

WHICH HALF WAS THE HORSE?: THE KENTUCKY MILITIA AND VOLUNTEERS IN
FACT AND FICTION

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in History.

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ABSTRACT

The state of Kentucky has a unique history having originally been the hunting grounds for various Indian tribes. The settlement of the territory proved difficult for, and even fatal to, the pioneers due to the proximity to these tribes and the fact that they did not welcome white infringement on their hunting grounds. With an increase in hostility, the need for a state militia developed. A lack of enthusiasm for militia service eventually resulted in the development of volunteer units as an alternative to the drafted militiamen. When the federal government called on states for militiamen to serve in national conflicts, Kentucky was often quick to answer supplying volunteers and/or militia; however, the performance of these men in the various military engagements of the United States was spotty at best.

Kentucky militiamen and volunteers developed a unique reputation over the decades beginning in the late eighteenth century and through the years after the War of 1812. Public opinion viewed them as courageous, brave, and skillful, but their combat record more often than not contradicted that perception. By examining the history of Kentucky, origins of the militia and volunteers, and their involvement in national conflicts one can observe this disparity between the dual nature of the Kentuckian, the real and the mythical.

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It was early May, 1813. Fort Meigs, a heavily fortified garrison located in northern Ohio near the Maumee River, was under siege. Major General Henry Procter of the British and his Indian allies led by the Shawnee Tecumseh had succeeded in drawing near the fort and bombarding it with cannon shot. Any Americans leaving the safety of the fort walls were subject to ambush attacks by the natives. Thusly situated General William Henry Harrison, commander of the Northwest Army and highest-ranking American officer present at the siege, welcomed the arrival of militia reinforcements from Kentucky under the command of General Green Clay. Quickly sending an express to Clay, Harrison requested the Kentuckian send 800 troops to the west bank of the river to disarm the British artillery. Clay commissioned Colonel William Dudley with this task. Travelling by river, they arrived at their destination and successfully carried out the task of spiking the cannons. However, defying Harrison's orders to return to the fort after completing their mission, Dudley and his men belligerently charged after a number of Indians they spied in the surrounding woods.

Fueled by the memory of an Indian-led massacre of wounded Kentuckians after the Battle of Frenchtown just four months prior, these militiamen took it upon themselves to utilize this opportunity to return the favor. Outnumbered and lacking in discipline and organization, the brave but foolhardy militiamen were cut down by their enemy, including Dudley himself, after close to three hours of combat. Those that survived were taken prisoner and subsequently suffered a massacre at the hands of the Indians similar to the one they sought to avenge. In the end far less than half of the original 800 made it back to the safety of Fort Meigs. Their success in disarming the cannons eventually persuaded the enemy to retreat, but the loss suffered at what became known as Dudley's Defeat enhanced the unreliable and impulsive reputation of the militia in the War of 1812, a reputation which originated from decades before. In this defeat, one

sees only a fraction of the Kentuckians' conduct in one particular war, but one also can find the dominant theme of duality that marked the men from Kentucky—enthusiastic and brave while also inept and reckless. In the years following the war, their reputation for possessing a duality of character weakened, and they eventually became glorified as backwoods heroes. In the pages that follow, this issue is examined by comparing their actual performance with their depiction in the media and the reputation they developed in the public's mind.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The most widely known fact of the War of 1812 is that it started in 1812. Beyond that, the many people develop a look of consternation or perhaps their eyes just glaze over if they are asked to explain more. On rare occasions, someone may know it had something to do with the British; that the “Star Spangled Banner” was written at some point during the conflict; or perhaps they think of fireworks and Tchaikovsky’s Overture of the same year. In any event, the War of 1812 seems to have failed to capture the imagination and intrigue of people like the Revolutionary War has. Perhaps it is because the causes of it were fairly complicated, and arguably somewhat ambiguous. Or perhaps it is because it did not end with any major changes in territorial holdings, political authority, or a total governmental overthrow for either side. Whatever the reasons, it is indeed a significant chapter in our nation’s past.

The War of 1812 was basically a hangover of the Revolutionary War. The British maintained a strong presence in the Northwest Territory despite the Treaty of Paris of 1783, and they constantly mocked the authority and sovereignty of the young United States by shamelessly kidnapping, or impressing, sailors on American ships and forcing them to serve in the British Navy. These depredations were carried out against the backdrop of a fledgling nation struggling to define itself and maintain the cohesiveness of its states.

The constant debating in Congress, the various stances of the different state governments, and the failed attempts at peaceful solutions to the problems between America and Britain all intertwined to create a tenuous situation for the US in the early years of the nineteenth century. Having earned their freedom in the sanguinary, passionately fought Revolutionary War, Americans sought to establish not only a government for themselves, but

also to pursue their own personal ambitions. Regarding their state governments, there did not seem to be any pivotal obstacles that inhibited governors and state congresses from functioning with the general approval of the residents. Each state had its own unique history, troubles, and strengths and their individual governments tended to react to their constituents appropriately, at least for the most part. However, regarding the national government a litany of issues plagued the passing and enforcing of legislation. The dominant force that created the most trouble for the national congress to do anything was the acceptance, or rather the disapproval, of the states.

This young, budding collection of ambitious men and women seeking to navigate their newly established freedom led to an identity crisis of sorts. How powerful should the central government be? When should a state have the sole authority over an issue? Under which circumstances could a state government refuse to enforce national legislation? Questions such as these hampered the national government throughout the first decades of its work. Having just freed themselves from a distant authority that taxed without giving representation and maintained scores of armed troops on their land during peacetime, the idea of continuing to spend a portion of their income in support of another central authority and another standing army was too much to bear for many Americans. Thus, a constant back and forth between state and national governments ensued as to who had what particular power regarding these issues.

Entering this scene of contention in the latter half of the eighteenth century was the frontier state of Kentucky. Originally a hunting ground for various Indian tribes, Kentucky has a history that is quite unique from other states. The appearance of settlers in the area angered those tribes that had for years traveled into the area to hunt game. A virtually constant threat of attack from these tribes plagued those who sought to permanently settle; thus began the

tumultuous process of establishing livelihoods and ensuring personal security for those who braved to trek into the wilds of this territory.¹

Alongside these issues existed Kentucky's flirtations with seceding from the US altogether and possibly siding with a foreign nation in order to secure much needed protection as well as navigation rights to the Mississippi River. As it is, though, they remained within the yolk of the US and became one of the most patriotic of states. The story of how these early Kentuckians were able to eventually secure their frontier and establish their state will be discussed later, though. For now, suffice it say that the creation and use of a state militia became one of the first means by which these settlers were able to enforce an organized form of protection. This militia, which came to include both conscripted men and volunteers, not only carried out its duties in its home territory but later joined other militias and the national army in warding off threats that were further afield.²

The Kentucky militia's first real test in a national conflict came with the Indian wars of the 1790s. In 1791, 1792, and again in 1794, Kentucky militiamen marched alongside regular troops into the Northwest in an attempt to end Indian attacks on the frontier. Many of these men brought with them the experience and emotion of their involvement in the recent Revolutionary War and eventually tasted victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. Years went by before the militia was called to once again serve in a major national conflict, the War of 1812. By this time, the battle-worn veterans of the Revolution and the Indian Wars had ripened with age leaving the younger generations to fill the ranks. However, these men were not nearly as prepared as their fathers and grandfathers had been. Although many had not participated in

¹ See, Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), Ch. 1.

