

# THE MAKING OF A MYTH: GEORGE ROGERS CLARK AND TERESE DE LEYBA

NANCY SON CARSTENS



A moonlit Moorish garden to the mansion of Lieutenant Governor de Leyba at St. Louis. Time 1778. Therese singing to accompaniment upon the harp. Colonel George Rogers Clark seated near, ranged about them Governor and Lady de Leyba, Captain Todd, Father Gibault, and others.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage is the opening scene from a play in *The Romance of George Rogers Clark and Therese de Leyba* (1929). The play

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<sup>1</sup> R. Alexander Bate, *The Romance of George Rogers Clark and Therese de Leyba* (Louisville, 1929), 9. In the play Terese is referred to as Governor Leyba's sister. Technically, if Terese were Spanish, her name would be spelled Teresa. If she were French, it would be spelled Therese or Terese (personal communication, Dr. Mica Howe, Professor of Spanish, Murray State University, 4 April 2002). Almost every document in the St. Louis region in the late eighteenth century was written in

tells the romantic and tragic tale of George Rogers Clark and Terese de Leyba. In 1778, Clark captured Kaskaskia and fell in love with Terese, the sister of the Spanish Lieutenant Governor Fernando de Leyba, in St. Louis. Clark was tall and handsome and she was short and beautiful. They became betrothed and planned a future together until tragedy befell them. Clark's fortune dissipated, and he broke off his engagement to Terese because he could not properly support her. In devastation, she returned to Spain and became a nun in an Ursuline convent, and Clark was said to have never been happy again. Unfortunately, myth has substituted for fact for over two centuries concerning the subject of Terese de Leyba. Research into the Clark-Leyba issue reveals that a Terese existed but that Terese de Leyba did not. In addition, it indicates that Terese and Miss Leyba were two separate persons. Unfortunately, research is hindered because Terese's last name and Miss Leyba's first name are unknown. Whether Clark had a relationship with either of them is also questionable. Revealing the conditions that created the Clark-Leyba myth is the purpose of this essay.

George Rogers Clark was the founder of Louisville, a Revolutionary War hero, and a bachelor. Information has been collected about Clark since the early 1800s, but most of it has centered upon his military exploits. Very little has been written about Clark's personal life, and there is minimal evidence available concerning Clark's interest in women.

Authors have disagreed about whether there was a Terese de Leyba and whether there existed a love interest between her and Clark. Some authors devote entire chapters to the romance, while

French; therefore, even a Spanish name would be transcribed in the French spelling. Although sources differ in the spelling, I have used "Terese" as the preferred spelling because the only original document in which her name is written has Terese. See John Todd's letter to George Rogers Clark cited in footnote 42.

others mention it only in footnotes. This debate can be viewed through existing historical literature. Clark family tradition has been the basis for most of the information that exists about Clark's love life. Although the publications of all the major Clark biographers were examined, only those that affected the creation of the myth are discussed.<sup>2</sup>

The Spanish lieutenant governor of Upper Louisiana was Captain Fernando de Leyba. Lieutenant Governor Leyba, his wife Marie, and their two daughters, Pepita and Rita, arrived at their official post in St. Louis in June 1778.<sup>3</sup> Leyba brought his slave Cupidon with

<sup>2</sup> Works such as Frederick Palmer, *Clark of the Ohio, A Life of George Rogers Clark* (New York, 1929); Lowell Thomas, *The Hero of Vincennes, The Story of George Rogers Clark* (Boston, 1929); William E. Wilson, *Big Knife: The Story of George Rogers Clark* (New York, 1940), from which I have only referenced a drawing (see p. 154); Hugh F. Rankin, *George Rogers Clark and the Winning of the West* (Richmond: Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1976); and Walter Havighurst, *George Rogers Clark: Soldier in the West* (New York, 1952) were excluded because they blend information from the Lyman C. Draper Collection with fiction. While Theodore C. Pease and Marguerite Pease, *George Rogers Clark and the Revolution in Illinois, 1763-1787* (Springfield, 1929) contains excellent research, I have only briefly cited them because they merely mention the affair and did not use footnotes or a bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> Leyba is often referred to as the governor instead of as the lieutenant governor. I have chosen to write Leyba instead of de Leyba because the name is used so frequently. According to Dr. Howe, it is common "to have de as part of a Spanish name. It is a stylistic choice whether you include the de or not in your writing, although de is an actual part of the name" (Howe, personal communication, 4 April 2002). Temple Bodley states that Marie is "Lady Marie de la conception y Zerar" in *George Rogers Clark, His Life and Public Service* (Boston, 1926), 89. Frederick Billon, *Annals of St. Louis in its Early Days Under the French and Spanish Dominations 1764-1804* (St. Louis, 1886), 205, transcribed the St. Louis church register that listed Marie's death. The register reads "Madame Marie, of the Conception and Zezar"; "Madame" and "Marie" are French. "Conception" is her catholic name, and "Zezar" is her ancestral name (Howe, personal communication). The Leyba Papers contain the will of Fernando de Leyba (10 June 1780) and other miscellaneous papers that deal with the disposition of his

him.<sup>4</sup> While stationed in St. Louis, Leyba also owned a mulatto slave named Marianne.<sup>5</sup>

estate. Leyba's daughters Pepita and Rita are identified in their father's will. The will, written in French, is the only document that gives the children's names. While on his deathbed, Leyba dictated his will to his friend and business partner, Francis Vigo, a Frenchman. Vigo wrote Pepite and Rite as the children's names. The Spanish spelling of the names would have been Pepita and Rita. Vigo spelled them in French; see *Leyba Miscellaneous Papers* (hereafter *Leyba Papers*), Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis (all dated in the late eighteenth century), vol. 3, book 1, pp. 269-70, instrument 2211. The Missouri Historical Society also has in its archives the Fred L. Billon Collection which has a translated copy of the original will. The translation is in Billon's handwriting and is in a notebook in envelope #2 in the Billon collection. Billon published his translation of the will in *Annals*, 202-203.

<sup>4</sup> Filson Society research specialist Pen Bogert found the information in Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, ed., *Databases for the Study of Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1699-1860, Louisiana Slave Database, 1719-1820* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), CD-ROM, n.p. and sent the information to me in a letter (2000). Bogert forwarded the following *Database* information: "13 February 1778, Orleans Parish, Document #129, before notary Almonaster Pedro Beltran sold a 41-year-old slave named Cupidon to Fernando Leyba for 385 pastres"; while in St. Louis, Leyba sold Cupidon sometime after June 1779. Clarence W. Alvord, ed., *Cahokia Records (1778-1790)*, vol. 2 of *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Society, Virginia Series* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1907), 17-19. Leyba also sold two slaves in New Orleans in 1778, two months prior to his departure to St. Louis. See Hall, *Databases*.

<sup>5</sup> Billon reprinted a 1779 court record which contained the "trial of Lorine, negro slave of Gaspard Roubieu, for an assault on Marianne, the mulatto slave of Govr. De Leyba, at 10 o'clock a.m., January 22, 1779. Govr. De Leyba being the owner of the injured woman." Billon, *Annals*, 158-59. The majority of the St. Louis residents and Leyba's soldiers were French and Canadian. Only three Spanish soldiers are recorded among the military rosters of 1778-1780, which "includes the names of all arms-bearing males of St. Louis." The three Spanish officers are Second Sergeant Joseph Alvarez Ortiz (sometimes referred to as Hortiz), Spanish cadet Antoine Bareda, and Lieutenant of militia Benito Basquez (sometimes referred to as Vasquez). John Francis McDermott, ed., "The Myth of the Imbecile Governor: Captain Fernando de Leyba and the Defense of St. Louis in 1780," *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley 1762-1804* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 373-81. Military rosters are also cited in J. Thomas Scharf, *History of St. Louis City and County from the Earliest Periods to the Present Day: including*

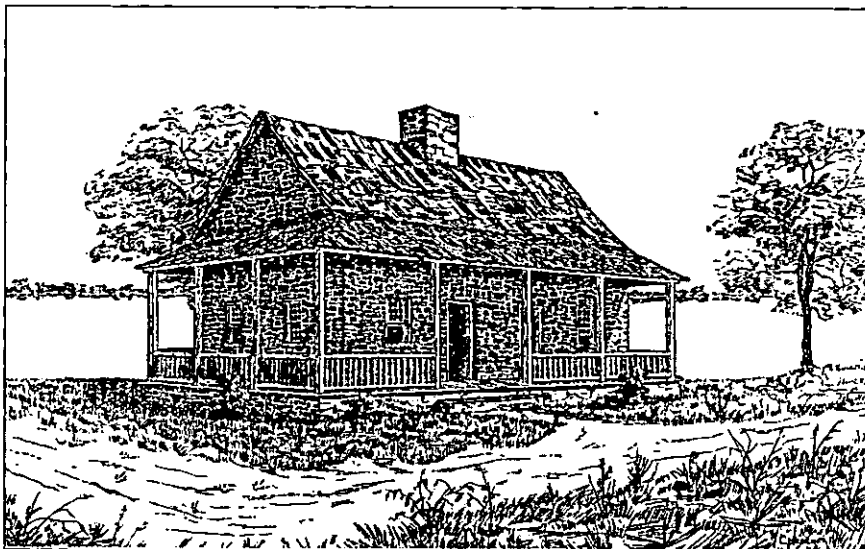
Shortly after the Leybas arrived in St. Louis, Clark captured the nearby town of Kaskaskia. With instructions from Bernardo Galvez, the Spanish Louisiana governor in New Orleans, to establish good relations with the Americans, Leyba began a correspondence with Clark.<sup>6</sup> Clark and his soldiers, stationed at Kaskaskia, were occasional guests at the Leyba home (known as the Government House) in St. Louis.<sup>7</sup> While it is well documented that Clark and Leyba were unusually good friends, documentation concerning the legendary relationship between Clark and a female member of the Leyba household is highly debatable. Both Leyba and his wife died in St. Louis during 1779-1780.<sup>8</sup> Although Leyba's will made provisions for the

*Biographical Sketches of Representative Men* (2 vols.; Philadelphia, 1883), 1: 175-76, 179.

