

EARLY FRENCH INHABITANTS OF INDIANA: OUR LOST LEGACY

By Marylou Snyder

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

Prepared in partial fulfillment of requirements for
"INDIANA AND THE NEW NATION, 1776-1876"
a project of the Historic Southern Indiana Project
of the University of Southern Indiana
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Evansville, Indiana 47712
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FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

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LESSON PLAN

BY

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"INDIANA AND THE NEW NATION, 1776-1876"

HISTORIC SOUTHERN INDIANA PROJECT

FALL WORKSHOP 1989

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

Early French Inhabitants of Indiana: Discovering Our Lost Legacy

Preview of Main Points:

This lesson defines the geographical location of the French land possessions on the North American continent prior to 1763, explores the basic structure of the French economy involving trading of furs with the Indians, and describes the customs and clothing of the French living in North America during the 17th and 18th centuries. This lesson emphasizes the contributions of the early French inhabitants while pointing out inaccuracies reported by early historians relating to the basic character and integrity of the early French settlers.

Curriculum Connection

This lesson is intended for use at the fourth grade level of instruction, but parts of it could be adapted for use with other grade levels. It is appropriate for incorporation into units of study of the French exploration and settlement in North America from 1616 to the late 1700's.

Objectives

Students are expected to:

1. Understand restrictions imposed upon the French in North America by the King of France and the ramifications of these limitations which largely account for the demise of French control in North America and the unfavorable portrayal of the French in historical records.
2. Identify the land claims of the French government prior to 1763.
3. Recognize articles of clothing worn by early French inhabitants of North America.
4. Know some of the customs, celebrations and songs typical of those practiced and/or enjoyed by early French inhabitants of New France.

Suggestions for Teaching the Lesson

Opening the Lesson. Begin the study of the French period in Indiana by reading the book Totem for Ti Jacques by Keo Felker Lazarus to the students. This book will acquaint students with the life of the voyager and the relationship between the French and the Indians. This book relates the experiences of a young French boy who, as a passenger on a voyager canoe, travels from Montreal in New France to the western post of Fort Quiatenon. The plot explains the friendly relationship between the Indians and the French, but it also explains the competition which the

French encounter from the British in trading with the Indians. A French mercenary adds an element of suspense by kidnapping Ti Jacque, because of the latter's ability to speak English. Discussion of the development of the plot will help students understand the French position in Indiana during the 17th and 18th centuries. Why did Giroux want to capture Ti Jacque? What made many of the Indians decide to trade with the French, even though they received more goods in return for their furs from the English? Name examples in this story of the good feelings shared between the French and the Indians. Show slides of pictures of the French house in Vincennes, Fort Ouiatenon, and Fort Wayne. The book The Sign of the Beaver may be substituted but would not answer all of the questions posed for the first book.

Developing the lesson. Have students examine large, early French maps pointing out that the French cartographers' work traces the explorers' discoveries within the North American continent. These maps are part of the legacy which the French have left to present and future generations. Also have students color individual maps illustrating the French, Spanish, and English land claims in North America. Have them draw a line east and west through Indiana near Terre Haute to indicate the separation of the two colonies of New France: Canada and Louisiana.

One way to introduce the French inhabitants' clothing would entail the modeling of a French outfit by the teacher or a student. Outfits made for paper dolls could be used for a similar discussion of the names of clothing articles and their purpose. Reading the information included in this lesson would be another way to present the clothing, as well as, information pertaining to the the French customs observed by the inhabitants of New France. Teach the French song "Alouette," sung by women while they plucked fowls, which is indicative of the French inclination to combine work with songs.

Concluding the Lesson. Students would divide into groups. Each group would be given a canoe and provisions including beads, blankets, and cloth for the voyager trip from Montreal to Louisiana. Students roll a die, determining how many spaces the group's canoe can move, giving each group one chance to move each round and alternating turns with each group. Before the die is rolled, the student must answer a question relating to the study of the French period in Indiana. Yellow dots designate hazards requiring the student to follow the prescribed instructions. Black dots are forts and offer the students an opportunity to trade some of their provisions for a fur. The teacher can use the questions suggested in this lesson, questions pertaining to the study of the French forts in Indiana, or other questions of importance relating to the French in Indiana. The objective of the game is to arrive at Louisiana with the most furs. A student must land on a fort in order to trade for furs.