² In particular, the origin and nature of the Kentucky militia will be discussed in greater depth in Ch. 2. For a discussion on the patriotism of Kentuckians, see Stephen Asperheim, *Double Characters: The Making of American Nationalism in Kentucky, 1792-1833*. Urbana, Illinois: Doctoral Thesis, 2003.

battle on this scale in their lives, Kentucky men still rushed to answer the call to arms once war was declared. Fighting in the northern theater as well as the southern, they contributed their skill as frontiersmen, sharpshooters, and patriots with varying degrees of success.

The role of Kentuckians in these different military engagements is an interesting study. It exemplifies the struggle for the security of the American frontier and the freedom to pursue a successful livelihood, which was so integral to the basis of the US as a whole. Out of the various armed conflicts in which they joined, the War of 1812 truly makes for the most curious examination. By the time this war began, Kentucky had been a state for two decades. The state's collective attitude towards the war was one of sheer patriotism and fervor, which contrasted with their prior attempts to secede from the US.

Even so, it is intriguing to study the evolution of the militia from a local frontier security force to a contributor to the national cause, and how attitudes towards service in the militia gave rise to the Kentucky Volunteers, the majority of whom preferred to serve on horseback as mounted men. Additionally, it is fascinating to observe how these forces of backwoodsmen were perceived and evaluated by their officers, fellow soldiers, the citizens of their state, and the nation as a whole.³

Before continuing, a distinction must be made regarding the differences between a state militiaman and a state volunteer. Militias were subject to law, both state and national, and were required to perform particular duties within the state and answer any call to arms issued by the governor. To put it very simply, service in the militia was a requirement of all eligible men, but as is usual with obligatory service many citizens grew to loathe it. Therefore, when the federal government exercised its right to call on the state governors to provide militiamen for war campaigns, the eligible men often times hired someone to substitute for them, or rather to serve

³ See Asperheim, "Double Characters," especially chs. 3-4.

in their place. This way they avoided fines for not showing up and did not have to serve under any officers they did not know or like. However, these substitutes were typically of a very low quality as far as soldiering goes.

To avoid filling their quota with low-quality substitutes, state governors often advertised for volunteer units first. These men were still in fact militiamen in the general sense. That is why some sources, both primary and secondary, may use the general terms “militia” or “militiamen” even though the men in question were volunteer militia. The circumstances under which they served their terms of service differed from the drafted militia. These volunteers, as the name implies, offered to serve of their own volition. They often provided their own weapons, clothing, and personal supplies, but not always. A volunteer unit “would serve under officers of their choosing” while those in regular militias “might have to serve under officers who were strangers.” Volunteers also had a greater deal of autonomy and, as was their preference, could serve their enlistment term on horseback; thus, more often than not, they were referred to as Mounted Volunteers. Although, they were not always of a better quality than drafted militia; at times their level of enthusiasm did not match their level of training, ability, or discipline. Yet, if the required amount of men a governor needed to fulfill his quota could not be filled using volunteers, he would have to enforce a draft for the regular militia.⁴

A number of scholarly works deal with these themes in one way or another. For instance, many works dealing with the history of Kentucky certainly discuss the unique manner in which the area became a state and offer a chronology of the development of the state’s militia. One of

⁴ Quote and information, Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 43. For more discussion on this topic and related ones, see Skeen, 40-56. See also, Richard G. Stone, *A Brittle Sword: The Kentucky Militia, 1776-1912* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 12-17. For our purposes, when speaking in broad terms about the state soldiers, the general terms will more often be used; however, distinctions are made when speaking of particular battles.

the earliest histories of Kentucky is Lewis Collins' *History of Kentucky* written in 1877, which was a revision of and expansion to the original 1847 version by Richard H. Collins, Lewis' father. Collins' work began with a discussion on the geography and early settlement of the area and traced the state's history up to 1874. The value of this work is truly found in the fact the author was not far removed from the events of the latter decades having at his disposal first-hand accounts of many of the pivotal events that affected Kentucky and its citizens.

Collins discussed the origins of referring to Kentucky as the "dark and bloody ground." Further, he offered a great deal of information regarding the significant influence the cultural and political aspects of Virginia had on the establishment of settlements and subsequent state government of Kentucky. Collins also went to great lengths to convey the characteristics of the people who settled in the territory and how their traits influenced the formation of the militia and the expectations placed on its members. However, reading it with a modern-day perspective, one does find a theme of sentimentality towards many of the subjects. Also, references can be hard to find as there were no footnotes or endnotes; nonetheless, the general sequence of events, when compared to other works with known credibility, are found to be accurate.⁵

A similar work is Thomas D. Clark's *A History of Kentucky*, 1937. Clark's work begins with Kentucky's Virginia roots. Like Collins, Clark traced the history of the state of Kentucky from before it was fully settled to what was the modern day at the time of writing. At times Clark's work took on a somewhat sentimental tone as well, such as referring to Daniel Boone the Amerigo Vespucci of the west. In any event, this particular history shed a great deal of light on the nuances of Kentucky life for those early settlers. Clark certainly discussed Kentucky's involvement in military affairs and engagements, but as his work was meant to serve as a basic historical chronology of the state's birth and development, there was no analytical discussion on

⁵ Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky* (Louisville, Kentucky: Richard H. Collins, 1877), 806.

any given topic, such as the militia. However, this source is vital to understanding later works and enhancing opinions on more specific arguments regarding the Kentucky militia. Clark described and defined the typical activities of Kentuckians in its early years, such as barking for squirrels. Without learning these specific terms and how they existed in an historical context, reading the journals and diaries from these early time periods would be much more difficult.⁶

More specific to the Kentucky militia was the work entitled *Military History of Kentucky: Chronologically Arranged* published in 1939. Conveniently, the authors of this work outlined its purpose in a formal introduction: “The goal in the preparation of this book has been to present an adequate, accurate, and interesting portrayal of the Kentucky military organization, past and present, in all its endeavors and achievements. Battles and skirmishes are dealt with briefly, for this is a history of the soldiery as a state organization rather than as a war machine.” As such, this work gave a great deal of information on more nuanced aspects of the militia by discussing such topics as their uniform, the forts they established within Kentucky, conflicts with Indians, and their choice of firearm.⁷

Like the previous histories, it began with Kentucky’s Virginian roots and the process of immigration and settlement, but as its introduction stated, its purpose was to focus on a military history rather than a general history of the state. Despite this, it breezed over the national conflicts of the 1790s focusing more on General Charles Scott’s expedition in 1791 into the Northwest. It did offer more attention on the build-up to and the involvement of the militia in the War of 1812, though. Overall, the flow of the book during its discussions on the northwest theater of the War of 1812 was written in a somewhat ambiguous manner, but utilized an

⁶ Thomas D. Clark, *A History of Kentucky* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1937), 48. Page 102 describes barking for squirrels as “shooting into the bark of the tree just under its [the squirrel’s] stomach, to stun the animal and knock it to the ground.”