<sup>6</sup> Good relations with the Americans would increase the population in upper Louisiana and good relations with the Indians would prevent "entrance to the rivers" by the English. John Francis McDermott, "The Battle of St. Louis 26 May 1780," *The Bulletin of The Missouri Historical Society* 36 (1980): 131-51. The 9 March 1778 "Special Instructions to Leyba from Galvez" are reprinted in Lawrence Kinnaird, ed., *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945* in volume 2 *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794*, Part 1, "The Revolutionary Period," 1765-1781 (3 vols.; Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 258-60.

<sup>7</sup> Leyba to Galvez, 21 July 1778 and 16 November 1778. Leyba informed Galvez that he had entertained Clark and his soldiers "at meals and laid thirty covers [blankets?] on his first visit which lasted two days. Dances were given for them both nights and a supper to the ladies and dancers, and lodging in my house . . ." See Lawrence Kinnaird, "Clark-Leyba Papers," *American Historical Review* 41 (1935): 98, 102. The Clark-Leyba Papers published by Kinnaird are in the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield, Illinois. Kinnaird published thirty-five letters, ten of which are Clark/Leyba letters. The George Rogers Clark Papers at the Missouri Historical Society contain a 30 May 1779 letter from Leyba to Clark that Kinnaird overlooked.

<sup>8</sup> The parish records or "Old Cathedral records, 1766-1781" that are in the St. Louis archives records the Leybas' burials as "pp. 78, 79, Burial No. 676, June 28, 1780 ([Fernando] de Leyba); Burial No. 661, Sept. 6, 1779 (Senora de Leyba)." John Bakeless, *Background to Glory: The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Philadelphia,



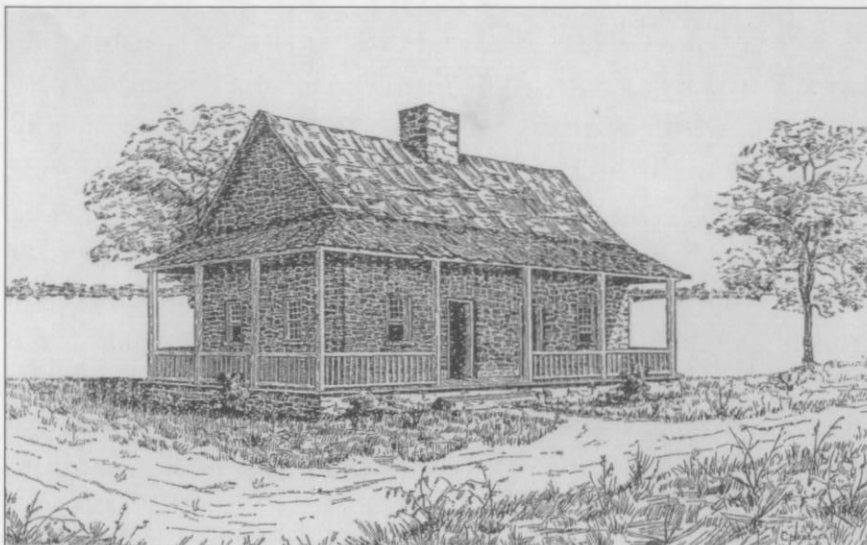
The Government House, 1765  
Frederick Billon

education of his two daughters “either in the convent or any other boarding school,” it is not known where they were after 1780.<sup>9</sup>

In three of Clark’s letters to Leyba, he included his regards to Leyba’s wife and daughters. Because there was no reference to a Leyba sister, could Clark have been romantically involved with Leyba’s daughters, Pepita or Rita? While the ages of the daughters are unknown, the letters of Clark and Leyba are of interest in determining their ages. Clark’s letter salutations included his “compliments to Madam Lebau [ sic]” and “my two favorites the

1957), 371. Premature death was not uncommon during the late eighteenth century. The two children of Pedro Piernas, the first Spanish lieutenant governor, died in 1774-1775, and Francisco Cruzat, the second lieutenant governor, lost his wife and three children in 1775, 1784, and 1786. Billon accessed the parish church records of St. Louis that recorded these deaths and published them. See Billon, *Annals*, 128, 232, 244-45.

<sup>9</sup> Leyba will, Leyba Papers, Missouri Historical Society.



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<sup>9</sup> Leyba will, Leyba Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

little Misses,” “the young Ladies,” or “your Ladies.”<sup>10</sup> After becoming widowed and nearing death and financial ruin, Leyba wrote to Governor Galvez for help. In these letters Leyba pleaded for assistance by stating “I have two daughters” and by referring to “my poor daughters,” “my weeping little daughters,” and “these innocent little girls.”<sup>11</sup> In Leyba’s will, the girls are called “young daughters.” Both Clark and Leyba described the daughters as “little” and “young.” Were the daughters too young to be of interest to Clark? In the eighteenth century, a female was considered a minor until the age of twenty.<sup>12</sup> However, females commonly married as young as fifteen years of age.<sup>13</sup>

Almost all of the original information about the Clark-Leyba subject is found in the Lyman C. Draper Manuscript Collection.<sup>14</sup> In the nineteenth century, Draper conducted interviews and wrote letters to Clark descendants and contemporaries to gain information

<sup>10</sup> Clark misspelled Leyba’s wife’s name as “Madam Lebau” and “Madam Layba.” Married women were referred to as “Madam” and single women were “Mademoiselle.” These Clark letters to Leyba were 26 October 1778, 23 January 1779, and 1 March 1779 and are reprinted in Kinnaird’s “Clark-Leyba Papers,” 100, 105-6.

<sup>11</sup> Leyba to Governor Galvez, 18 October 1779, *ibid.*, 111-12.

<sup>12</sup> Billon, *Annals*, 298.

<sup>13</sup> In a thirty-page pamphlet written for the “Spirit of ’76 Fair” in St. Louis, Robert Parkin, a St. Louis researcher, cites numerous examples of females marrying in their teens. For example, in 1781 Charles Gratiot married Auguste Chouteau’s seventeen-year-old sister. In 1779 Ignace Laroche married fifteen-year-old Marie Becquet, and in 1774 Francois Hebert married fifteen-year-old Madeleine Leroy. See Robert E. Parkin, “The Revolution in the Environs of St. Louis” (St. Louis: St. Louis Genealogical Society, 7 June 1975), 7, 24-25. There is also a case of a marriage to a ten-year-old girl. Spanish Lieutenant Benito Basquez “married Julia Papin, then only ten years old, who bore him twelve children.” Basquez was Fernando de Leyba’s substitute executor of his will. Scharf, *History of St. Louis*, 1: 176.

<sup>14</sup> Some of Draper’s contemporaries also collected information about Clark, but Draper’s collection is the largest.

about him. Draper served as secretary of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin from 1854 to 1886.<sup>15</sup> From the 1830s until his death in 1891, Draper collected more than four hundred volumes of information concerning trans-Allegheny frontier history. The collection was made available to the public in 1893. Draper's tenacity and attention to detail are impressive, but his organizational skills and documentary methods are less than desirable. Nonetheless, the use of his collection for studying Clark's life is essential.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, Draper refused to begin writing his proposed biography of Clark until he had collected every detail. Draper continued to collect until his death in 1891 without having written a biography of Clark.<sup>17</sup>

If Draper had not conducted interviews and written letters inquiring into Clark's love life, there would be little, if any, information about this subject.<sup>18</sup> While most of the descendants' letters are dated and signed, some of Draper's interviews and personal notes about the "love affair" are not adequately cited. Thus, when the notes were written or from whom he received the information is not always known. The best and most frustrating example of Draper's notes of unknown source is the following:

Miss Theressa Leyba was three years younger than Clark: got acquainted with her first in 1778: After her brother, Gov. Leyba's death, she went to New

<sup>15</sup> Draper was born 4 September 1815. See Ted Franklin Belue, ed., *The Life of Daniel Boone by Lyman Draper* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1998), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won the Northwest and Other Essays in Western History* (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Corner House Publishers, 1978; originally published in 1903), viii, 345, 358.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 340, 345, 351, 355.