Early French Inhabitants of Indiana: Discovering Our Lost Legacy

The story of the French in Indiana spans a little more than a century. The first Frenchman to record his stay in Indiana was Robert de La Salle in 1679. Settlement was not established until the early 1700's in response to a need to maintain trade with the friendly Indians and to restrict the encroachment of English fur traders. Even though the three forts maintained by the French in the territory, known today as Indiana, never supported a very large population, they played a significant role in maintaining a line of communication between the two French colonies of New France: Canada and Louisiana. The French also established contact with the Indians which was to leave an irreversible pattern of change in the latter's way of life. Although the French were not forced to leave after the Americans assumed control of the forts in Indiana in 1763, many of the French felt unwelcome and left to move to the territory under Spanish rule.

Early accounts of those visiting the French would have us believe that the French were lazy people who were more interested in having fun than in tending to agriculture or industries. Such records indicated that the French were entirely dependent upon articles received in their trading with the Indians and upon the goods sent from France for cloth for their clothing and other basic supplies. In the interest of fairness to the early French settlers, who left little or no records to speak for themselves, a student of the history of this period must look further than the early accounts. Many of the original records were made by invading Englishmen. After studying the reasons for the French inclination to refrain from weaving, spinning, or other industries of the period, it becomes apparent that the French government regulated nearly every aspect of the lives of the citizens of New France. The regulations were designed to protect the industries in the mother country. The King was interested in not only helping the industries at home, but he also wanted to add to the treasury of France. Citizens of New France were subject to high fines or severe punishment such as banishment for spinning, weaving, or taking part in some other craft. Industries such as mining or fur trading were also burdened with these regulations. Companies which held exclusive trading rights, by French law, were able to set and change prices to assure both their advantage and that of the French government. These restrictions impeded the growth of industries, as well as the population. The French were left with no alternative but to make garments from fabrics obtained either in trading with the Indians or from the mother country. The inferior cloth sent to New France put the French at a further disadvantage in the competition between themselves and the British in trading with the Indians. The regulations imposed by the French government of France were likely responsible for the downfall of the French control in New France.

Geography

After discovering the wealth to be had in the fur trading industry, the Frenchmen sought a route to explore in order to claim the land for France. The eventual colonization of the interior of North America was influenced by the geography of the land. Of the entries to the interior, where the wealth in fur trade was to be found, the French used the inland water routes of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi Rivers.

Customs and celebrations

The church was an integral part of the social and political life of the community in New France. Assemblies after church services gave inhabitants the opportunity to elect officials, to decide pertinent agricultural questions (as to when to plant or to harvest), and to suggest improvements in the community. Celebrations of important religious holidays were very popular. Christenings, weddings, planting, harvesting, and saints' days were all occasions which called for the French to celebrate. The most festive of these celebrations was the King Ball which was held on Epiphany, January 6. The citizenry of Vincennes, which included a large number of Creoles, found enjoyment in lively dancing, singing, drinking, feasting, story telling, and general merry making at this ball.

Entertainment was a vital part of the lives of the inhabitants of New France. In much the same way as the pioneers from the American colonies, the French found ways of combining work and fun. Sugar making was one of those times. The inhabitants would leave their homes to stay in temporary cabins near the maple trees. The days would be filled with working, visiting, feasting, and enjoying one another's company.

Folksongs, story telling, and dancing were other forms of entertainment enjoyed by the French and were as much a part of the everyday lives of the people as were the basic necessities for survival. Some of the songs were likely those sung by the voyageurs and the coureurs de bois. Other songs which the French sang in America have been traced to their origins in the older tradition of French literature. Marching songs, political satire, adventure and love ballads, travel songs, and religious music were all typical of the folksongs of the period. These songs appealed to the common folk and were unlike those of Southern France -- the latter being sung by the troubadours and jongleurs whose love songs were geared to the upper class of society. The stories may well have had their inspiration from the exciting adventures told by the voyageurs and coureurs de bois. The return of the fur traders heralded the start of joyous celebrations. Balls were held to honor the return of the travelers and were enjoyed by all, even the young. The gatherings gave the guests of honor the opportunity to enliven the proceedings with daring tales of valor and intrigue drawn from their missions in the wilds.

Clothing

One means of distinguishing the class of members of the community in New France was by their apparel. Although not adhering as strictly to the code of dress as those in France, the women of New France tended to dress much like the style of their native localities. Women's head coverings clearly indicated the section of France from which they came. Peasants' chores required that their petticoats and skirts be shortened for work around the fireplace, garden or pigpen. Both classes of women wore a chemise with several petticoats underneath. The wealthier women wore a bodice over the chemise in addition to aprons, and pockets attached at the waist. The materials of the upper class women's garments were of paler colors and were made from finer materials than those of the peasant class. The latter attached working implements such as a pot holder, wash cloth, or dish towel to the waist of their chemises. Moccasins over wool socks or wooden shoes called sabots were what the peasant women wore on their feet in the winter. They went barefoot in the summer. The refined upper class woman might have leather shoes or a special slipper type of shoe, made from leather, which would slip into a wooden shoe to keep her feet above the mud.