⁷ *Military History of Kentucky: Chronologically Arranged* (Frankfort, Kentucky, The State Journal, 1939), quote from v. To experience the ambiguity of the discussions on the War of 1812, see chapters 2 and 3.

impressive amount of primary sources such as newspapers, letters, and government documents. It additionally gave a more human face to the militia through the use of personal anecdotes.

Going beyond these histories of Kentucky, there are works focused on the contributions of multiple state militias in different military engagements of early American history. So many in fact, that only a few choice works will be discussed here. For example, Richard H. Kohn's *Eagle and Sword: The Federalist and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* published in 1975 examined the source of America's militia from a political perspective. Kohn did not agree with previous assertions that militias were established due to trouble with Indians on the frontier or threats from foreign nations; rather, he felt that militias were established simply because the Federalists lost the battle to establish a standing army during peace time.

The predominant themes of Kohn's work include early America's aversion to a standing army, the uniqueness of the development of militia systems from the colonial period through the early years of the republic, and advantages and shortcomings of militia involvement in frontier defense including the expeditions of the 1790s. Kohn emphasized the Janus-faced frontier policy of the national government at the time: diplomacy or armed coercion. He put the militia-regular army debate in a national context regarding the political climate, though he did not give much emphasis to other factors that certainly influenced the political decisions, such as public opinion and taxes. Sadly, his examination only extended as far as 1802 so there was obviously no discussion on militia involvement in the War of 1812. However, reviewers of his work lauded his efforts: "There has not previously been published a monograph on the American military of

the post-Revolution and early national years: Richard Kohn has filled the void.” Additionally, *Eagle and Sword* was a well-cited work utilizing both secondary and primary sources.⁸

A more extensive history of state militias was Michael D. Doubler’s *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War: The Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, published in 2003.⁹ Only a portion of this study examined the time frame of interest here. Within that portion, the expeditions of the 1790s did not receive any novel treatment. Militia contributions to the War of 1812, however, received a bit more attention. Doubler did indeed examine the origins of state militias and how their purpose altered over the decades, but in much more broad strokes than other works.

Considering the time frame stated in the title, it is easy to understand why he did so—the purpose of this book was to trace the history of the National Guard from its militia roots through to its modern form. He did touch on the major topics such as the Federalist and Anti-Federalist views regarding armies and militias, public sentiment of each, and echoed the oft-made conclusion that a militia’s chances for success in armed combat relied heavily on their commanding officer.

John Grenier’s *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier* published in 2005, took a novel approach when compared to similar books in the historiography of US military history. He began his study with the early Indian conflicts of the seventeenth century and traced the development of the military style employed by the colonists through to that employed by Americans to the War of 1812. The militia popped up here and there when their presence affected the outcome of a battle or expedition, but this work did not take a focused approach to early armed conflicts; rather, it sought to discuss the difference between the way in which British colonists, and later American citizens, fought their battles in North America as

⁸ Frank C. Mevers, “Review of *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* by Richard Kohn,” in *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Aug., 1977), 495.

⁹ Doubler’s book was originally written in 2001 under the title *I Am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*.

compared to their mother continent. For our purposes, this work does contribute to the understanding of military history in early America, but, again, was not focused on state militias.

Stemming from general military histories are those works dedicated to more specific themes, such as Alan D. Gaff's *Bayonets in the Wilderness*. Gaff's predominant focus was the humble beginnings of the U.S. army and how these regular troops and their militia counterparts performed in the Indian wars of the 1790s. He gave particular attention to General Anthony Wayne's expedition, so much so in fact that *Bayonets in the Wilderness* could possibly be considered a biography of Wayne. Overall, incorporating economic, political, and social influences, this work explored the formation and direction of the U.S. military during the tumultuous years following the Treaty of Paris, 1783, but ended its discussions with the conclusion of the 1790s conflict.

Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812 by Edward C. Skeen offers a focused approach as well. In this book, Skeen stated that his purpose was to describe "the federal utilization of militia to supplement the military forces during the War of 1812, surveying their performance in general, and reviewing the operational aspects of militia participation at the state level."¹⁰ Also, he aimed to discuss the shortcomings of the militia and examine the possible causes for their failures. Referencing militia involvement in past engagements including the Revolutionary War, the Indian Wars of the 1790s, and the Whiskey Rebellion, Skeen placed the system in a national context by relying heavily on congressional debates regarding the militia establishment and the endless attempts at passing legislation to govern the system. A dominant theme of his work was the concept of mythmaking that surrounded state militias. Additionally, there was a great deal of information regarding the intricacies of creating and maintaining militias. Ultimately, Skeen

¹⁰ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 1.

discussed the eventual evolution of the state militia system into the National Guard by the middle of the nineteenth century.

Narrowing down now to works discussing the Kentucky militia specifically, one of the foremost works is Richard Stone's *A Brittle Sword: The Kentucky Militia, 1776-1912*, published in 1977. His focus was "to place the Kentucky militia in a broad regional and national context." He observed that Kentucky itself had an unusual history due to its geographic location as a gateway to the frontier west and, like other authors, began his work by discussing the state's close political and cultural ties to Virginia. In dealing with the Kentucky militia, Stone dealt with such particulars as their equipment, clothing, and how they compared to the regular troops of the national army. He also gave detailed analysis on early frontier engagements such as the defeat near Sandusky in 1782; the defeat at Blue Licks, 1790; and the failed Harmar and St. Clair expeditions of 1790 and 1791. His study of the Kentucky militia extended far beyond early American conflicts, and thus included its transition into the National Guard. As such, the overall effect of the book did not offer an in-depth examination of the Kentucky militia's efficacy in early engagements.¹¹

Another work similar to Stone's is *Citizens More Than Soldiers: The Kentucky Militia and Society in the Early Republic* by Harry S. Laver published less than a decade ago. Laver's work differs from Stone's in that the predominant purpose of it was not to consider the militia from a military perspective, but rather from a cultural one. "This book establishes the relationship between the militia and the progression of Kentucky society by pressing beyond the traditional boundaries of militia history and revealing the citizen-soldiers' influence on the

¹¹ Stone, *A Brittle Sword*, ix.

transformation of frontier settlements into nineteenth-century communities.”¹² Accepting that Kentucky had a history much different from other states, Laver also asserted that historians have long neglected studying state militias as fraternal organizations that had a huge impact on their societies. He examined the impact that the Kentucky militia had on politics, community, and masculinity while shying away from the more traditional militia histories, which tend to focus on their use in armed conflicts. Even so, he did discuss militia obligations and rules as well as highlighting the importance of annual musters. Generally speaking, though, he employed a more sociological perspective rather than a political or military one.