<sup>18</sup> Some of the descendants died shortly after Draper interviewed them. Diana Bullitt died in 1853, John O'Fallon in 1865, and Thomas Rogers in 1851. Draper Collection, 34J24-25, 7J65-69, 10J78 (hereafter DC).

Orleans—had friends, not relatives there—& remained between 1 & 2 years—Maj. Williams was a medium of communication between Clark & Miss Layba [*sic*]—Williams then at Natchez: Finally she went to the town of Merida, in the province of Estranadura [*sic*], her region in Spain, entered a convent, & died there. Her brother Gov. Leyba's widow & family accompanied her to New Orleans & then to Spain in 1821. Her portrait is extant in Spain, & can be obtained. Clark used to hear something of her, not by letter, but through an American Minister to Spain. She was not tall.<sup>19</sup>

The above statement, in Draper's handwriting, contains more information than can be found anywhere about the alleged Leyba sister. Unfortunately, it is not known if the statement was a synthesis of accumulated interviews Draper had done or if the information is from a single interview. Some of the information contained in the above statement can be found in the letters of Clark's descendants, and some of the information is not found in any of the descendants' letters. For example, nowhere in the descendants' letters is there any

<sup>19</sup> Although Draper's notes are in 7J106-109, the statement about Miss Leyba is on page 109. Draper wrote at the top of 7J106 "See ante, 65." On page 65 (7J65), Draper wrote, "Memos Gen. George Rogers Clark, made July 25th, 1869" and at the top of the page is "compare post 106" and "Are these from W.L. [or M.L.] Clark?" This indicates that Draper may have been unsure from whom the notes were taken. It was probably not M.L. (Meriwether Lewis) Clark, Clark's nephew, because in DC, 7J116, he stated in 1869: "Don't know what became of Miss Leyba." The information in 7J109 indicated that the author knew what became of Miss Leyba. Draper's Memoranda on Clark, 25 July 1869, DC, 7J106-109. However, in the letter of John Temple (Clark's nephew) to Draper, 19 September 1867, Temple stated that, "Gen. Meriwether Lewis Clark . . . gathered up a lot of family secrets from various sources" and "seems to have learned many facts from his father Gov. William Clark." DC, 10J27-33.

mention of a portrait of Miss Leyba or her age. Nor is there any mention of the specific town or province in Spain where she originated. However, descendant Diana Bullitt's letter stated that Major John Williams did act as a liaison between Clark and Miss Leyba. There is erroneous information in the "anonymous" statement as well. The statement that "Her brother Gov. Leyba's widow & family accompanied her to New Orleans & then to Spain in 1821" is erroneous because Leyba's wife died in 1779. The source for the "anonymous" statement knew some intimate details that were not known by family descendants. It would be helpful to know from whom Draper received the unique information he copied in the "anonymous" passage.

The Draper material that pertains to Clark's love life contains only a few items that specifically use the name Terese. They are the "anonymous" statement, the Todd letter, the Perché and Gayarré letters, and the "list of sources" by Draper. Draper's list indicated the sources he used in obtaining information about "Miss Teresa Leyba." The following list is in Draper's handwriting and is copied below as he recorded it. Note how the name "Teresa" appears to have been added later:

Col. Geo: R. Clark – Events 1779

Teresa

Oct. - {Miss<sup>^</sup>Leyba-mentioned: Col. John Todd's letter,  
Oct. 3d. 79, vol. iii, ms. Clark Papers,

no. 73.

Ills. Papers, no. 4-p.122.

see Mrs. Semple Green's correspondence, Feb 29<sup>th</sup>, 1849.

& Mrs. D.M. Bullitt's [correspondence] <sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The list of sources is in DC, 23J28. The original Todd letter is in DC, 49J77. It is not clear if "vol. iii, ms. Clark Papers, no. 73" is where Draper kept the letter in his collection or if it is where Draper found the letter in some library or other

How much did Draper influence his sources? Draper would make lists of questions about Clark and mail them to Clark's descendants. Some of his "interrogatories" can be found in his collection because they were returned with the responses of the descendants. These surviving "interrogatories" indicate that Draper did not appear to influence the descendant's responses. For example, Draper consistently would ask, "Have you any knowledge of a love disappointment of Gen. George Rogers Clark?" or "Can you tell me the particulars—who the lady was and what became of her?"<sup>21</sup> Draper did not ask, "What can you tell me about Terese de Leyba?" Although the descendants' letters did not connect the name Terese with the last name Leyba, the descendants were sure that a Leyba or Spanish woman existed and was Clark's love interest.<sup>22</sup>

George Rogers Clark had been deceased only twenty-nine years when Draper began collecting information about him from his descendants. One of the first letters Draper received from a descendant was in 1847 from Thomas Rogers.<sup>23</sup> Captain John Rogers, Rogers's

collection. The Todd letter does have "73" in its upper left corner. Vol. iii became series J after Draper's death; I do not know what source Draper found in "Ills. Papers, no. 4-p.122." There is a series within the Draper Collection called the "Illinois Papers." In July 1847, Draper noted that he copied items from the "Illinois Papers." DC, 60J1. Mrs. Semple Green's 29 February 1849 letter is in DC 10J45 and Mrs. D.M. Bullitt's letters are in DC 10J176-77 and DC 10J167-70.

<sup>21</sup> J.B. Temple (Clark's great-nephew) to Draper, 26 August 1867, DC, 10J13-20; Draper to Lucy Semple Green (Clark's first cousin), 20 October 1848, DC, 10J39; Draper to Bland Ballard (Clark's relative), 1 September 1848, DC, 8J186.

<sup>22</sup> Two letters in 1867 to Draper, one from Abbé N.I. Perché, spiritual director of the Ursulines in New Orleans, and the other from Charles Gayarré, contain the name "Miss Therese Leyba" and "Teresa de Leyba." This indicates that Draper had specifically inquired about "Teresa de Leyba" to Perché and Gayarré. DC, 28J87-88. There is no evidence, however, that Draper ever mentioned the name Terese to a descendant.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Rogers was Clark's cousin's son.

brother, had served with Clark in the Illinois campaign during 1778-1780.<sup>24</sup> Thomas Rogers wrote to Draper: "I have heard he was once much pleased with some Lady, perhaps in St. Louis, though I am pretty sure I was never told of his making any overtures of marriage."<sup>25</sup> Rogers's letter to Draper provided an accurate description of Clark's relationship with the "St. Louis lady," but Draper continued to pursue other information or versions of the story from additional Clark relatives.

Another letter Draper received was in August 1847 from John O'Fallon, nephew and ward of George Rogers Clark. O'Fallon wrote to Draper:

Scarcely ever visiting any I have consequently not seen old Major Chouteau but was informed by Wm. Bourgs his lawyer and com[illegible]sion that Miss Leyba after the death of her brother Gov. Leyba, some where about 1780, she removed to New Orleans, and, after a short residence among her friends, or, co[illegible]sion, took the veil, and many years afterward, died a member of the Ursuline Convent.<sup>26</sup>

Draper also received a letter from Clark's first cousin, Lucy Semple Green, in 1849, who stated:

In the Spring of 1797 we removed to Ky. And came to my Uncle Clark's. Gen. Clark lived there at that time. He seemed to be fond of my society, and conversed with me often. Aunt (Mrs. John Clark) [this

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Rogers to Draper, 9 January 1847, DC, 10J112-14.

<sup>25</sup> Rogers to Draper, 3 April 1847, DC, 10J117. Rogers also corresponded with Mann Butler on 1 February 1834 and 1 November 1833. DC, 10J110-111.

