard to characterize any modern-day person as a pioneer, explorer or adventurer in the same way as Robert Dickson was during the early 1800s. He set sail as a young man from Scotland to the New World to become a fur trader and take on all the uncertainties of this uncharted and wild continent. To do that successfully, he had to become an interpreter of the Native American languages, deal faithfully with its varied indigenous peoples and become a trusted agent for

all parties concerned. It was a dangerous venture, but an exciting one. Mackinac Island was his first camp. It was there that he met a beautiful Indian princess, To-to-win, sister of Red Thunder, chief of a Sioux tribe. They fell instantly in love and married.

Because of their relationship, he met many tribesmen and acted as translator while pursuing his duties for the North West Fur Company. After the British attack at Mackinac Island, he became an active participant in the community, helping Captain Roberts and subsequent commanders maintain control at the fort until the United States regained it in 1815. In this story, I have touched only briefly on the life of one of early America's most interesting frontiersmen.

Captain Charles Roberts was, in fact, the commander of Fort St. Joseph's and did attack Mackinac Island as told in the story. By 1812 he had served his country's army at camps all over the British Empire and had suffered his share of hard conditions and dangerous duties. At the tiny outpost on St. Mary's Island he was in charge of a small garrison of worn-out old soldiers, the Tenth Royal Veteran Battalion. In addition to his ineffective garrison of retirees was a conglomeration of recruits–a hundred Canadian woodsmen and nearly a thousand Native Americans–gathered to attack the much more strategic location of Fort Michilimackinac, held by the United States. To give you an idea of the resulting situation, I offer this direct quote from Captain Roberts while his combined troops were encamped at Fort St. Joseph's in the days leading up to the attack:

"Although it is quite impossible to make my French and Indian allies do even the simplest drills, they each have the strength and will of ten of my regular soldiers. The French train, if you can call it that, with a pipe in their mouths and their daily rations of pork and bread skewered on their bayonets. When they are called to drill in to formation they simply laugh."

After taking command of Fort Mackinac in 1812, Captain Roberts suffered through a brutally cold winter in the Straits. His entire garrison was forced into near starvation, reduced to eating their horses to survive until spring. Already in fragile health from years of service to the British army, Captain Roberts' condition weakened as a result of that terrible season. When the ice broke in the spring of 1813, he sent word to General Provost, requesting relief from his duties, but that was not

granted until that September. He died in 1817 in Canada, having never fully recovered from the accumulated effects of his ailments.

John Jacob Astor never visited Mackinac Island, but his influence was enormous. He was the undisputed king of the fur trade that may have been the ultimate reason for the War of 1812. It is hard for us to imagine in our present-day lives in a time when oil production controls the world economy, that there was a period when animal furs did the same thing. Just as fossil fuels now keep us warm, processed pelts from wild animals did the same two hundred years ago. The fur-bearing animals in the highly populated areas of Asia and Europe had been hunted almost to extinction. Millions of people there were desperate for warm clothing. The Chinese produced lots of tea, which the British loved with a passion and could not get anywhere else. Mr. Astor, a recent German immigrant to the United States, sold his pelts in the Orient for huge quantities of tea leaves, which he sold in England. With some of the profits, he brought British trade goods to the United States. Those goods, in turn, were used to trade with the Indians for more pelts. With every transaction Mr. Astor made a handsome profit that made him the wealthiest American of his day.

What was the war all about?

The Treaty of Paris in 1783, which officially ended the American War of Independence, or the Revolutionary War, as we now call it, left a lot of loose ends. The British negotiators back in England unexpectedly ceded to the Americans the Northwest Territory, a huge tract of land that now includes Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and part of Minnesota. The British owners of the North West Fur Company were angry that their government had given up this valuable land to the Americans. So, instead of quitting their lucrative fur dealings, they simply retained their forts at

Detroit, Michilimackinac and Niagara and continued to trade with the Indians as though nothing had changed. Also, Indian tribes, who at this point favored the British over the American agents, continued working with the British traders.