Men's clothing was dictated by their work. Voyageurs and coureurs de bois often wore Indian garments when traveling, but they spent large portions of their profits to purchase the finest clothing possible for festive occasions. Shirts of wool or linen were worn by the lower class while fine cotton or silk would be worn by the gentlemen of the upper class. Linen, wool, or leather was used for the breeches. Shirts of the upper class men were adorned with laces and ruffles. Shoes were similar to those which the women wore.

Children were dressed the same from birth to about eight years of age. Very young children wore a simple chemise which covered their knees, without any under garments. A boy of eight would be appropriately dressed if he were wearing a chemise, bodice, and a petticoat with a corset or jacket. Girls were dressed similarly except that they would wear the head covering coif fashioned after the same style as that of their mothers. Young girls interested in pursuing a husband could make their intentions known by the manner of their dress. Single girls' hats were the small duster type called a coif flauttant which lacked the shoulder flaps which married women wore on their hats. The low cut of the bodice and chemise, along with the tucking of the back of the top petticoat, displaying a plain second one with a border and a third floral one, also indicated interest in courtship. All women added a layer called a bum roll to emphasize the contour around their hips. Heaviness was a sign of wealth and also indicated favorable prospects for child-bearing. Clothing was one of the obvious ways of identifying the French people on the American frontier in Indiana.

Reviewing and Reflecting on Facts and Ideas

1. How did the French change the lives of the Indian in North America?
2. What limited the French people in New France from adding new industries and encouraging the expansion of forts and cities such as Vincennes?
3. What geographical factors determined the path the French chose to explore and to settle in North America?
4. Write a description of the French people, including their general attitude toward life, entertainment, and clothing.
5. What major advantage did the French hold over the English in the contest between the two groups for control of fur trade with the Indians?

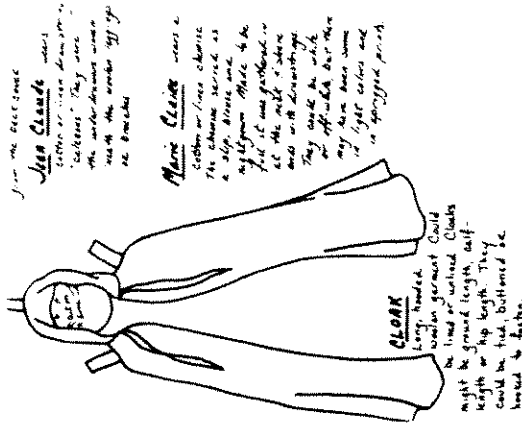
CLOTHING TYPICAL OF EARLY FRENCH INHABITANTS OF NEW FRANCE

from the beginning

Men's Cloaks were leather or even deer skin. They were made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.

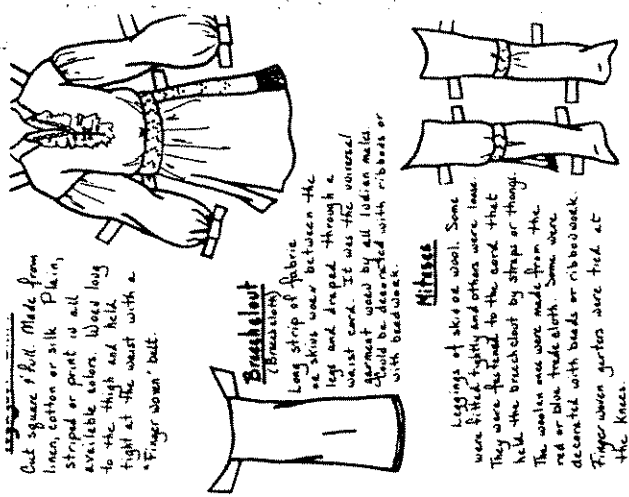
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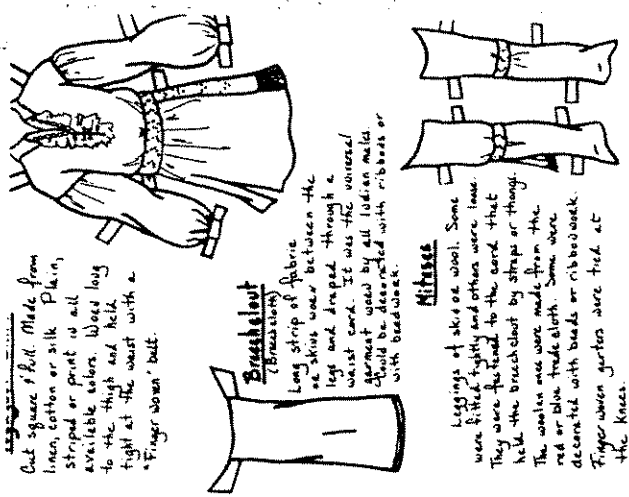
CLOAK
Men's cloaks were made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides. They were made of the animal's off-sides.