<sup>26</sup> O'Fallon to Draper, 6 August 1847, DC, 34J16-19. After John O' Fallon's father died in 1793, O' Fallon became a ward of Clark's. See DC, 34J24.

name added by Draper] said she had heard that George had seen a Spanish Nun somewhere and fallen very deeply in love with her, why he could not get her, or what became of her, she did not, or could not tell. She said that was the reason why he took no notice of Ladies, and was surprised to see him pay me so much attention.<sup>27</sup>

In 1848, Diana Gwathmey Bullitt, Clark's niece, sent Draper the most important letters he received from a Clark descendant. Bullitt's interrogatory responses to Draper contain the following contradictory statements:

[Statement One] I learned from Gen. Clark's mother all I ever knew about his love affair. I was quite young, only fifteen at the time, and I have no doubt that Uncle Wm. Clark's memorandum about the relationship of the lady to the Spanish Gov[ernor] is correct. I was with Gen. Clark a great deal until I was twenty years of age when I was married; I never heard him allude to the lady or the affair except when he was intoxicated. He would then frequently say to me that if he had been properly treated [by the government] I would have had an elegant aunt whom I would have loved very much. His reflections about her appeared to distress him

<sup>27</sup> Green to Draper, 29 February 1849. Green stated that she "was born in 1773" which means she would have been twenty-four years old in 1797. Green began corresponding with Draper in 1847. See DC, 10J45. According to Bodley, Lucy Semple was Clark's first cousin. See his *George Rogers Clark*, 369; Nettie Oliver, Filson Historical Society genealogy specialist and Clark descendant, confirmed Bodley's information by checking the Hopewell Rogers Index, 43 vols., in the Filson Historical Society collection.

very much; I have often seen him shed tears when he would make the above remark to me. He never mentioned her name, and indeed, the forgoing is the most he ever said to me on the subject.<sup>28</sup>

[Statement Two] Soon after he immigrated to the West he went to the South, and there became acquainted with and engaged to be married to a Miss Lebeau (I don't know that I spell the name correctly) she was the daughter of the Spanish Governor. He promised to marry her at the close of the war; but in consequence of the Government refusing to recognize his accounts he was obliged to sell all of his property. He thought it was not honorable in him to marry a lady educated as she was and accustomed to all the luxuries of wealth, without having any means of supporting her. Their mutual friend & confidant Mr. Williams of New Orleans came to Ky to see him on the subject. Gen. C[lark] told him that he was a bankrupt in every thing but love for her. When he paid his address to her his fortune was sufficient to maintain her in her accustomed elegance, but that now he was a ruined man and that he could not sacrifice her as he had himself been sacrificed. Not long after this, Mr. Williams wrote to him that the lady in despair had gone to Old Spain, and had there taken the monastic vows. From this time Gen. Clark was a changed man. His family think[s] that he always before had cherished

<sup>28</sup> "Mrs. D[iana] M. Bullitt's replies to interrogatories in your letter of August 28th/[18]48." Handwriting is by Isaac B. Gwathmey, nephew of Diana Bullitt. See DC, 10J176-77.

the hope of becoming able to marry the lady of his love. They think that this disappointment in addition to the mortification at the treatment of the state of Virginia was the cause of his deep depression and intemperance.<sup>29</sup>

Notice the difference between the two statements by Bullitt. Although the statements were made in separate letters, they were sent to Draper by a relative, and it is difficult to determine which statement Bullitt made first. The first statement provides little that is specific about the affair, but the second statement provides details. Bullitt's statement, "I have no doubt that Uncle Wm. Clark's memorandum about the relationship of the lady to the Spanish Gov[ernor] is correct" indicates that the association of the "lady" with the Leybas may have started with Clark's younger brother William. What did Bullitt mean by "the relationship of the lady to the Spanish Gov[ernor]?" Was Bullitt referring to the question of whether the "lady" was related to Leyba or was Bullitt simply unsure about the exact relation of the "lady" to the Leybas? Was the lady the sister or daughter of the lieutenant governor? The location of William Clark's memorandum is not known. There is evidence the memorandum was the result of an interview between historian Mann Butler and William Clark in 1833.<sup>30</sup> It is

<sup>29</sup> Isaac B. Gwathmey to Draper, 18 August 1848, DC, 10J167-70. In July 1848, Gwathmey received a letter from Draper that had questions (interrogatories) about Clark in it. Gwathmey mailed the questions to his Aunt Diana Bullitt. Bullitt's daughter, Eloise De Kautgow, wrote her mother's responses to the questions and mailed them back to Gwathmey on 5 August 1848. Gwathmey then recopied De Kautgow's letter and the questions and mailed them to Draper on 18 August 1848.

<sup>30</sup> Mann Butler's notes, DC, 44J91, 44J189-90; Butler interviewed William Clark in 1833. Mann Butler, *Valley of the Ohio* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1971; originally published in 1853-1855), 84; Mann Butler to Draper, 9 March 1853, DC, 44J239. Butler wrote, "You speak in that letter of a memorial of

possible that Bullitt was influenced by the information from William Clark.

Clark's descendants were happy that Draper was planning a book about their famous ancestor.<sup>31</sup> Could they have embellished the love story? Was it better to have Clark love the sister of a nobleman like Leyba instead of a commoner?<sup>32</sup> In the eighteenth century, the majority of the residents of the Illinois and St. Louis regions were of French birth and were *habitants* or people who came from the lower classes of France.<sup>33</sup>

Clark's besides, tho[sic] not so extensive, as the one communicated to me, by Gov. William Clark." Although Butler interviewed the younger Clark about his brother George's love life, Butler did not include the information in his *History of the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (Louisville, 1834) or his *Valley of the Ohio*. Butler knew about the "Miss Leyba" affair but chose not to include the information in either of his books. Ironically, in 1971, G. Glenn Clift and Hambleton Tapp, editors of the 1971 reprint, included detailed information about Clark's relationship with Terese de Leyba. The editors included the information in brackets so the reader would understand that Butler had not added the information. However, the editors admitted "that positive proof seems to be lacking [concerning the relationship of Clark and Terese de Leyba]." See *Valley of the Ohio*, 132.

<sup>31</sup> Lucy Semple Green to Draper, 29 February 1849. Green wrote, "I shall be glad to live to see your book." See DC, 10J45; Sarah Jane Logan Gamble to Draper, 10 June 1889. Gamble wrote to Draper that she had reassured a relative that, "We will get the truth when Dr. Draper's book comes." See DC, 10J358.

<sup>32</sup> Clarence Alvord, *The Illinois Country 1673-1818* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1965; originally published in 1922), 408. According to Alvord, "The majority [of the inhabitants of Illinois] were of French birth and were almost exclusively of the class called habitants, who are universally described as living in a condition of utmost poverty and fifth." In William Bodley (Clark's relative) to Draper, 12 February 1868, Bodley described Clark's love interest as a "lady of noble birth." See DC, 10J305. In Diana Bullitt (Clark's niece) to Draper, Bullitt stated that the "lady [was] educated and accustomed to all the luxuries of wealth." See DC, 10J167-70.

<sup>33</sup> Alvord, *Cahokia Records*, xvii; also see Alvord, *Illinois Country*, 407-408.

Many of Clark's descendants, such as Bullitt, were residents of Louisville, Kentucky. With the anticipation of having a book written by Draper about Clark, undoubtedly the descendants discussed family history. In his 1847 letter to Draper, O'Fallon mentioned the forthcoming recollections of Diana Bullitt. This proves that O'Fallon and Bullitt communicated with each other about Clark's love life.

O'Fallon, Bullitt, and Green were living descendants who had had previous direct contact with George Rogers Clark. Bullitt and Green's letters indicate that Clark was in love at one time. The important thing to remember is that in Draper's correspondence with Clark's descendants, the name Terese is not known. Neither Rogers, O'Fallon, Green, nor Bullitt mention the name Terese.

Seeking information about Clark's love interests, Draper wrote, interviewed, and received letters from at least nine other Clark descendants between 1867 and 1889.<sup>34</sup> These later descendants' statements are less reliable because they indicate that their information was simply a repetition of earlier information or family gossip (some specifically refer to the recollections of Diana Bullitt).<sup>35</sup> Even Draper

<sup>34</sup> Some of the descendants are: John B. Temple (DC, 10J13-20, 27, 33), Sarah Jane Gamble (DC, 10J352-58), William L. Bodley (DC, 10J305), Dr. William Clark (DC, 10J324-35), Ellen Fry (DC, 35J52-55), M.E. Gwathmey (DC, 35J54), George C. Gwathmey (DC, 10J186), Bland Ballard (DC, 8J186), and General Meriwether Lewis Clark (DC, 7J110-16). Sam McDowell, *Calendar of the George Rogers Clark Papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts* (Utica, Kentucky: McDowell Publications, 1985).

<sup>35</sup> O' Fallon to Draper, August 1847. O' Fallon mentioned "Mrs. Bullitt's promised statements relative to the Clark family." See DC, 34J16-19. In Sarah Jane Gamble to Draper, 3 and 10 June and 2 July 1889, she stated that, "I will give you all I can from memory and from notes I have at various times, taken from others of the family" and that "Richard C. Gwathmey told me about the engagement" and that "his informer was Diana Bullitt." See DC, 10J352-58, 360-64. In Richard C. Gwathmey to Draper, 27 September 1867, he wrote that he obtained information from his brother Isaac B. Gwathmey whose source was Mrs. Diana M. Bullitt. See

disclosed that, "Mrs. Diana Bullitt told me the most I have heard about it [Clark's personal life]."<sup>36</sup> This statement by Draper makes Diana Bullitt a good candidate for being the person who made the "anonymous" statement.