It wasn't until U.S. General Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians at Fallen Timbers in Ohio in 1794 that the British government gave over the frontier forts to the United States in 1797. Still, the British fur traders did not give up their fur-trading activities. Nor did their Indian allies.

After Fallen Timbers, the Indians slowly gave over small portions of land to the Americans in treaties. Then, in 1809, the great Shawnee chief, Tecumseh, attempted to gather all the various tribes together. He preached to his people that they should cast aside the evils of the white man's ways. If they united themselves they could keep what land they still controlled and live happily by their old customs. In spite of Tecumseh's promise to the U.S. government that his confederacy of tribes was strictly a defensive measure, William Henry Harrison, then governor of Indiana Territory, feared a major Indian rebellion.

Harrison feared the American settlers would be massacred by Tecumseh's followers, leaving villages burned and settlers' hopes for further westward migration dashed in the Indians' wake. So, in November of 1811, Harrison, with a large army, marched up the Wabash River to Tecumseh's brother's camp at the mouth of the Tippecanoe River and defeated the collected Indian tribes in a long and deadly battle. Reports following that conflict made Americans believe that the British government had supplied the Indians with guns used in their defense, and it was the scheming British who had contrived to support the Indian confederacy. Tempers between British and American combatants grew short. Each suspected that the other was about to attack.

Some American leaders such as Henry Clay and John Calhoun, known as War Hawks, felt it was time to drive the British out of this continent, once and for all. Once the British were gone, they felt, the Indians would also cave and the future American settlers would be safe. With the Frenchman, Napoleon Bonaparte, advancing steadily toward a conflict on English soil, was the time to start such a

campaign, the War Hawks believed. Soon the British army would leave the American continent to concentrate their energies on the real threat to their homeland.

Also, back in England, Parliament was certain the fledgling Colonies' government would soon collapse under its own weight. The new country would surely come crawling back to their homeland for leadership. Democracy, a largely unproven form of government on such a large scale, was bound to fail. Evidence of this notion existed in abundance. Incessant bickering between the northern and southern states over slavery, economy and ideology would conquer them without any intervention from the British military. It was just a matter of time.

But as the years went by and the United States *didn't* collapse as quickly as Parliament had predicted, British military leaders decided to set up a blockade to keep American businesses from selling supplies to Britain's primary enemy, France. When the blockade didn't work quickly enough, the British Navy began to stop American vessels on the open sea. They searched its ships and captured the American sailors, forcing them to serve aboard the British merchant frigates. Their excuse was that American sailors were nothing more than traitors to the Crown and were to be treated as British prisoners.

As a result of this blockade, American businessmen suffered and the struggling nation's economy got worse. Finally, by the spring of 1812, most of our seaport merchants were nearly bankrupt. On June 18, 1812, James Madison asked Congress to declare war. Once passed, word was slow to reach the people in the outlying areas, often not being know until months later. The message did not arrive at Fort Michilimackinac until 10 am, July 17,1812. It was delivered to Lieutenant Hanks by a group of Mackinac Islanders sent under a flag of truce by Captain Charles Roberts of the British Army, much as described in the story.

Just as America had Henry Clay and John Calhoun, its War Hawks, the British had their own leaders who were eager to reclaim the continent for their king. George Prevost, John Simcoe and Captain Gray had aims of making the United States return *all* its land to Britain.

General Isaac Brock led the British forces in Upper Canada. He recognized the strategic importance of Michilimackinac. For over six months before the war was declared Brock had planned that Captain Roberts' garrison at Fort St. Joseph's, with the help of as many Indian and Canadian woodsmen as he could get, would launch his attack on the United States by swarming the fort in the Straits.

Thus began the War of 1812. Although, for 21st century Americans, it does not evoke the patriotic zeal of either the Revolutionary War or the Civil War, it was a very important and controversial period in U.S. history. Unlike the Revolutionary War, the events leading to the War of 1812 deeply divided the new nation's citizens. Before the war was declared, the British leaders truly felt that the United States would soon collapse under the weight of its enormous size, unproven democratic structure and fractious leadership.

