



Control of the portage and collection of the fees for its use rested for many years with Tacumwah, who later turned this lucrative source of income over to her son. About 1800, Richardville married Natoequeah, a person about whom very little is known. Some accounts refer to her as having been a Miami, the daughter of Chief White Raccoon (Wappesepah). A different account of her origins was given by Allen Hamilton, Richardville's secretary and confidant after 1824, who referred to her as having been "a member of one of the New York Indian tribes, . . . the daughter of a white man, by an Indian maiden. This her personal appearance indicated." Though no account of her life has survived, she apparently lived until at least 1832, but she was no longer living at the time of the Chief's death nearly a decade later.

The Richardvilles had six children: Maria Louisa (usually referred to as "La Blonde"), Susan, Catherine (called "Cates or Catees"), Joseph, John Baptist, Jr., and Miaqueah (also known as Blind-eyed Richardville). There may also have been other children who did not live to adulthood. The Richardville children were well educated; the chief's sons were sent to the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, and his daughters were instructed by Catholic nuns in Fort Wayne.

In his capacity as deputy chief, Richardville made his first formal entry into the diplomatic field by being one of the Miami who signed the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. At that time, the most prominent member of the Miami delegation was Little Turtle, the great war chief. Richardville's next appearance in the role of representative for the Miami on Pacanne's behalf came in 1803 when he was among the Miami leaders who signed the Treaty of Fort Wayne. At this and the later negotiations for the Treaty of Grouseland at Vincennes in 1805, the presence of Little Turtle and the apparent failure of then Indiana Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison to understand the Miami distinction between the roles of civil and war chiefs apparently led Harrison to overlook Richardville's importance. At the latter treaty in 1805, Harrison failed to ask Richardville, the highest-ranking civil chief present, to head the list of Miami signatories to the Grouseland Treaty.

In stature, the chief was about five feet ten inches, with broad shoulders, and weighed about one hundred eighty pounds. His personal appearance was attractive; graceful in carriage and manner; and bore all the marks of a "finished gentleman." Exempt from any expression of levity - a simple child of nature - he is said to have "preserved his dignity under all circumstances." His eyes were of a lightish blue and slightly protruding -- "his upper lip firmly pressed upon his teeth and the under one slightly projecting. His nose was Roman and the whole contour of his face was classic and attractive." . . . With a mind some-what massive, a rather close observer, and apt in his business transactions, he was always extremely careful in what he undertook. A most patient listener, his reticence often almost assumed the form of extreme indifference; yet such was far from his nature, for he ever exercised the warmest and most attentive regard for all his people and mankind in general; and "the needy never called in vain -- his kind and charitable hand was never withheld from the distressed of his own people or from the stranger; and he was beloved and esteemed by all who knew him." . . . A patient and attentive listener -- prudent and deliberate in his action -- when once his conclusions and determination were formed, "he rarely had occasion to change them."

By the time Richardville became civil chief in his own right, his resourcefulness as a negotiator had become his principal asset in dealing with the increasing demands by the U.S. for the cession of Indian lands and the complete removal of the Miami from Indiana.

The War of 1812 saw the end of British influence in the Northwest Territory, including the possibility of British support for any organized military resistance by the Indians to American rule. During the war, the Miami tried to remain neutral. Richardville is said to have spent the war behind the British lines at Detroit. By this time, it was also the case that both the Miami and most of their former Indian allies had been greatly weakened by prolonged exposure to European culture. Though the Miami had been neutralized as a military threat, they remained significant because earlier treaties, especially that of Greenville in 1795, had acknowledged their ownership of a large part of Indiana. The American recognition of Miami claims had been the great diplomatic achievement of Chief Little Turtle. He may have been the first Indian leader to appreciate the value of establishing Indian land titles in terms recognized by the Americans. The recognition of Indian land ownership was also a key element of the policy by which the federal government planned to get the aid and acquiescence of tribal leaders to further land cessions. As formulated by Thomas Jefferson, first as Washington's Secretary of State and later as President, the annuities paid to the tribes in exchange for their lands would enable them to buy goods from government-run trading posts and from private traders. In a letter to William Henry Harrison dated February 27, 1803, Jefferson suggested that Harrison should "be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them run into debt, because we observe that when these individuals get beyond what the individual can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of land."