But square / Roll Made from linen, cotton or silk. Plain, striped or printed in all available colors. Woven long to the thigh and held tight at the waist with a "finger woman" belt.



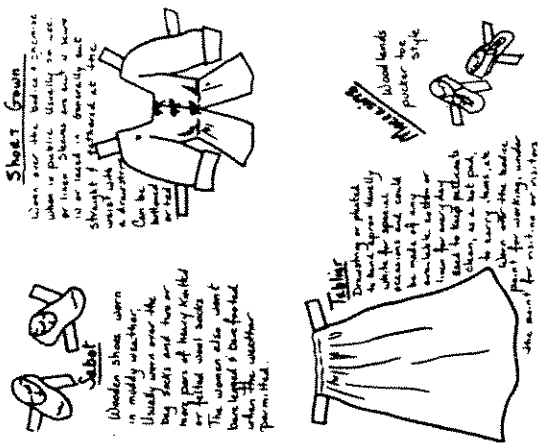
Breachcloth (Breaches)
Long strip of fabric or skins worn between the legs and draped through a waist cord. It was the universal garment worn by all Indian males. Should be decorated with ribbons or beads.

Mittens
Leggings of skins or wool. Some were fitted tightly and others were loose. They were fastened to the cord that held the breachcloth by straps or thong. The women were made from the red or blue trade cloth. Some were decorated with beads or ribbons. Finger women garters were tied at the knees.



Shoes
Wooden shoes worn in muddy weather. Usually worn over the big shoes and had two or three pairs of heavy felled or filled wool socks. The women also went barefoot in the weather permitted.

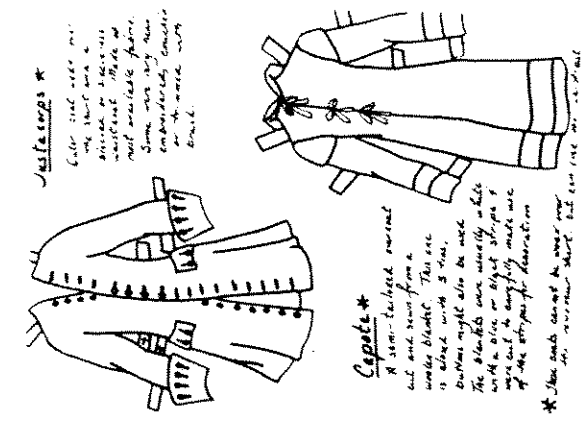
Shoes
Worn over the big shoes when in muddy weather. Usually worn over the big shoes and had two or three pairs of heavy felled or filled wool socks. The women also went barefoot in the weather permitted.



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Justicings *
Color red, blue or white. They were made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.

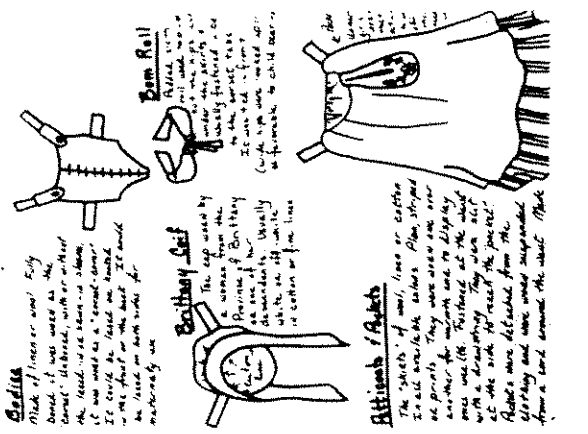
Capelets *
A short-tooled, narrow and worn from a woman's breast. This one is short with 3 ties. The sleeves were usually white with a blue or black stripe. They were made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.



Bedding
Made of linen or wool. Fully lined. It was used as the blanket. It had a cord that held the bedding together. It was made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.

Bear Roll
A roll of animal skins used for bedding. It was made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.