Once begun, if the war had gone Britain's way, it would be easy to imagine, from our current perspective in time, how the shaky United States government *could* have collapsed. The entire continent might easily have reverted to British control. Imagine, for a moment, what that would mean to you, your state, your country and, in fact, the world.

Remember: Politically, financially and emotionally, our country was about to dissolve into a bunch of weak, ineffectual states. Political leaders from the America's southern region openly hated the northern statesmen. The feeling of distrust was mutual. Well before the Revolutionary War, the two sections of the country bickered incessantly over the slave issue. It was not until the two sides agreed not to disagree on this matter that they were able to join sides against their true adversary, King George III, of England. Once the War for Independence was resolved (1776-1783), the old issue of slavery re-emerged, and the bickering began again in earnest.

Sadly, as always, the basis of the argument was not so much the principle, but the money. Southern landowners could not produce their crops without cheap slave labor. Before long, the New

England delegates to Congress were seriously considering seceding from the Union if the Southern delegates didn't relent on their proposal to go to war against the British.

Meanwhile, the British embargo against our ports was crippling our eastern states' economy. Our nation's treasury was bankrupt. The country was unable to repay loans to France, Holland and other countries that had lent money (often at exorbitant rates) during the Revolutionary War to defeat Britain. At the same time, if Napoleon Bonaparte's army hadn't been taking up most of England's resources in their war on the Continent (Europe), the British could have sent an enormous army to our shores and put our young government out of its misery right then.

On the other hand, if the American forces had gotten a few breaks early in the campaign (Fort Michilimackinac, for example), the United States might now include Manitoba, Quebec, Ontario and all the other Canadian provinces. Those circumstances and consequences were very real.

The *Caledonia*, the ship Captain Roberts used to attack Fort Michilimackinac, was real. The 70-ton schooner was built at Amherstberg, Ontario in 1807. It was owned by the British-controlled North West Fur Company. In real life, as in the story, it had been in the service of the British company, taking pelts that had been brought from all over the upper Lakes by the French-Canadian voyageurs in their bateaux to Michilimackinac. The *Caledonia* crew then loaded those pelts and took them east to be sold in markets all over the world. As in the story, when war was declared, the *Caledonia* was requisitioned by Captain Charles Roberts and put into service for the king. From this point on, the *Caledonia* followed the route described in the story. At 10 a.m. on July 16th she sailed to Michilimackinac, escorting, by one account, 42 regular British soldiers, 4 officers, 260 Canadians, 572 Chippewas and Ottawas, 56 Sioux, 48 Winnebagos and 39 Menomonees to the encounter. Also aboard were two 6-pound artillery cannon, one of which would be hauled to a point overlooking Fort Michilimackinac's north wall on July 17,1812. After the attack, the *Caledonia* became a full-fledged part of the British naval forces.

A few months later, the *Caledonia*'s fortunes changed. Lt. Jesse Duncan Elliott of the United States Navy captured it on Oct. 8, 1812 at Fort Erie. Thereafter the ship became a vital part of America's naval arsenal. On September 10, 1813, with the *Caledonia* in his fleet, Oliver Hazard Perry engaged the entire British naval task force in Lake Erie. The American victory there contributed to what might have been the turning point in the entire war.

How did the war end? The Treaty of Ghent, signed on December 24, 1814, didn't become known here in Michigan Territory until the middle of the next summer. British interests retained, for as long as they could, the resources and wealth of the fur-trading center. Finally, Fort Michilimackinac was returned to United States hands on July 18, 1815, three years and a day after Lieutenant Hanks surrendered to Captain Charles Roberts on the fields behind the old fort. Mackinac Island was, as mentioned in the story, the site of both the first and the last activities in the War of 1812.

Terms

Glossary (also a schematic of the Caledonia)

Aft: the back end of a boat

Ahoy: sailor talk for "Hi." Standard hailing cry to attract the attention of those aboard another boat

Avast: watch out or listen up! Stop what you're doing!