In practice, this was actually a policy which succeeded best as it affected tribal members rather than their leaders. Many Indians spent their annuities carelessly or were swindled by traders and then had to live on credit extended by the traders against the next year's annuity payments. Many of the chiefs, including Richardville, were traders, and they may have used their business activity as part of an effort to exert some control over the amount of debt such credit created. Nonetheless, the growth of the front-tier economy became dependent upon further increases in the amounts of the annuities, which entailed the further cession of Indian lands. An additional element which became a feature of the later treaties, beginning with that of 1818, was the provision of grants of land in fee simple to tribal leaders as a further inducement to them to make sales or concessions of tribal lands.

As civil chief of the Miami after 1816, Richardville was foremost among the tribal leaders to be given such entitlements. In the 1818 treaty of St. Mary's, the Miami were punished for their attempt to be neutral during the War of 1812. The Miami were required to relinquish most of their lands in central Indiana, an area totaling more than seven million acres, but, in the same treaty, Richardville was given seven sections of land on the St. Mary's River in the vicinity of Fort Wayne and two sections of land on the Wabash at the Forks. Although several other chiefs and Miamis of mixed blood were also given land grants, only Richardville was given the right to sell his land without federal approval.

Though Richardville established trading posts on many of his reserves, Fort Wayne remained his base of operations for many years. In the original sale of city lots at Fort Wayne in 1824, he bought lot 42, which was situated on Columbia Street in the center of the new town.

Here he built his store and office. Though at least one account states that he lived much of the time above his store, his family lived on his reserve, south of Fort Wayne along the west bank of the St. Marys River. Here, in 1827, a two story brick house was built for him. An 1826 treaty included a provision that each of the nine principal chiefs of the Miami would be provided with a two room, one story brick house costing \$600. Richardville asserted his prestige and position as principal chief by having a larger, two story house built, for which he provided an additional \$1,600. (The house was later occupied by his descendants and still stands today.) Richardville may have spent a great amount of time traveling to his various trading houses which were located at the Forks of the Wabash and at the present-day sites of Wabash, Logansport and Peru.

The Miami council house was originally located at Kekionga. In 1831, Richardville relocated the Miami council house to the reserve at the Forks of the Wabash although he continued to reside at Fort Wayne. He apparently did this for the sake of putting the council house in greater proximity to the remaining Miami reserves and to isolate the councils, treaty negotiations and annuity payments from any but those traders and white settlers trusted by the Miami. Richardville probably also foresaw that the first segment of the Wabash and Erie Canal, extending from Fort Wayne to Huntington and begun in 1832, would effectively eliminate the portage trade. Apparently this proved correct since in 1836, the year after that first leg of the canal was opened, Richardville sold his store in Fort Wayne to Allen Hamilton. The chief had sought to consolidate his ownership of the reserve at the Forks by having the Indian title to it converted into a land grant in his own name as a provision of an 1834 treaty. In 1837, this provision was finally ratified by the U. S. Senate. The chief also platted the area north and west of the Forks in 1838 as the town of Richardville, but its development apparently never proceeded beyond that point.

Though earlier in his life he had adopted European dress and was known to speak both English and French fluently, later Richardville increasingly returned to Miami customs and dress and refused to deal with such figures as treaty commissioners in any manner other than speaking through an interpreter. Though he was probably literate, he also had his letters penned by secretaries. While the chief's use of interpreters can be explained as a ploy to gain additional time in considering his responses, many of his other changes of habit may have been a reaction to the growing cultural dissolution of the Miami that he witnessed as they were increasingly influenced by contact with white traders and settlers. An apparent case in point was provided by Richardville's own sons. The chief once remarked to Hugh McCulloch that he thought the white man's schools had had a bad effect on them.