A number of regional studies regarding the settlement of Kentucky and the lands west of the Appalachians also exist. Stephen Aron’s *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* offered a great deal of insight on the various aspects of western settlement. Of course as the title suggests, it focused on Kentucky and its internal growth, but it also examined the state’s involvement in national politics, military engagements, and their reputation within the Union. Aron did not focus on the lives of Boone and Clay, though, as this book did not serve as biographies for these men; rather, as he stated in the introduction, “[t]he emphasis is on the transformation of their worlds and not on the specific course of their lives.”¹³

Regarding the War of 1812, a number of books are available that discuss this conflict from a variety of perspectives. Donald R. Hickey’s fairly recent work was a well-organized, measured study on the entire chronology of the war and offered succinct points on every theater of the war. Examining themes such as frontier warfare, politics, economics, and international

¹² Harry S. Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers: The Kentucky Militia and Society in the Early Republic* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2007), 8.

¹³ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 1.

relations, he demonstrates the intricacies and ambiguities of what he states “is probably [America’s] most obscure war.”¹⁴

Alan Taylor’s *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* posited quite a novel spin on the conflict purporting it to also have been a sort of Irish rebellion. Regardless of this unique argument, the portion of the book that directly relates to the topic at hand contributed more in-depth examinations of a number of issues and events pertinent to the war effort. Whereas Hickey’s work was a highly efficient chronological review of the War of 1812, Taylor’s offered more insight into its nuance, and delved deeply into its civil war-like traits.¹⁵

Even though there are numerous more works on similar themes, the works just discussed are generally reflective of the bulk of literature on the themes concerned here. However, one does see a gap in the historiography. Yes, there are works on early American military engagements that offer varying levels of attention given to state militias. Yes, there are works on state militia systems specifically, and the Kentucky militia in particular. There are also works dealing solely with Kentucky’s militia and its contributions to early American military conflicts. However, a work that is solely focused on the development, employment, and efficacy of the Kentucky state militiamen, including volunteers, and their consequent reputation in these early conflicts is lacking.

Stone’s work comes close, but his themes were too broad and his timeline too extensive to achieve such a concentrated study. Laver’s work, too, does not satisfy this criteria as his purpose was to discuss the militia in social terms. Thus, it is right to state that this

¹⁴ Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, Bicentennial Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 23.

¹⁵ See Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 4-6.

historiographical lacuna begs for a formal discussion of the Kentucky militia and the various nuances of its role in armed conflicts from its inception through the War of 1812 and the reputation they developed as a result of their participation. By focusing on how necessary they were to the various military engagements in which they participated and how their performance and contributions affected the outcome of the action it becomes obvious that the reality of their service did not always match the public's perception of their ability. What resulted was contrasting perceptions—on one hand, they appeared unreliable, unskilled, and inept while on the other they were lauded for their ability, valor, and viciousness. As such, an examination of the reality of their conduct in early American armed conflicts will shed light on whether they deserved such a heroic and intimidating reputation, or if there truly was a dichotomous aspect to their true nature and the public's perception of them.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF KENTUCKY AND HER MILITIA

As previously mentioned, Kentucky was originally a hunting ground for the surrounding Indian tribes. Tribes located both north and south of the area conducted seasonal hunting expeditions, and at times hunting parties from different tribes would encounter one another, oftentimes with violent results. “Thus, Kentucky was, by a common understanding—if not by an enforced consent—literally the vast hunting ground of the universal Indian race—qualified by the fact that when parties of savages upon the warpath chanced to meet, the conflicts were so instant, fierce, and pitiless that Kentucky became known as ‘The Dark and Bloody Ground.’” With such struggles already existing in the territory, it is no surprise that when white men began showing up they were immediately included in the fight.¹⁶

Land rights in Kentucky were contentious even before significant white settlement there. The Shawnees to the north and the Cherokees to the south had bitterly contested the region, agreeing only that it should be free from human habitation to preserve its great stocks of game. When Indian Superintendent Sir William Johnson purchased Kentucky in 1768 at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, he did so from the Iroquois League, who had no real claims to the area, and ignored both Shawnee and Cherokee claims. Uncompensated and furious, the Shawnees would then be drawn into a fight with Virginia.

In the spring of 1774, members of the Shawnee tribe to the north of Kentucky attacked settlers there in revenge for their murder of some of their kin. The settlers then repaid them in kind, and the cycle of reprisals continued until it intensified into general warfare. John Murray,

¹⁶ Quote, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 806; see also, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 8, and John Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucky*, in *American Journeys*, AJ-125 (ca. 1747-1788), 279.

Lord Dunmore, governor of Virginia, sent 1,100 Virginia militiamen to fight the Shawnees. The Virginians barely defeated them at the Battle of Point Pleasant in October of that year. This conflict was later known as Dunmore's War and it "result[ed] in the Shawnees' coerced concession of hunting rights in Kentucky." The Shawnees never considered this cession valid. A faction of the Cherokees, meanwhile, was desperate for cash and gunpowder, and sold the land to speculator Richard Henderson's Transylvania Company. Other Cherokees, led by chief Dragging Canoe, opposed the cession, and warned Henderson that he would find the land a "Dark and Bloody Ground." With the Revolution, the company's rights were revoked and the new state of Virginia Assembly then absorbed the land, officially creating Kentucky County, in December of 1776. From that point onwards, more people began to venture into the area, but it still suffered from the threat of Indian attacks from north and south, often with fatal results.¹⁷

A number of these travelers did live to tell their tales. Surveyors spoke of a land possessing abundant forests, canebrakes, wild rye, and other wild plants that could feed livestock. They asserted the potential for mining in the more mountainous regions. Wild game abounded and there was a curious lack of established Indian villages. This geography coupled with the presence of game led one observer to describe the land as "the most extraordinary country on which the sun has ever shone." Other accounts of Kentucky lauded the climate, quality of the soil, and pointed out that its geographical location kept it "beyond the reach of foreign intrusion."¹⁸