There are two letters from 1867 in the Draper Collection that specifically imply that it was Draper who associated the name Terese with the Leybas as early as 1867. The first letter is from Charles Gayarré. Gayarré writes to Draper that he does "not happen to know anything of his [Leyba's] sister Teresa de Leyba." Gayarré suggested that Draper write to Abbé N.I. Perché for assistance.<sup>37</sup> The second letter to Draper was received from Perché, the spiritual director of the Ursulines in New Orleans. Draper apparently had asked Perché to search the convent records for Terese de Leyba's name because Perché responded to Draper that he could find no mention of "Miss Theresa De Leyba's name in the records that date back to 1727." Perché also stated that:

Sisters who have been in the convent nearly sixty years and have known their predecessors the past century, say that they did never hear of that lady. It is to be supposed that she went to Spain, or maybe to Havana where there was an Ursuline convent which is still in existence. . . .<sup>38</sup>

If Terese's name was not Leyba, Perché's search was in vain. Also, the name Leyba was often misspelled as Liboa or Lebau and may have

DC, 10J187-90.

<sup>36</sup> At the end of Sara Jane Gamble's letter to Draper, 10 June 1889, Draper scribbled a note about getting his information from Bullitt. See DC, 10J358.

<sup>37</sup> Gayarré to Draper, 23 September 1867, DC, 28J87.

<sup>38</sup> Perché to Draper, 1 November 1867, DC, 28J88.

added an additional hindrance to the search.<sup>39</sup> If Perché had encountered the name of Pepita, Rita, or anyone named Leyba, would he have passed this information along to Draper?<sup>40</sup> According to Leyba's will, daughters Pepita and Rita were to be sent to a "convent or boarding school."

In 2000, Pen Bogert, Filson Historical Society research specialist, discovered evidence that the Leyba mulatto slave Marianne was still alive in 1793, living in New Orleans as a free woman, and was known by the name Marianne Leyba. Bogert discovered the following entry in a Louisiana slave database, 1719-1820:

8 January 1793, Orleans Parish, Document #13, before notary Pedesclaux, Juan Bautista Labatut sold a slave (name not given) to Mariana Leyba, a "free mulatress," for 150 piastres.

This new information is important because it raises the possibility that Marianne was the "Spanish St. Louis lady" Clark loved and was the one who accompanied the daughters Pepita and Rita to New Orleans in late 1779 or 1780. Marianne Leyba is the only known link to the Leyba family after 1780. Although unlikely, Marianne could have been the love interest of Clark and cannot be ruled out as the

<sup>39</sup> Louis Houck, *A History of Missouri* (3 vols.; Chicago, 1908), 2: 32. According to Houck, Leyba was spelled "Liboa" in 1769 on a ship roster; also see Clark to Governor Patrick Henry, 16 September 1778 in James Alton James, ed., *George Rogers Clark Papers 1771-1781* (New York, 1912), 68-69. Clark spelled Leyba as "Lebau."

<sup>40</sup> It was suggested to me that when a woman entered a convent in the eighteenth century, she renounced her last name and, therefore, she could not be traced. However, it is unlikely that the director of the Ursulines would have searched for a "Theresa De Leyba" unless she was registered or known by her last name in convent records.

Miss Leyba whom Clark courted.<sup>41</sup>

What evidence prompted Draper to begin referring to the Leyba lady as Terese? The most important document concerning Clark's love interest, found in the Draper Collection, is a letter from Colonel John Todd, Jr., to Clark dated 3 October 1779. The name Terese and

<sup>41</sup> Pen Bogert to author, 2000. Bogert provided information he found in Hall, ed., *Databases*. St. Louis was a frontier settlement and although customs were more relaxed than in more established regions, class distinctions still existed. The 1799 St. Louis census listed fifty "Free Mulattoes," six "Free Negroes," two hundred and sixty-eight "Slaves," and six hundred and one "Whites." The St. Louis Cathedral records registered five "mixed" marriages prior to 1818. Marianne may not have been a slave; she may have been Fernando de Leyba's servant, a free mulatress. She is most often referred to as de Leyba's slave, but she is also sometimes referred to as his "mulatto servant." There are at least three instances of Frenchmen marrying "Indians" in the list of marriage contracts in the St. Louis archives. There are some examples of men fathering illegitimate mulatto children. For example, Pierre Francois De Volsay, a Knight of the Royal Order of St. Louis and a captain in the French company at St. Louis, was married to a French woman. He divorced her in 1779. When he died, he left "the best part of his property to Francoise, a mulatto girl, his natural daughter, the wife of Francois Dupuy." Scharf, *History of St. Louis*, 1: 171, 177-79, 309. Another example is Charles Henrion, who died in 1783 in St. Louis. "Some time before his death he had purchased from Louis Barada, his illegitimate mulatto child Marianne, nine years of age, to emancipate her (which he did at once), and make her his heir. This he neglected to do, and dying not long after without a will, his property fell to his heirs, the Beaugenous. The matter was left to the decision of Governor General Miro at New Orleans, who placed her as one of the heirs with the Beaugenous, all of them yet living in 1787." Billon, *Annals*, 416-17. There are several Mariannes listed in the St. Louis archives. For example, Spanish Second Sergeant Joseph Alvarez Ortiz married Marquerite Marianne Becquet on 27 January 1780. She was seventeen years old. Ortiz was a "military attache at the Government House." He was born "in the town of Lienira, province of Estremadura, Spain, in 1753." Scharf, *History of St. Louis*, 1: 170, 178; Ortiz and "Miss Layba [Leyba]" were from the same province in Spain. See "anonymous" statement in text. Joseph and Marianne's daughter Marie married John Baptiste Lebeau. Scharf, *History of St. Louis*, 1: 170, 178; Could this "John Baptiste Lebeau" (written by Frenchman?) be the "Juan Bautista Labatut" (written by Spaniard?) who "sold a slave to Mariana Leyba" in 1793?

the term “Sweet Heart” are used together in the letter. The ending of the letter follows:

Your Br [brother] is well—Madame Leyba is dead—Madamlle Terese still a Maid & & &.

If I could get an Oppy [opportunity] of sending you some thing good to Toast your Sweet Heart in I would—perhaps I may Shortly—by Mr. Bowman.<sup>42</sup>

Todd had been in Kaskaskia only a couple of months when he wrote the letter to Clark at the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville). If Todd was sending Clark, by Mr. Bowman, something to toast his sweetheart in, it is logical that the sweetheart was in Louisville, not St. Louis. Not only did Clark never mention the name of his sweetheart, he also did not indicate where she lived.

Because Terese’s name is used in the same context as Madame Leyba’s, could this explain how Terese’s name became associated with the Leybas? Apparently, Draper associated the name Terese and the term “Sweet Heart” and concluded the two were the same person. Obviously, Todd was only reporting recent news about people in the region (St. Louis and Kaskaskia) who were significant to Clark.<sup>43</sup>

The Todd letter has been available since 1909 when it was first published by Clarence Alvord in his *Kaskaskia Records 1778-1790*. In

<sup>42</sup> Todd to Clark, 28 July 1779, DC, 49J62; Todd to Clark 3 October 1779, DC,49J77. Clark and Todd were very close friends, and Todd was Clark’s only choice to head the “new government” of Illinois which was based at Kaskaskia. James, *Clark Papers*, ciii. Todd also had correspondence with Leyba concerning business affairs but made no reference to Leyba’s family. Houck, *History of Missouri*, 1: 344.

<sup>43</sup> “In the late fall [of 1779] Todd left the Illinois, never, save perhaps for one fleeting visit, to return.” Pease and Pease, *George Rogers Clark*, 58. This could explain why there were no more letters from Todd to Clark concerning Terese.

addition in 1912, James Alton James included it in his *George Rogers Clark Papers 1771-1781*.<sup>44</sup> Yet even before the Alvord or James books were published, the original Todd letter was available as early as 1893 in the Draper Collection.<sup>45</sup> Unless referenced in their books, it is difficult to know which Clark scholars were influenced by the Todd letter and which were not. It is not known how Draper acquired the letter.<sup>46</sup> The acquisition of the Todd letter may have been the catalyst that inspired Draper to associate “Terese” with the Leybas in 1867. After all, the Todd letter is at the top of the list of Draper’s sources.

After Mann Butler’s unexpected death in 1855, many of his notes about Clark were either stolen or destroyed.<sup>47</sup> Fortunately, Draper was able to acquire some of Butler’s notes that concerned Clark’s love affair. Draper prized Butler’s “love notes on Gen. G.R. Clark, some of which are valuable, especially the memo rela-

<sup>44</sup> Alvord, *Kaskaskia Records 1778-1790*, vol. 1 of *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Society, Virginia Series* (Chicago, 1909), 128; also see James, *Clark Papers*, 369-70. There is no mention of Terese in Alvord’s *Kaskaskia Records, Cahokia Records*, or *The Illinois Country*.

<sup>45</sup> Although Draper guarded his collection from the public during his lifetime, he allowed some late-nineteenth-century authors to view it. None of the authors mentioned here, however, are among Thwaites’s list of people who were allowed access. Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won*, 349, 358.

