

*Adventures on the American Frontier*

# Resolute Men of the Illinois Country

Part Two

Chief Pontiac Fights  
for the Illinois Country



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This book features QR codes that link to audio of the book being narrated so that readers can follow along.

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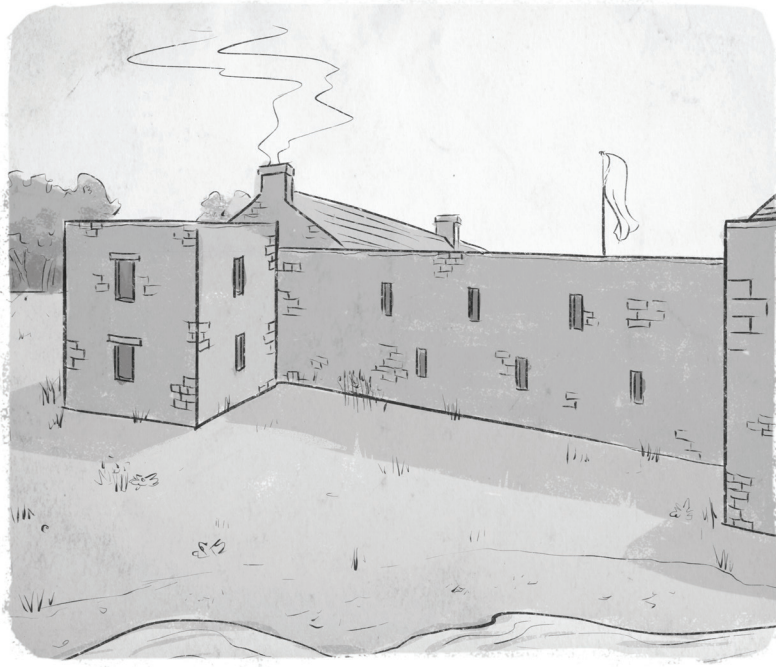


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In the mid-1600s, the French explorer Robert La Salle began building forts in the Illinois Country. The Illinois Country was a large region in the Midwest made up of the area around the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers in what are now the states of Illinois and Missouri. It was the heartland of America, and La Salle wanted to claim it for France.



By 1750, there were many French forts in the Illinois Country. Small villages had grown around each of them, for French men, women, and children had come to America. Native Americans camped near the villages, and many French fur traders took Native American women to be their wives. The Native Americans and the French got along well together, and life in the villages was peaceful. But the peace was not to last.

The fur trade brought traders from the British-American colonies near the Atlantic



Ocean into the Illinois lands. Both France and England claimed this land, and they went to war over it in 1755. But not nearly as many French people as British people had come to live in America, and the French could not defend New France. So they signed a treaty with the British in Paris in 1763 giving all of their land east of the Mississippi River and in Canada to Great Britain. The year before, France had given the land west of the Mississippi to Spain, in part to keep it from falling into British hands.

The war in America that ended with the treaty was called the French and Indian War because the Native Americans joined the French and fought against the British. Greatest of the Native American chiefs who helped France in the war was Pontiac, a member of the Ottawas, a tribe that lived in what is now southern Michigan and northwestern Ohio.

In 1760, Pontiac watched angrily as the French commander at the fort in Detroit lowered his flag and surrendered the fort to



the British. He did not want France to give up the fight, but he saw that the French could not defeat the British. Because the French had made peace, Pontiac did too, and he smoked the pipe of peace with the British generals.

A few months later, however, Pontiac changed his mind. After all, he reasoned, the land was neither French nor British; it belonged to the Native Americans. So Pontiac set out on a long journey, calling on all of the chiefs to fight for their land.