Along with the surveyors, long hunters also traveled into the territory. Seeking to profit off the aforementioned abundant game, they would enter Kentucky via the Cumberland Gap and

¹⁷ Quote, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 28. See also, *ibid.*, 20, 38-39, and 59-64 for more details; Robert M. Owens, *Red Dreams, White Nightmares: Pan-Indian Alliances in the Anglo-American Mind, 1763-1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 38-40, 49-52

¹⁸ First quote, Filson, *Discovery*, 290; second quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 26.

stay in the area for months at a time. Although their long stays afforded them time to accumulate a sizeable amount of game and learn the lay of the land, they also caught the attention of the different tribes, who still hunted there and they did not welcome their presence. As such, a white man took a significant risk in entering the Kentucky territory, but such risks seemed worth taking for the trend caught on to other groups.¹⁹

After hearing the accounts of speculators and long hunters, colonists in the eastern portion of the country became interested in Kentucky. Eventually, a majority of these settlers traveled westward in search of better lives for themselves and their families having grown “disgruntled with the semiproprietary form of government and the quittrents of the eastern Atlantic colonies.” Since Kentucky offered a variety of game to hunt and an abundance of fertile land upon which to grow crops, it was certainly an alluring destination for those intrepid men and women who had for any number of reasons grown unsatisfied with life on the Atlantic Seaboard. First, though, they had to brave the dangerous journey to this western territory, which in addition to the usual perils of long-distance travel in the late eighteenth century included the added threat of Indian attacks. In an attempt to prevent such attacks, groups of travelers employed scouts, who would keep a few hours’ advance on the escorted party in order to ascertain whether or not Indians were nearby. If they detected signs of Indian presence, they would inform the commander and attempt to scatter their potential enemy so as to inhibit them from delivering a “concerted attack on the immigrant train.”²⁰

Despite the inherent dangers, thousands flocked to these western lands. Just a few short years after becoming an official county of Virginia, tens of thousands of immigrants began flooding in to Kentucky and setting about clearing land for pasture and agriculture. As these

¹⁹ See, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 5-6.

²⁰ First quote, *Military History*, 26. See also, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 807-09.

communities developed, Indian attacks remained a constant threat. By 1781, “[e]very portion of the country was kept continually in alarm, and small Indian ambushes were perpetually bursting upon the settlers.” Even so, the flow of immigrants continued and their pursuit of establishing livelihoods did as well. “The rich lands of Kentucky were the prize of the first occupants, and they rushed to seize them with a rapacity stronger than the fear of death.”²¹

In light of so many people entering Kentucky, it became of the utmost importance to find a way to establish security on the frontier. Within just one year, 1783 to 1784, the population of Kentucky doubled from 12,000 to 24,000. By 1790, more than 70,000 people made this western land their home. Many of the residents were Revolutionary War veterans from Virginia. Lacking money to pay these men wages for their services, the state government “used her western lands to settle these debts.” Between 1790 and 1800, the population grew rapidly from 73,000 to over 200,000. “Towns sprang up to be developed overnight, and western society became well established.” All in all, Kentucky went from a seasonally visited Indian hunting ground to a thriving, populated state in just a few decades. However, the continual aggressions acted out between Indian and settler certainly made such advancements difficult.²²

Progress by the settlers did quell Indian threats for a short time in the 1780s. This was greatly aided by the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. With an end to fighting between the United States and Great Britain, there was an expectation that the lately increased hostilities between western settlers and neighboring Indians would also cease. Neither side maintained peace for long, though. “[T]he British failed to surrender the posts in the Northwest, and

²¹ First quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 65; second and third quotes, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 814. See also, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 56; *Military History*, 25-26.

²² First quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 107-08; second quote, Clark, 163.

gradually increased their agitation of Indian hostility against the frontier settlements to the extent of again offering bounties for scalps and prisoners.”²³

With the continuation of frontier hostilities, some form of a military force was needed, but after the Revolutionary War, Americans were repelled by the idea of a strong, standing army. “Traditional fears over the evils of a standing army and the expense of maintaining Regular troops could not negate the growing need for some type of field force.” Historically, those living in Kentucky sought security via the use of local militiamen. Having originally been under the auspices of Virginia law, the first militias were organized based on Virginian traditions. “The Kentucky Militia as an institution was established by the laws of Virginia and continued thus until 1792, when Kentucky became a sovereign state.” Since 1776, Virginia had laid out a Bill of Rights that asserted the need for a state militia. Section 13 stated:

That a well regulated militia, composed of the body of the people trained to arms, is the proper, natural and safe defense of a free State; that standing armies in time of peace should be avoided as dangerous to liberty; and that in all cases the military should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the Civil power.

American animosity towards a standing army stemmed from the British use of such a force upon the colonies prior to the Revolutionary War; therefore, “[t]he linchpin of an effective frontier strategy was the militia.”²⁴

In addition to this clause of the Virginia Bill of Rights, County Lieutenant Levi Todd spread handbills to the people of Fayette County in 1790 regarding Virginia Militia Law. In it he stated that commanding officers were obliged “to enroll all free males above the age of 18 and under fifty.” These regiments were to observe two musters per year during which the

²³ Quote, *Military History*, 35. See also, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 818 and Aron, *West Was Lost*, 53.

²⁴ Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 69; second quote, *Military History*, 1; third quote, “The Charters of Freedom,” *Virginia Bill of Rights* (1776). See also, Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers*, 9.

commanding officers were “to cause his men to be trained and exercised agreeable to Baron Steuben’s plan of military discipline; and he is authorized to order the most expert under his command to perform his duty.” Those men who did not possess their own weapons and ammunition could seek exemption. The handbill also described forms of punishment for different offenses, pay, rations, and how a man might incur fines for lack of service. Overall, this document encompassed the main idea of what a state militia should be, how it should be organized, and what the expectations were for those joining. These rules and regulations remained the basis for governing the militia of Kentucky until it became a state, and greatly influenced the system thereafter.²⁵

Despite the fact that the Virginia government created these state laws for the militia, men in Kentucky were “spurred on to duty more often by the law of self-preservation.” The threat of Indian raids incited active participation in the militia for Kentuckians more than any fine or punishment imposed by state governments could. Even so, there was a lot of overlap between the Virginia militia statutes and the expectations of frontier culture. For example, the Virginia Legislature decreed harsh punishments for anyone refusing to serve in the state militia. Those refusing were deemed “civilly dead.” The individual’s heirs would be entitled to the man’s property and then he was “to suffer the penalties and forfeitures of praemunire.” This coincided with the pioneers extreme contempt for cowardice. “[C]owardice carried an awful stigma. To admit to faint-heartedness was to fail as a man. To reveal terror in a more physical form condemned one to a lifetime of ridicule.”²⁶

²⁵ First quote, *Military History*, 3; second quote, *ibid.*, 4; for the handbill, “Extracts of Virginia Militia Law, Jan. 30, 1790,” itself, see *Military History*, 3-5.