<sup>46</sup> Draper could have received the Todd letter from a descendant. For example, in letters to Draper, O’Fallon indicated that he would send Clark’s papers to Draper. DC, 46J20-51 and 34J13. William Croghan, Clark’s brother-in-law, wrote to Draper that he would send Clark’s papers at “Mulberry Hill [Clark’s parent’s home]” to Draper. DC, 10J227-28. In 1845, John Croghan wrote Draper that the Clark family had agreed to send Clark’s papers to Draper. DC, 10J225. After O’Fallon’s death in 1865, his collection of Clark papers were to be sent to Draper. DC, 34J25.

<sup>47</sup> Draper’s notes concerning Butler’s death. DC, 4J243. According to the editors, G. Glenn Clift and Hambleton Tapp, Butler’s “valuable papers and most of his library, was stolen or destroyed by Federal soldiers.” Butler, *Valley of the Ohio*, preface, n.p.

tive to Clark's 'flame' Miss Leyba."<sup>48</sup> The following are some of Butler's handwritten notes:

Life of George Rogers Clark

While Col. Clark was engaged in his military operations considerations of duty and courtesy took him over to St. Louis. There at the house of Gov. Leyba he met the sister of that officer Miss Leyba. Attachment followed and a correspondence was kept up between the parties, after the return of Col. Clark to Ky. But blight which befel [*sic*] the fortunes of Col. Clark seems to have interposed difficulties however gladly by heart would have remained, this unhappy termination of an honourable affair drove the lady to seek consolation in the austerities of religion. Miss Leyba retired into a convent at New Orleans.

This Mann Butler recd. from Gen. Wm. Clark personally [this line added by Draper].<sup>49</sup>

Could the above notes by Butler be the William Clark memorandum that Diana Bullitt referenced in her letter to Draper, even though Bullitt and Clark disagree about the relation of Miss Leyba to the Spanish governor? Bullitt claimed that Miss Leyba was the daughter and William Clark described her as the sister of Governor Leyba. William Clark died in 1838. This means that Butler was probably the first historian to obtain information about Clark's love life. Draper's investigations followed Butler's. As a historian, Butler often erred by using quotation marks for his paraphrasing of the

<sup>48</sup> For Draper's undated notes concerning Butler's material, see DC, 44J178.

<sup>49</sup> Butler's notes, DC, 44J189-90. William Clark was born in 1770 and would have been about eight years old when Clark allegedly met Terese. Houck, *History of Missouri*, 3: 4.

original material.<sup>50</sup> Because the notes are in Butler's handwriting, not William Clark's, could Butler have added the term "Miss Leyba" when William Clark talked about the love of George's life? Butler's paraphrasing makes it difficult to determine the accuracy of his notes. Draper also interviewed William Clark. William Clark recounts, while Draper transcribes, the St. Louis attack of 1780 and states "[Clark] arriving at Cahokia, May 25th, repulsed [the enemy] the evening the 26th, after having visited Gov. Leyba at St. Louis and seen his lady love for the last time."<sup>51</sup> Notice that William Clark does not mention the lady's name when Draper interviewed him. In both of William Clark's interviews, the name Terese is not mentioned and he does not say the "lady love" was related to the Leybas.

The first published account of the Clark-Leyba love affair can be found in *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (1887). As one of the contributing editors, Draper was credited with writing the entry about Clark:

The freedom of Clark's early life had unfitted him for domestic happiness, and he never married. A tradition is preserved in the family that he was fascinated with the beauty of the daughter of the Spanish governor of St. Louis when he relieved that post from an Indian attack. Observing a want of courage in the governor, he broke off his addresses to the girl, saying to his friends: "I will not be the father of a race of cowards." His last years were spent alone and in poverty, in a rude dwelling on Corn Island . . . [Clark

<sup>50</sup> Butler, *Valley of the Ohio*, preface, n.p. Editors Clift and Tapp note that many of Butler's "direct quotations are paraphrases." Although Butler claimed that his quotations were "taken literally" from his sources, the editors believe "in actuality he but adhered to fact or the ordinary construction of primary meaning, setting the whole apart in quotation marks."

<sup>51</sup> Draper's undated notes. DC, 28J27.

exclaimed] "When Virginia needed a sword, I gave her one. She sends me now a toy. I want bread!"<sup>52</sup>

Draper denied having written portions of this entry by including the following note in his collection:

Gen. Geo R. Clark. Written June 18 & 19, 1886 for Appleton's Dict. Of Amer. Biography by request of its Eds., Jas. Grant Wilson. L.C.D. [Draper]. This sketch of Clark as pub. by the Appletons, has some matter added I did not furnish – viz: abt addressing the St. Louis lady & his remark; abt the sword from Va. & abt his rude dwelling on Corn Island. The love story & the sword are quite erroneously told - & his cabin was not on Corn Island, but on the Indiana Shore. L.C.D.<sup>53</sup>

Why did Draper deny the "added" information? After all, the "added" information was an accurate reflection of some of the descendants' accounts that Draper had collected. Draper was near the end of his life when he submitted his information about Clark to the *Cyclopaedia*. What conclusions had Draper reached about the "St. Louis Lady?" Did Draper merely dispute the reference to the "daughter of the Governor?" Also, why would Draper write "St. Louis Lady" if he already knew the lady's name? By 1887, Draper may have discovered that the "St. Louis Lady" was not related to the Leybas. After over fifty years of searching for information about Clark's life, Draper's conclusions about Clark's love life are still not known.

<sup>52</sup> James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (8 vols.; New York, 1887), 1: 627.

<sup>53</sup> DC, 1J210.

The *Cyclopaedia's* description of Clark would have been accepted as the conclusion of Draper's research had it not been for the discovery of his denial note. Unfortunately, the *Cyclopaedia* influenced subsequent authors who would write about Clark. These authors probably did not know about Draper's denial. The *Cyclopaedia* article is an excellent example of what Draper dreaded most. He had hoped to correct history by conducting thorough research and then writing about his findings.<sup>54</sup> Instead, he found his own writing to have been altered, producing an inaccurate description of Clark's life. This must have angered Draper greatly. It is ironic that Draper, who had tried so hard to gather accurate data for future publication, should have inaccurate information published with his name attached to it.

The first author to write a biography about George Rogers Clark was William H. English.<sup>55</sup> In his 1896, two-volume history, *Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio 1778-1783 and Life of Gen. George Rogers Clark*, the only mention of Clark's love life is in a footnote. To his credit, as early as 1896, English's observations were accurate:

In his researches the author has found no evidence that General Clark was ever engaged in any affair of the heart. The nearest to it is a tradition that he was for a time fascinated with a Spanish lady in St. Louis who afterwards took the veil in a Catholic institution in New Orleans, greatly to the disturbance of his peace of mind. It is only tradition, however, and very vague at that.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Belue, ed., *Daniel Boone*, 6; also see DC, 13J75.

<sup>55</sup> English was a distant relative of Clark's; see James Fisher, "A Forgotten Hero Remembered, Revered, and Revised: The Legacy and Ordeal of George Rogers Clark," *Indiana Magazine of History* 92 (1996): 111.

<sup>56</sup> William H. English, *Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio 1778-1783 and Life of Gen. George Rogers Clark* (2 vols.; Maryland: Heritage Books,

After Draper's death in 1891, Reuben G. Thwaites, Draper's successor at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, oversaw the opening of the collection for the public use in 1893. In 1903, Thwaites wrote *How George Rogers Clark Won the Northwest and Other Essays in Western History*. Interestingly, Thwaites does not mention any love interests of Clark's, even though he had access to all of Draper's notes about Clark's alleged love affair.<sup>57</sup>

In 1904, Wilshire Butterfield wrote the *History of George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois and the Wabash Towns: 1778-1779*. Butterfield, like English, mentioned Clark's love life in a footnote:

AN ERRONEOUS TRADITION AS TO CLARK'S  
ATTACHMENT FOR THE DAUGHTER OF THE  
SPANISH GOVERNOR.

The following tradition mentioned by Draper in his article on Clark in *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, is wholly erroneous; for as a matter of fact, Clark never visited St. Louis to aid in its defense or to relieve it from an Indian attack.<sup>58</sup>

Butterfield was aware of the *Cyclopaedia* article because he quotes from it. Butterfield claims that there could not have been an affair with the Spanish girl simply because Clark never visited St. Louis. Apparently, Butterfield was not aware of the letters that

1991; originally published in 1896), 2: 868.

<sup>57</sup> In his will, Draper donated his collection to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Thwaites was president of the society when the collection was received. Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won*, 358.

<sup>58</sup> Wilshire Butterfield, *History of George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois and the Wabash Towns: 1778-1779* (Boston: Gregg Press, 1972; originally published in 1904), 801.

Clark and Leyba exchanged, which detailed Clark's visits to St. Louis during 1778-1779.<sup>59</sup>

The revered Clark historian James Alton James, who published the *George Rogers Clark Papers 1771-1781* in 1912, was the first to associate Terese's name with the Leybas in print. James published the Todd letter and addressed the letter's reference to Terese with a mere footnote:

[In relation to the Todd letter] Mlle. de Leyba [was the] sister of Governor Leyba. Colonel Clark is said to have become betrothed to her. She afterwards entered a convent in New Orleans.<sup>60</sup>

Todd wrote "Madamlle Terese" in his letter, not "Mlle de Leyba." Like Draper, James assumed Terese was a Leyba and projected his assumption into the evidence.