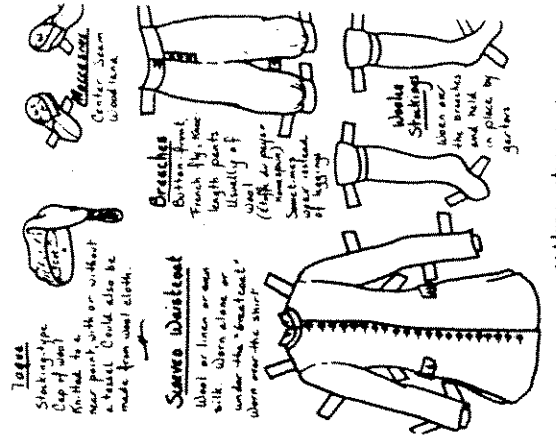
Bear Roll
A roll of animal skins used for bedding. It was made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.



Loose
Slack-fitting. Cap of wool. Made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.

Breaches
Made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.

Sleeveless Waistcoat
Worn over the shirt. Made of animal skins and were made of the animal's off-sides.



* These goods cannot be worn over the animal's skin. They can only be worn over the animal's skin.

Alouette Little Lark

Alouette, a work-song which used to be sung while women plucked fowls, does not seem to have survived in France except in Brittany. On the other hand, it is widely known in Canada and every French settlement in the United States, where the irresistible gayety of its rhythm has made it a favorite with every lover of folk music, whether French- or English-speaking.

In singing the complete song, after the first stanza, the words of the second stanza are used as the basic text and a new line is added with each subsequent stanza and retained until the end of the song. The line added in stanzas 3, 5, 7, and 9 is sung to measure 5, while that in stanzas 4, 6, and 8 is sung to measure 6. The line in parentheses, however, is sung only in the stanza indicated, and every stanza closes with the couplet:

"Alouette, gentill' alouette,
Alouette, je te plumerai."

2	Alouette, gentill' alouette, Alouette, je te plumerai. Je te plumerai la tête, Je te plumerai le bec. (Eh! le bec. Oh!)	2	Little lark, my pretty little lark, Oh! Little lark, I'll pluck your feathers soft. I shall pluck your little head, I shall pluck your little beak, (And your beak, Oh!)
3	Je te plumerai le nez. (Eh! le nez. Oh!)	3	I shall pluck your little nose, (And your nose, Oh!)
4	Je te plumerai le cou. (Eh! le cou. Oh!)	4	I shall pluck your little neck, (And your neck, Oh!)
5	Je te plumerai le dos. (Eh! le dos. Oh!)	5	I shall pluck your little back, (And your back, Oh!)
6	Je te plumerai les ailes. (Eh! les ailes. Oh!)	6	I shall pluck your little wing, (And your wing, Oh!)
7	Je te plumerai les cuisses. (Eh! les cuisses. Oh!)	7	I shall pluck your little leg, (And your leg, Oh!)
8	Je te plumerai les pattes. (Eh! les pattes. Oh!)	8	I shall pluck your little feet, (And your feet, Oh!)
9	Je te plumerai les doigts. (Eh! les doigts. Oh!) Alouette, gentill' alouette, Alouette, je te plumerai.	9	I shall pluck your little toes, (And your toes, Oh!) Little lark, my pretty little lark, Oh! Little lark, I'll pluck your feathers soft.

Alouette
Little Lark

Lively

1. A - lou - et - te, gen - till' a - lou - et - te,
1. Lit - tle lark, my pret - ty lit - tle lark, Oh!

The first system of music consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Lively'. The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

Measures 5

A - lou - et - te, je te plu - me - rai. Je te plu - me - rai la têt - te,
lit - tle lark, I'll pluck your feath - ers soft; I shall pluck your lit - tle head,

The second system of music covers measures 5. It continues the vocal and piano parts from the first system. The vocal line has a melodic contour that rises and then falls. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and a consistent bass line.

Measures 6

Je te plu - me - rai la têt - te. Eh! la têt - te. Oh! A - lou - et - te,
I shall pluck your lit - tle head, And your head, Oh! Lit - tle lark, my

The third system of music covers measures 6. The vocal line features a prominent note with a fermata, followed by a series of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment includes a fermata in the right hand corresponding to the vocal line.

gen - till' a - lou - et - te, A - lou - et - te, je te plu - me - rai.
pret - ty lit - tle lark, Oh! lit - tle lark, I'll pluck your feath - ers soft.

The final system of music concludes the piece. The vocal line ends with a melodic phrase that mirrors the beginning. The piano accompaniment provides a final harmonic resolution.