Aye: yes, okay, yup, uh-huh—anything in the affirmative

Barbarize: use of a soap and sand mixture to clean a surface, usually a ship's deck

Belay: to put a stop to something. On a ship it usually means to secure a rope to a wooden pin

Bitt the cable: attach a cable to something to hold it in place

Bitt the halyard: fasten the particular rope that keeps the halyard from going out

Boatswain (Bos'n) (Bosun): a ship's petty officer in charge of sails, rigging, etc., and summoning men to duty. Also metes out punishment, pipes orders and otherwise handles crew's discipline

Boom: the long spar, hinged at one end, that holds a sail to a mast. It is aptly named, for when the wind shifts or the boat turns, the boom flies across the deck and can easily knock an unfortunate sailor off the ship

Bowsprit: the spar extending forward from the stem of a ship, to which the stays of the foremast are fastened

Brig: the ship's jail, also in England spelled gaol (but pronounced jail)

Burgoo: Boiled oatmeal porridge, seasoned with salt, sugar and butter (Orig. Norse)

Cabin boy: young male who attends to officers or passengers aboard ship

Capstan: a revolving barrel on a vertical axis for winding cable aboard ship, worked by persons walking round, pushing bars fitting into the barrel

Chantey man: A boatswain who was an experienced leader, said to be worth his weight in gold to a captain, for in the course of a long sail he would not only keep up the spirits of his crew with a large repertoire of songs but he could pick just the right one and sing it at just the right tempo to get a particular job done without exhausting his workers

Cheerily: nautical–quickly, with haste. Also, term used to encourage work with urgency

Companion ladder: steps leading from one deck to another

Dandyfunk: broken ship's biscuits soaked with water and baked with fat and molasses

Davy Jones's Locker: domain at the bottom of the sea, the ultimate destination of drowned men and foundered ships

Deadlight: nautical, a wooden block to stop water from coming into a porthole during a storm

Deep six: nautical expression meaning to jettison—drop overboard—get rid of something or someone

Dog watch: a day aboard a ship is divided into eight 4-hour periods. The dog watch is the time between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Doubloon: Spanish gold coin of double value

Dray: a horse-drawn cart with no side rails–used for hauling heavy goods and materials, still actively in use on Mackinac Island

Dreadnaught: a fearless person. Also a class of British battleship

Dried horse: dried meat of a variety of sources (beef, sheep and horse–yes, really) served to sailors aboard 19th century ships

Forecastle (Fo'c's'le): the forward part of the upper deck. Due to the fact that the bow of a sailing ship took the brunt of a vessel's pounding, its accommodations were less comfortable than those at the stern (where the officers stayed). In merchant ships, the seaman's quarters (also referred to as 'Before the mast') were where the laboring class of seaman resided. Fo'c's'le chanteys were "story" songs sung for fun by common seamen and not "work" songs as were sung by the chanteyman," the taskmaster of the ship, to get a particular job done

Galley: ship's kitchen

Graveyard watch: Term aboard ship for period of duty from midnight to 4 a.m.

Grog: rum diluted with water

Grub: sailors' food, which, coincidentally, was often infested with worms (grubs)

Gunwale (Gunnel or gunwhale): Uppermost planking on a ship's side

Halyard: rope or tackle used to hoist or lower a sail, yard or gaff

Hard alee: or Helm's alee: Warning to sailors that the ship is about to change direction and to watch one's head because the "boom" will soon follow

Haul out the watch: orders to bring off-duty crewmen up to the deck for emergency action such as bad weather, completion of voyage, or an attack by a foreign ship

Head: the ship's lavatory

Horse marine: a clumsy or awkward seaman–a person more used to riding aboard a horse than a ship

Hove to: nautical, when a ship came alongside a pier or another ship to disembark

Hundred lashes: the punishment a captain might invoke upon a sailor for breaking a ship's rules. The result frequently was fatal.