²⁶ First quote, *Military History*, 9; second, *ibid.*, 7; third, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 33. See also, Elizabeth A. Perkins, *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998), 132-41.

Generally speaking, those early settlers of Kentucky had adopted a particular way of life quite distinct from their eastern counterparts. The unsettled wilderness and threat of Indian attacks molded these people. Unlike the colonists in the more mature settlements, towns, and cities, these early pioneers lived by a code unique to their surroundings. For example, numerous activities, such as sporting contests, were centered near rivers. “River landings, like the one at Louisville, gave rise to a rip-roaring, notorious people, who called themselves ‘half horse, half alligators, tipped with snapping turtles.’ A man’s prowess in individual contests was boasted of freely and as freely demonstrated.” Although this self-description may sound like a thing of nightmares or perhaps a gene-splicing experiment gone terribly awry, it exemplifies the merit Kentucky men found in being associated with such attributes as strength and hardiness. Conflicts between the pioneers themselves were rarely settled in a court; rather, the Virginia-based practice of gouging was often employed. “In this practice opponents took every possible advantage of each other; ears were bitten off and eyes gouged out.”²⁷

Whether at play or at work, Kentuckians took their sense of community seriously. “At house raisings, log rollings, and harvest parties, every one was expected to do his duty faithfully.” Those who neglected such duties were “designated by the epithet of ‘Lawrence,’ or some other title still more opprobrious.” Despite the perceived crudeness of their character, hospitality reigned supreme. “Adept hunters were quick to offer rations to any pioneer in need.” Collectively, an ideal man was one who supported and helped provide for others, not just his family. He also had to demonstrate strength, both physical and otherwise. He had to possess the resolve to right any wrong, avenge any offense, the whole while seeking to ensure the safety and

²⁷ Quotes, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 103 and 95, respectively. See also, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 13-16 and 86 for more on the character of the early Kentuckians.

success of the community. Men such as these were the only individuals that gained the respect of the collective population.²⁸

With that in mind it must be stated that the Kentucky militia was quite finicky about who their commanding officers were. If an officer expected to be obeyed by Kentucky militiamen, he had to have their respect. Unlike in the regular army where the soldiers were expected to obey out of obligation to a ranking system, Kentucky militiamen obeyed only if they respected their officer. Even Daniel Boone fell victim to this attitude. Boone had received a promotion from captain to major by Virginia officials in 1778. However, “in some respects...the higher rank conferred less authority, for his commission to lead derived from the governor of Virginia and not from the respect of his comrades.”²⁹

Another example comes from George Rogers Clark’s Indian raiding expedition of 1786. Clark led his men into the Northwest Territory, and the contingent soon suffered from a delay in the arrival of their provisions. The troops grew disgruntled, an emotion further stoked by Clark’s cantankerous attitude, and eventually 300 of them returned to Kentucky. As can be assumed, the expedition fell into a state of disarray. Overall, “[f]or militiamen... there was no substitute for competent leadership. Not only did regimental colonels have to have some understanding of Indian warfare and of capabilities and limitations of their own men, but they also had to lead by personal example.” It was values such as this that aided these men in organizing themselves and enabled them to conduct raids and retaliatory attacks on nearby Indian tribes.³⁰

Against this backdrop of on-again-off-again contention, Kentuckians began navigating the thorny road to independence from Virginia and aspired to eventually become a state. In 1780, Kentucky County became trisected into Fayette, Lincoln, and Jefferson Counties. All

²⁸ First quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 31; second quote, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 33.

²⁹ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 53.

³⁰ Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 15; see also, *Military History*, 41-2.

three had officials named by the governor of Virginia, but also had their own local authorities. However, like the pre-Revolutionary colonies, citizens of Kentucky were not content to be ruled by a government so distant from them. In fact, during the Revolutionary War itself, Kentuckians became so indignant of Virginia authority that one observer stated if England would “offer Kentuckians uncontested title to adequate parcels, ‘the greatest part will join.’”³¹

One source of their discontent was the manner in which Virginia law dictated the distribution of land titles. Although, on paper, one might think the Virginian rules were fair, Kentuckians were a land-hungry group. “Regardless for how many acres they needed, pioneers wanted more land.” Further, a great number of those settled west of the Alleghenies did not hail from Virginia and were thus unwilling to heed its decrees. The capitol of Virginia, first in Williamsburg then in Richmond, was extremely far away from the Kentuckians. As such, it was too great a distance for most of them to travel if they felt compelled to appeal to the government and oftentimes the legislation passed in Virginia failed to consider the difference in lifestyle between the two areas. “Perhaps the most serious bone of contention between the Kentuckians and the Virginians was the question of defending the western settlements against the Indians.” Under Virginia law, the state governor had to approve any action of the militia prior to said action being executed. Consequently, those communities suffering frequent and often unpredictable Indian attacks found themselves unable to act with the authority of their state government. Thus, the stage was set for a series of conventions that allowed Kentuckians to

³¹ “Letter from a ‘gentleman of veracity,’ June 24, 1780,” quoted in George Morgan to William Trent, Sept. 12, 1780, quoted in Aron, *West Was Lost*, 73. See also, *Military History*, 1-2; Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 25; and Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 92-94.

voice their complaints and seek solutions, with the ultimate goal of becoming an independent state.³²

During these conventions, Kentuckians asserted that the Virginia government greatly endangered them by restricting their authority over their own militiamen. In one instance, Benjamin Logan conducted a successful, though minor, expedition against the Cherokees in reprisal for their theft of goods and violence against settlers, but he did so without first seeking the approval of the Virginian governor. As a result, the Virginia government censured him. As hostile encounters between Kentuckians and Indians increased, so did their petitions to the federal government for protection. “This country is in its infancy, and the inhabitants are daily exposed to an enemy who not content with taking away the lives of men in the field have swept away whole families, and burnt their habitations.” Their calls for help were not immediately answered, though. As a result, those in the territory of Kentucky, while embarking on the complex process of becoming a state, were not only exasperated by this apparent inaction regarding the safety of the frontiers, but also with the number of fruitless conventions and setbacks in the process of statehood. It appeared to Kentuckians that not only did the national government seem to not care about their safety, but it did not seem to take seriously their desire to formally join the nation as another state.³³

As a result, various statesmen for Kentucky, such as James Wilkinson, John Brown, and Harry Innis, made it clear, even to Congress, that Kentucky was reconsidering its intentions of remaining in the Union. Arthur St. Clair, then governor of the Northwest Territory, observed in a letter to the secretary of foreign affairs: “It is certain, Sir, that, in their last Convention, a

³² First quote, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 74-75; for more on issues with land speculation and titling, see Aron, Chs. 3 & 4. Second quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 112. See also, Clark, 110-30 and Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 820.