During the 1920s sesquicentennial of the American Revolution, at least six new books (fiction and nonfiction) were published about Clark.<sup>61</sup> In 1926, Clark descendant Temple Bodley wrote *George Rogers Clark, His Life and Public Service*.<sup>62</sup> While Bodley's book has over four hundred pages, only two pages are devoted to the Terese affair. Bodley uses information from the Draper Collection in his description of the Clark love affair and also associates Terese's name with the Leybas in print:

<sup>59</sup> Kinnaird, "Clark-Leyba Papers," 92, 99, 106, 108.

<sup>60</sup> James, *Clark Papers*, 369-70.

<sup>61</sup> They are: Bodley, *George Rogers Clark, His Life and Public Service* (Boston, 1926); Ross F. Lockridge, *George Rogers Clark, Pioneer Hero of the Old Northwest* (Chicago, 1927); James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Chicago, 1928); Pease and Pease, *George Rogers Clark and the Revolution in Illinois, 1763-1787*; Palmer, *Clark of the Ohio, A Life of George Rogers Clark*; and Thomas, *The Hero of Vincennes: The Story of George Rogers Clark*.

<sup>62</sup> Fisher, "Forgotten Hero," 115.

It was at this time that the one romance of his [Clark's] life is said to have begun. A well-supported tradition says he met, loved, and became betrothed to Terese, the beautiful young sister of the Spanish lieutenant governor. . . . That they were engaged, and that, when he found himself financially ruined, he told her he could not marry her, has not only always been a family tradition, but one which appears to be supported by the statements of several trustworthy contemporaries, and by what he himself told one of them [John Todd?]. . . . No correspondence between her and Clark has been discovered, and it is not known when, or in what manner, he informed her that their marriage was impossible.<sup>63</sup>

Bodley cites the same sources that Draper had used as proof that the affair took place: the "anonymous" statement, the Todd letter, and the Bullitt and Green letters are cited in Bodley's footnotes. Like Butterfield, Bodley was aware of the entry in *Appleton's Cyclopaedia* because he cites it in a footnote concerning another episode in Clark's life.<sup>64</sup> Because the information given by Bodley is almost identical to the *Cyclopaedia* entry, Bodley must have assumed that this entry was accurate. Bodley also referenced James's *Clark Papers*, which contained the Todd letter and James's footnote about it.

James Alton James's *The Life of George Rogers Clark* (1928) contains over five hundred pages of information about Clark. While James devotes an entire chapter to Clark's post-Revolutionary life, he includes only two footnotes that concern Clark's love life:

<sup>63</sup> Bodley, *George Rogers Clark*, 89, 161, 368-69.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

[First footnote] There is only a very questionable tradition for the statement that Clark became betrothed to Therese, the sister of De Leyba. See Temple Bodley, *George Rogers Clark* (Cambridge, 1926).

[Second footnote] There is no real basis for the statement [in the *Cyclopaedia*]. . . . Mr. Bodley has preserved the questionable tradition in another form [Bodley's 1926 *George Rogers Clark*].<sup>65</sup>

James questioned Clark's connection to Terese, but he still assumed she was a Leyba. Instead of addressing the issue further, he referred readers to Bodley for a definitive conclusion. Therefore, Bodley's conclusions about the Clark-Leyba issue have been repeated by biographers more than the conclusions of James.<sup>66</sup>

While James devoted only footnotes to Clark's love life, another author chose to write a play about the subject. In 1929, R. Alexander Bate of Louisville, Kentucky, published his *The Romance of George Rogers Clark and Therese de Leyba*. John Bakeless in his *Background to Glory, The Life of George Rogers Clark* also revels in retelling the mythical Clark-Terese story. In addition to using the Draper Collection, Bakeless's bibliography indicates that he had seen the will of Leyba and the church records that recorded the burials of Leyba and his wife.<sup>67</sup> Although Bakeless knew that Terese's name did not appear in her alleged brother's will, he did not question the omission.

Like James in 1928, Lowell Harrison in his *George Rogers Clark and the War in the West* (1976) skeptically mentions the affair:

<sup>65</sup> James, *Life of George Rogers Clark*, 124, 469.

<sup>66</sup> Lockridge's book is an excellent example of the repetition of information from Bodley. Lockridge, *George Rogers Clark*, 181.

<sup>67</sup> Bakeless, *Background to Glory*, 371.

Tradition has it that George Rogers Clark fell in love with Terese, the sister of Don Fernando [De Leyba]. If the story is true, their blighted romance provides one answer to the question of why Clark never married . . . . There is little evidence to support the romantic tale; those who wish to believe have done so.<sup>68</sup>

Harrison was right to question the validity of the love story. However, like his predecessors English, Butterfield, James, and Bodley, Harrison did not question Terese's association with the Leybas.

The only author to deny that Leyba had a sister is Lawrence Kinnaird. Since the 1920s, Kinnaird had studied Spanish documents from the American Revolution. In 1976, he presented a paper at the sixteenth annual Conference on the History of Western America titled "The Western Fringe of Revolution."<sup>69</sup> According to Kinnaird, "one of the most interesting myths of the western frontier" involved Clark and the Leyba family. Kinnaird criticized Clark biographers and Clark descendants for perpetuating the myth because:

Unfortunately for romance, Leyba had no sister in America. There is much evidence to support this fact, including Leyba's Will. Finally, the venerable Pierre Chouteau, who had lived near the Leyba family in St. Louis and knew the members well, settled the matter. In an interview with one of Lyman Draper's investigators, Chouteau said "that Govr. Leyba had no sisters in this country." Clark's

<sup>68</sup> Lowell H. Harrison, *George Rogers Clark and the War in the West* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 30, 112.

<sup>69</sup> Lawrence Kinnaird, "The Western Fringe of Revolution," *Western Historical Quarterly* 71 (July 1976): 252.

friendship with the Leyba family was based on economics rather than romance.<sup>70</sup>

Kinnaird correctly questioned the omission of any reference to a sister in Leyba's will. The will made provisions for his two daughters as well as for his mother who resided in Barcelona, Spain. Provisions also were made for the sale of Leyba's "deceased wife's clothes."<sup>71</sup> Such attention to detail in the will indicates that Leyba would not have overlooked the needs of a sister. Even if Leyba's alleged sister entered a convent and did not need financial consideration, it is difficult to believe that Leyba would make no mention of her existence. One of the problems with Kinnaird's conclusion, however, is a failure to cite where the Chouteau statement can be found in the Draper Collections. The "sister of Leyba" question is not mentioned in Kinnaird's dissertation or in any of his numerous books or lectures.<sup>72</sup> The location of the Chouteau statement is important because Chouteau is a primary source concerning the Terese de Leyba mystery. Chouteau was a respected citizen of St. Louis and was in close contact with the Leyba family from 1778 to 1780.<sup>73</sup> While valuable, Kinnaird's research is weakened by his failure to properly cite his source.

Only one author is known to have been influenced by Kinnaird's conclusions. In his *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley 1762-1804* (1974), John Francis McDermott mentions the story about Clark's relationship with Terese. However, after reading Kinnaird's conclusion that Leyba had no sister, McDermott revised his own view in his article, "The Battle of St. Louis, 26 May 1780" (1980) by deleting any

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 263. Kinnaird was referring to Leyba's financial assistance to Clark and his soldiers during the American Revolution.

<sup>71</sup> Leyba's will, Leyba Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>72</sup> Kinnaird, "American Penetration into Spanish Territory 1776 to 1803" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1928).

<sup>73</sup> A report by Colonel Charles Delassus to Captain Amos Stoddard, 6 March 1804, described Chouteau's respected reputation. Billon, *Annals*, 364-66.

mention of Terese. As an explanation for his deletion, McDermott stated in his list of sources that, "Kinnaird . . . firmly disposes of the myth of Clark's romantic interest in a non-existent sister of Leyba."<sup>74</sup> Both Kinnaird and McDermott, however, failed to realize the possibility of a Terese who was not a Leyba. They also overlooked the possibility that Clark may have been in love with one of the daughters of Leyba.

The last historian to include in the study of Clark biographers is Kathrine Wagner Seineke. In 1981, Seineke wrote *The George Rogers Clark Adventure in the Illinois* in which there is no mention of Clark's love life. Seineke's use of some of Kinnaird's published works, like McDermott, indicates she may have been influenced by Kinnaird's conclusions concerning the Clark-Leyba affair.<sup>75</sup> Seineke is the only author to publish the Draper interview of Paschal Cerre (1846). Cerre, born in 1771 or 1773,<sup>76</sup> related his remembrances about Clark's affections toward a lady in Kaskaskia in 1778:

Soon after the capture of Kaskaskia, a ball was given by the gay French citizens in honor of Col. Clark; . . . [Clark] danced a cotillion with the fair Madame Brazeaux; after which, Clark gallantly--too gallantly, the madame thought,—advanced with open arms, evidently enough to embrace & kiss her, when she drew up & struck him full in the face with her flat hand, & sent him reeling several steps. Clark took it all in good part, but did not, doubtless, dream till then, that he had transgressed the rules of politeness,

<sup>74</sup> McDermott, "The Myth of the Imbecile Governor," 330 and "Battle of St. Louis," 151.