Impressed (or pressed): a seaman who is taken aboard an enemy ship to serve without his consent. This situation directly led to the War of 1812

Jay Treaty: settlement in 1795 between the U.S. and Britain, which ceded vast tracts of territory to the U.S. This was very unpopular among British fur-trading interests. Said to lay the groundwork for the War of 1812

Keel haul: Punishment in which an accused sailor was tied to a rope and thrown overboard. He was drawn, by another rope, under the keel, from one side of the ship to the other. This punishment was often fatal. Survival depended on the sailor's offense–and the feelings of the ship's officers, who, as they pulled the ropes, could either save the offending sailor by hauling him swiftly beneath the ship's hull or, by drawing him slowly, cause the victim to drown. Such was the fate, life or death, of many 19th century sailors.

Landlubber: Lazy or clumsy seaman; one without sufficient experience or skill to properly sail or operate a ship

Lashes: short for "hundred lashes," which was the maximum number of whips dealt as penalty aboard ship. "You'll get your lashes for this, sure you will!" That was a common threat aboard any merchant ship, and sure to strike fear into the heart of any sailor. The wounds from "a hundred lashes" would surely be fatal

Lime juice: Obligatory ration aboard British ships to combat scurvy

Limey: British sailor

List: ship tilting to one side due to flooding or cargo shift

Lobscouse: Stew consisting of salt meat, potatoes, hard tack, onions and available spices

Manito: also Manedo and Manitou: Indian spirit. Gitchimanitou and kitchimedo (other attempted phonetic spellings apply) is the Great Spirit, the Supreme Being

Man-o'-war: class of British battleship

Master: Officer in command of a merchant ship

Mate: First mate is second in command of ship, below Master

Mess room: area where ship's company would take their meals

Monkey: nautical expression for a small size of something, such as a jacket. There is also a monkey shift, for example, which is a short time on deck

Mooring ball: floating device anchored offshore to tie a boat when not in use

Morning watch: The time aboard ship between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m.

Nee-mush: Native American term for milkweed pod, used in stews and soups

Pieces of eight: coins that could be cut into halves, quarters and eighths and used to make change. Each part would be a bit, hence the expression, "Shave and a haircut, two bits." Two bits equaling 25 cents

Pinch: to steal; something that has been stolen

Pin-ik: Native American term for wild potato

Poor Jack: fish salted and dried for eating aboard ship

Port: lefthand side of ship as viewed from the stern

Porthole: Circular opening in a vessel's sides to admit ventilation and light

Privateer: literally a private individual not under orders from any one nation. He does his country a service by stealing an enemy country's resources; in this case, its ships, their men and cargo. A privateer, or pirate, keeps all that he gets for himself

Quarterdeck: The upper deck from the mainmast back to the ship's stern

Rudder: hinged device at the stern of a vessel, by which she is steered.

Running downward, weather helm: a ship moving with full wind behind it, like a runaway freight train–unstoppable

Sail close to the wind: Dangerous stupidity: To take a chance, especially with authority or accepted ship standards. The term comes from the peril, nautically, of the situation where, should the wind shift, the sails could snap their lines and the ship would founder. Philosophically, it is a person who goes off on his own without heeding common sense

Salt: an experienced sailor

Scurvy: a disease caused by lack of Vitamin C often seen aboard ships due to long voyages without fresh fruits, especially citrus

Slops: Clothing kept in the ship's chest (a store owned by the master of the ship <captain> and operated by an assistant) for sailors who came aboard without proper apparel–often because of being pressed against their will into service

Stanchion: a vertical post supporting a ship's guard railing

Starboard: right-hand side of ship as viewed from the stern

Stem to stern: from front to back; the whole ship

Stone: an English measure of weight equal to 14 pounds

Tack: the direction a ship is traveling, often dictated by the wind or sea conditions

Thwart: a transverse beam on a rowboat, providing structural stability as well as a bench for the rowers or passengers to sit on

Vittles: slang for victuals

Zush-ka-boo-bish: Native American dish made from muskrat, skinned, cut into small pieces, then roasted until brown and boiled until tender, then put in aa pot with pin-ik and nee-mush

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