³³ *Military History*, 41-44; Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 99. Quote from, *Centinel of the North Western Territory*, Nov. 9, 1793.

proposal was made that the District of Kentucky should set up for itself, not only as independent of Virginia but of the united States also, and was rejected by a small Majority only...” Overall, the federal government needed to act. Not only was their sovereignty over the Ohio Valley tentative, but inclusion of Kentucky in the US was as well. Additionally, the Kentucky militia would “continue to execute indiscriminate attacks on the Ohio Valley Indians” in defiance of national authority.³⁴

The issues of safety and statehood added to the predicaments surrounding their desire to gain free navigation of the Mississippi River. “We are well aware that the want of a regular and certain trade down the Mississippi, deprives this country in a great measure, of money at the present time.” Regardless, diplomat John Jay engaged in attempts to create trade agreements favorable to the East, but not the West. Then, Spain’s withdrawal of free navigation of the Mississippi River and the port at New Orleans added to it all became too much for the hardened Kentuckians to bear. Basically, it was highly possible that “Kentucky would form an independent government” within a short period of time as the national government did not seem interested in offering any protection and was not willing to consider the economic interests of this more westerly territory.³⁵

Finally, President George Washington sent his recommendation to Congress to allow Kentucky to become an independent state in 1790 and by June, 1792, Kentucky celebrated its formal acceptance as a state of the Union. Having navigated the tedious and intricate process of

³⁴ First quote from *Centinel of the North Western Territory*, Nov. 9, 1793; second quote, Governor Arthur St. Clair to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Dec. 13, 1788, in *Territorial Papers of the United States: Northwest Territory*. Vol. II. ed. Clarence Edwin Carter (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), 167; third quote, Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 114. See also Collins *History of Kentucky*, 827; Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 99. For more on the issues regarding navigation of the Mississippi River, see Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 73-4, 114, and 127.

³⁵ First quote, *Centinel of the Northwest Territory*, Nov. 9, 1793; second quote, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 827. See also, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 120-23, and *Military History*, 43-44.

statehood, the people of Kentucky still had their reservations about the Union. Firstly, although promised protection from Indian attacks, the national government had so far failed to act on their word. Secondly, the Kentuckians could potentially lose free navigation of the Mississippi River, and the use of the Mississippi was integral to their ability to trade. Additionally, even though the national government appeared to be dragging its feet on dealing with combative Indians in the Northwest Territory, they maintained that the Kentuckians could not do it themselves either. If they did, they would be in violation of the law; furthermore, Washington felt inclined to use regular troops rather than the frontier soldiers of Kentucky.³⁶

Taken as a whole, it is clear that frontier life in Kentucky began under tense, dangerous, and trying conditions. Establishing livelihoods in a wilderness with the moniker “dark and bloody ground” was no place for the weak-hearted or those repelled by hard work. However, as admirable or even bucolic as it all may sound to the modern mind, those persons living in the East at this time harbored differing opinions of these pioneering folk. For example, the manner in which men hunted west of the Alleghenies perplexed eastern gentry to the point of condescension. Historian Stephen Aron stated that “[a]ccording to the theory of human developmental history that reigned in the Age of Enlightenment, when backcountry whites hunted, they reverted to the lowest mode of subsistence.” In contrast, though, Aron pointed out that behind the judging exteriors of the gentlemen “lurked resentment of the ease with which ill-mannered backcountry hunters lived, and of the democratization of leisure that went hand in hand with the democratization of hunting.”³⁷

Negative stereotypes of the frontiersmen persisted during the early decades of settlement. One the most salient generalizations applied to people in Kentucky was that their citizen-

³⁶ See Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 821 and 832, and *Military History*, 65.

³⁷ Quotes, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 14 and 15, respectively.

soldiers, their militiamen, were inefficient and backwards. Harry S. Laver worded this viewpoint succinctly when he wrote that many saw militiamen as “...drunken buffoons who stumbled into a crooked line, poked each other with cornstalk weapons, and inevitably shot their commander in the backside with a rusty, antiquated musket.” Recalling that the first groups to settle in Kentucky were individuals seeking to hunt the wild game and later those looking to establish livelihoods, it can be no surprise to state that, “Kentucky’s first militiamen were hunters and farmers soldiering from stark necessity—not personal preference.” Consequently, they did not perform as regularly trained soldiers, but rather they were “fighters [who] lacked the training, organization, logistics, and command structure” of a more traditionally appointed army.³⁸

Be that as it may, they earned a poor reputation from more than simply being less organized than a regular army. As can be discerned from multiple historical sources, whites viewed the ways of the American natives as antiquated, savage, and wild. Therefore, when it became apparent that the frontier militia employed similar, if not the same, tactics as its “savage” enemy, they too became classified in much the same manner. “Both sides [Indian and militia] employed traditional Indian tactics of scouting, surprise, concealment, mobility, and marksmanship, as well as the novel Anglo-Irish strategy of total warfare waged against women, children, and crops. Young men of both cultures gained status by daring raids which were deplored by civic leaders.”³⁹

Nevertheless, unfair as some of the above mentioned description sounds, sometimes stereotypes exist because there is some fact to them. So, from where was this idea of the militia generated? What type of contact did non-Kentuckians have with its militia that led them to perceive them in such a manner? One way to answer these questions is to consider the Kentucky

³⁸ First quote, Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers*, 1; following quotes, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 1.

³⁹ Quote, Perkins, *Border Life*, 124.

militia's first real test of battle on a national level alongside the federal government's regular troops, the Indian Wars of the 1790s.