<sup>75</sup> Kathrine Wagner Seineke, *The George Rogers Clark Adventure in the Illinois* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1981), 620. Seineke cited Kinnaird as one of her sources.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.



Artist's conception of George Rogers Clark dancing  
with Terese de Leyba  
William E. Wilson

which he now found were far more rigid among the French, even in the back woods of Illinois, than in the hospitable halls of old Virginia.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 538-39. The original Cerre statement is in DC, 8J51. Although there is no mention of a love interest in Clark's Mason letter or memoir, Clark did mention attending several dances or "balls" in Cahokia (about sixty miles north of Kaskaskia) and in Prairie du Rocher (about twelve miles north of Kaskaskia). Concerning the dance at Cahokia, Clark wrote in his 19 November 1779 Mason letter that he "assembled a number of gentlemen and ladies, and danced nearly the whole night." In his memoir, written about 1791, Clark again mentioned the Cahokia dance: "The arrival of those [from] Kohokia [*sic*] to whome [*sic*] an expensive entertainment, to which they invited all their acquaintance of Kaskaskias." Clark also referred in his Mason letter to the Prairie du Rocher "ball"



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Except for the legend about Terese de Leyba, this account by Cerre is the only other occasion that illustrates Clark's attraction to a female. Like Kinnaird, Seineke discovered a fact that was not known or used by any other author. Unfortunately, it is impossible to trace Madame Brazeaux's identity.<sup>78</sup>

Another author who contributed to the search for Terese de Leyba is Louis Houck. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Houck meticulously researched documents concerning Spain's occupation of Upper Louisiana and published a *History of Missouri* in 1908.<sup>79</sup> Like Seineke, Houck studied the inhabitants of the Missouri region from its earliest beginnings. Not only did Seineke and Houck list the occupants of the St. Louis region, they also listed their relatives, ancestors, places of origin, and any other information that was pertinent. If a Terese de Leyba existed, researchers, such as Houck or Seineke, would have discovered her and included her with information about Leyba's family. No Terese de Leyba is mentioned in Houck or Seineke's books.<sup>80</sup>

by stating that, "The gentlemen and ladies immediately assembled at a ball for our entertainment. We spent the fore part of the night very agreeably." Both accounts by Clark confirm Cerre's statement that Clark attended and enjoyed at least one ball between 1778 and 1780. Reprint of the memoir and the Mason letter is in English, *Conquest*, 1: 423, 430, 520; original Mason letter is in the department of special collections, The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>78</sup> Madame Brazeaux was probably of French descent. There are many difficulties in determining exact lineages of the French families during the French occupation of the Illinois country in the eighteenth century. French family names often consisted of double or triple surnames. In addition, Therese/Teresa was a common name among the French and Spanish, and it was not uncommon for families to have several members with the name. Seineke, *George Rogers Clark*, 591.

<sup>79</sup> See footnote 39.

<sup>80</sup> Census information is given throughout the books by Seineke and Houck. Billon is also an excellent researcher of frontier Missouri History. Scharf, *History of St. Louis*, 1: 141.

In Lowell Harrison and James Klotter's, *A New History of Kentucky* (1997), the authors assert that, "There is no proof that Clark fell in love with de Leyba's beautiful sister."<sup>81</sup> While Harrison and Klotter doubt a romance occurred between Clark and Miss Leyba, they too do not question that Miss Leyba was the sister of Governor Leyba. Why they describe the Leyba sister as "beautiful" is not documented, unless they are referring to the *Cyclopaedia* and Bodley's sources who also describe Terese as beautiful. To Harrison and Klotter's credit, they did not use the name Terese when referring to the Leyba sister.

In 1985, Sam McDowell indexed and published the *Calendar of the George Rogers Clark Papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts*. There are about thirty entries in his index that refer to Clark's love life.<sup>82</sup> Because only a small portion of the Draper Collection is indexed, research remains difficult.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, the contribution of McDowell in the indexing of part of the collection has greatly aided Clark researchers.

<sup>81</sup> Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 39; Also see Wilson and Fiske, *Cyclopaedia*, 1: 627 and Bodley, *George Rogers Clark*, 89, 368.

<sup>82</sup> McDowell, *Calendar*. DC, 35J52 (483 in *Calendar*), 35J54 (485), 35J53 (486), 35J55 (487), 49J77 (66-67), 34J16-19 (370), 8J186-88 (380), 7J65-9 (430), 7J106-9 (429), 44J186-90 (603), 1J210-17 ( 539), 10J117 (367), 10J167-70 (379), 10J176-77 (383), 10J39 (384), 10J45 (387), 10J13-20 (417), 10J27-33 (418), 10J187-90 (419), 10J305 (423), 10J324-35 (428), 10J352-57 (584), 28J26-27 ( 630), 28J87 (419), 28J88 (421), 5J29-33 (491), 10J358 (584), 10J360 (585), 7J116 (433), 44J178 (617), and 23J28 (630).

<sup>83</sup> The Draper Collection was eventually divided into sections, such as the Clark Collection, Daniel Boone Collection, and others. Thwaites stated that after the death of Draper, the material Draper had collected was in a "chaotic condition" and was "the reverse of orderly." Although Thwaites claimed that the collection was later "carefully classified" by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, there are probably other references to Clark's love life that have been overlooked and are mixed into other sections of the Draper Collection. Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won*, 358.

A brief history of this subject indicates that at the turn of the twentieth century, Clark biographers claimed “the daughter of the Spanish Governor” or “the Spanish lady” did not have an affair with Clark. Beginning with the 1926 sesquicentennial of the American Revolution, and for the next fifty years, the name Terese de Leyba first appears in print. During this period, most of the Clark biographers not only thought she existed, but some of them vividly wrote about her romance with Clark. During the last twenty-five years Clark biographers have begun once again to dispute the affair but not the name of Terese de Leyba. Since 1912, with few exceptions, the only common thread among the biographers is the unquestioned belief that Terese was a Leyba.

Many were correct to doubt the romantic connection between Clark and Terese. There simply is not enough evidence to prove that Clark loved Terese. The Todd letter is a single piece of evidence, and it is insufficient to prove that Clark was even involved with Terese. On the other hand, the descendants’ various oral histories provide consistent evidence that Clark did have a love interest. The descendants are inconsistent, however, in defining who she was. Most of the descendants refer to Clark’s love as the “lady,” but there are some references to “the Spanish lady” or “Spanish nun” as well. Rarely did the descendants identify “the lady” as Miss Leyba, and the descendants’ earliest accounts never associated the name Terese with the Leybas. The Clark descendants are not guilty of creating the Terese de Leyba myth. The later misinterpretation of evidence is the ultimate cause.

How did the name Leyba become attached to Terese? It was Lyman Draper who originally made the association. Draper, the man who had hoped to correct history, had actually created a myth that has lasted over a century. Subsequent historians followed Draper’s lead and referenced the Todd letter as evidence to support making the association. Once the association began, no one ever considered the possibility that Terese and Miss Leyba were not the

same person. Moreover, no author has ever seriously considered the possibility that Clark was attracted to either Pepita or Rita.

According to Dr. Mica Howe, professor of Spanish at Murray State University:

Pepita and Rita are common Spanish names. Rita is often shortened from Marquerite. Pepita could be a nickname or term of endearment. Although Pepita could be a nickname for Teresa, Pepita is commonly used as a nickname for Josefina because Pepita is short for Josefina. Ita and ito are used as diminutives. Josefina or Josefa is a Spanish woman's name and Josephine is French.<sup>84</sup>

In Leyba's will, his mother's name was written (in French by Francis Vigo) as "Madame Josephe Viscagana." There is no evidence available which confirms that either Pepita or Rita was named Terese.

The Terese mentioned in the Todd letter may have been associated with the Leyba family as a governess, friend, or even a slave (indentured?), but evidence, such as Leyba's will and letters as well as Chocteau's statement, clearly indicate that Terese was not Leyba's sister. The "Sweet Heart" mentioned in Todd's letter remains unknown.

In conclusion, the most that can be said about Clark is that he had a romantic side to him. After all, Clark "shed tears" to his niece Diana Bullitt when speaking about the "elegant aunt" Bullitt might have had. Pascal Cerre claimed that Clark sought to "embrace" and "kiss" the "fair Madame Brazeaux," and John Todd implied that Clark liked to "toast" a "Sweet Heart." Ultimately, while Clark's love life remains a mystery, the circumstances and persons responsible for creating the Terese de Leyba myth have been identified.

<sup>84</sup> Dr. Mica Howe, Murray State University, to author, personal communication, 4 April 2002.