Richardville may have foreseen that the process of cultural disintegration among the Miami would be both accelerated and exacerbated by the construction of the Wabash and Erie Canal through the remaining Miami reserves, as permitted under the terms of the Treaty of 1826. The canal would no doubt fuel further white demands for opening the reserves to settlement. By 1840, when the chief was nearing eighty years of age, he probably also foresaw that his successor might be unable to get the increasingly fractious Miami council to agree to any further land cessions or to terms for the removal of the tribe, a subject the treaty commissioners repeatedly brought up at the negotiations held in the 1830s. Since the authority of the principal chiefs, including that of Richardville, had been greatly enhanced by their role as the representatives of the tribe in treaty negotiations but was dependent upon their ability to parlay

the diminishing Miami lands into tribal annuities and land grants for the most prominent chiefs, Richardville apparently decided in 1840, that the time had come to arrive at the best terms possible for the tribe's final agreement to removal.

Richardville and Hamilton drew up the Treaty of 1840 in which the Miamis ceded the remaining part of the Miami Reserve that had been defined in the Treaty of 1818 and agreed to the removal of the tribe to a federal reserve in present-day Kansas within five years. In return, the tribe received a payment of \$550,000 in annuities and payments of claims against its members. The treaty also contained provisions that made payments to Richardville and the estate of Francis Godfroy, as well as additional land grants of seven sections of the Miami Reserve to Richardville, one to his son-in-law, Francis LaFontaine, and another reserve to be held in common by the band of Chief Meshingomesia.

The treaty also provided that members of the families of Richardville, Godfroy and others who had been given individual land grants by earlier treaties would be allowed to remain on their lands. In practice, this meant that approximately half the tribe was exempted from emigration.

This provision is perhaps the best measure of the extent to which Richardville's strategy of securing individual land titles for members of the tribe succeeded in thwarting the federal government's policy. Richardville may also have known it was the only basis on which he could secure the Miami council's approval.

The Miami continued to resist emigration until 1846, but Chief Richardville did not live to witness that event. The chief died at his home south of Fort Wayne on the St. Marys River on August 13, 1841, and was buried next to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in that city. Although the cemetery, including the marble monument erected by his daughters over his grave, was removed about 1880, Richardville's remains are reputedly still in their original resting place.

In his will, Richardville made generous grants of land to his children and grandchildren. In addition, his strongbox (which is on display at Historic Fort Wayne) reputedly held as much as \$200,000 in gold and silver. One measure of the complexity of the chief's affairs was that it was not until late in 1852 that his co-executors, Allen Hamilton and Reverend Julian Benoit, were able to settle all of his business and carry out the provisions of his will. He was survived by one of his sons, Miaqueah, and his three daughters. One daughter, LaBlonde, married James Godfroy, the son of Chief Francis Godfroy. She inherited her father's house south of Fort Wayne, and her descendants later owned that property. Catherine, who was said to be the chief's youngest and favorite daughter, married Francis LaFontaine who succeeded Richardville as civil chief. The later lives of Miaqueah and Susan Richardville, who married trader Henry James, remain largely a mystery.

Though Chief Richardville remains a controversial figure among the descendants of the Miami today, his accomplishments are nonetheless secure. He did succeed in staving off the removal of the Miami from Indiana for decades past the time when other tribes had succumbed to that fate. By guaranteeing the retention of their personal land holdings, he ensured that at least some of the tribe's members would have a chance to survive on their home territory, even though it was on the white man's terms.

Many Miami, including many of Richardville's descendants, did not make the necessary cultural adaptation and eventually lost their lands. However, without Richardville's shrewd

manipulation of their situation, they would not have had even this opportunity. Without Richardville, the Miami saga at the Forks of the Wabash would have ended years earlier.

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*Ibid.*, p. 208; Helm, p. 21.

Anson, p. 215; copy of Chief Richardville's will in John Roche Papers, Huntington Public Library.