CHAPTER III
THE KENTUCKY MILITIA'S FIRST TEST

Leading up to the formal military engagements of the 1790s, militia-led excursions into the Northwest were conducted. However, they were not always directed at the appropriate target. In 1789, Arthur St. Clair, then the governor of the Northwest Territory wrote: “It is not expected...that the Kentucky people will or can submit patiently to the cruelties and depredations of those savages—they are in the habits of retaliation, perhaps without attending precisely to the nations from which the injuries are received.” Differentiating between the tribes was unimportant to the majority of Kentuckians though the Indians that were involved in the borderland depredations did not all belong to the same tribe. “No single tribe perpetrated the attacks, but rather a combination of warriors from many different nations, unsanctioned by an Indian council—many originating from the Miami villages at Kekionga and the polyglot community it encompassed.” By extolling revenge on the wrong tribe, sometimes a peaceful one at that, the Kentuckians ensured that the cycle of violence would not only continue, but would do so at an intensified rate. The federal government attempted numerous times to come to terms with the Indian tribes of the Northwest via treaties; however, not all the tribes concerned would participate. “Without full involvement, the [Indian] confederacy did not view the treaties as binding.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ First quote, *Kentucky Gazette*, Jan. 2, 1790. Next quotes, Sarah E. Miller, “‘Foolish Young Men’ and the Contested Ohio Country, 1783-1795,” in *Contested Territories: Native Americans and Non-Natives in the Lower Great Lakes, 1700-1850*, ed. Charles Beatty-Medina and Melissa Rinehart (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 2012), 45 and 51, respectively. See Wiley Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 73. For a detailed description of Kekionga and its surroundings, see Sword, 101-02.

Therefore, in 1790 General Josiah Harmar, commanding 320 regular soldiers, was ordered to lead an expedition to attack combative Miami Indians in the Northwest, but Congress did not allow funding for a greater, more effective force of formal American troops. Such an expansion of the federal army would have needed to be funded by tax dollars, and as Americans had such a great aversion to the idea of a standing army in peacetime, the funds were not to be had. So, he was granted the authority to use militiamen. As a result, Northwest Territory Governor St. Clair, called upon different militia groups including Kentucky to make up the numbers necessary for the expedition, eventually gaining 1,113 of them. Unfortunately, the quality of these men was questionable as “[m]any Kentuckians hired substitutes because they objected to being drafted, disliked federal officials in general, and lacked confidence in Harmar in particular; and while ready enough to serve at twenty dollars monthly as mounted volunteers, they had no intention of going as infantrymen at only three dollars.” The Mounted Volunteers, though more expensive, were, in this case, of a higher quality than the foot soldiers and would have been a much more effective choice.⁴¹

Despite this, the use of the Kentucky militia not only served to add manpower to the overall force, but served a political purpose as well. As mentioned, Kentucky was at the time considering secession. In order to not lose this territory, President Washington seized the opportunity to involve the influential Kentucky militia in Harmar’s expedition. Thus, the decision served the purpose of the campaign and created a way by which the Kentuckians could

⁴¹ Troop numbers taken from Ebenezer Denny, *Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny*. (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 141. Quote, Sword, *Indian War*, 24. See also, Henry Knox to Beverly Randolph, September 2, 1790, in “Papers of the War Department,” (PWD). For background information on Harmar, see Sword, *Indian War*, 89. Congress had granted the president the authority to call upon state militias for border defense in September, 1789, Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 116. For more on Harmar’s appointment, see John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 195. For more on aversions to a standing army see Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, introduction, especially pgs. 1-6.

be persuaded to abandon intentions of leaving the Union.⁴² However, having already felt slighted by the national government and now finding themselves fighting with its army, there were bound to be some reservations and even disdain between the Kentuckians and the regulars.

General Harmar and Governor Arthur St. Clair presented a plan of action to Secretary of War Henry Knox, who “in spite of reports of bad feeling between the militia and the army,” had to approve it as there was no real alternative. Knox insisted that the attack be a quick and resolute one. However, this would be impossible because the resulting forces under Harmar’s command were comprised mainly of slow-moving infantry. Additionally, before a major expedition was executed, a “warm-up for a full-scale assault” occurred. In April, 1790, Harmar was ordered to lead a joint effort of regulars and militia against Indians along the Scioto River in the Northwest. During this expedition, the Kentucky militia developed a greater disdain for serving with federal troops due to their belief that frontiersmen better understood how to fight Indians. Their displeasure was pointedly aimed at Harmar, as he was the commanding officer, and this disapproval greatly affected their dedication to his command in the “full scale assault” that had been planned for later that year.⁴³

This new tension did not escape notice. Regarding the anticipated second, larger expedition Secretary of War Knox wrote to Virginia Governor Beverly Randolph that “[it] has been suggested that the expedition may be liable to miscarriage from a jealousy of the militia and regular troops.” He went on to state that if this were true, “it would be highly important that they should be entirely removed, or suspended during the season of activity.” This contempt was not one-sided; soldiers in the federal army, including officers, often loathed the frontier soldiers.

⁴²See Richard M. Lytle, *The Soldiers of America’s First Army, 1791*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 18, and Paul David Nelson, “General Charles Scott, the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers and the Northwest Indian Wars, 1784-1794,” in *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Autumn, 1986), 223-24.

⁴³Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 103; Nelson, “General Charles Scott,” 224; St. Clair to Secretary Sargent, July 15, 1790, in *Territorial Papers*, 287.

Even St. Clair's secretary, Winthrop Sargent, lamented: "...it appears to me, from the past Conduct of the Kentucky militia that they will absolutely take themselves off—We know how their Officers are appointed & from repeated Experiments how little Dependence can be placed in them."⁴⁴

By September 1790, Harmar was at Fort Washington preparing for the expedition against the Miami towns and awaiting the arrival of the militia. "In the rush to march west, however, Harmar took whomever he could find... pay and bounty were so low 'that it could not be a sufficient inducement to any man' who was not 'inclined' to military life." En route, "discipline broke down completely, the men drunk and disorderly, and destroying civilian property..."⁴⁵

Adjutant-General Ebenezer Denny maintained a fairly detailed journal of the events. As the Kentucky militia began to arrive, he noted:

[T]hey appear to be raw and unused to the gun of the woods; indeed many are without guns, and many of those they have want repairing... [Harmar] much disheartened at the kind of people from Kentucky. One-half certainly serve no other purpose than to swell their number. If the leading *patriots* of Kentucky don't turn out rascals, then some men that I know are greatly mistaken.

Here Denny makes a valuable observation. It was a popular belief, then as it somewhat is now, that all these frontiersmen possessed their own rifles and were highly proficient in using them. However, a great many of these men, particularly the militia substitutes, had neither a suitable weapon, if any at all, nor any familiarity with using one. In an entry dated a few days later, Denny described the militia as unruly and argumentative.

Eventually, the militia became so anxious for action that Harmar, "mindful of the dissension smoldering among [them]," began marching his forces towards the Miami

⁴⁴Henry Knox to Beverly Randolph, Sep. 2, 1790, in PWD. Sargent to St. Clair, Aug. 17, 1790, in *Territorial Papers*, 301.

⁴⁵Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 63; internal quote from John Robert Shaw, *A Narrative of the Life and Travels of John Robert Shaw* quoted in Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 63.

villages at the end of September. “St. Clair reported that this decision had been prompted by the impatience of the militia—a clear indication of the loss of practical control by federal authorities.”⁴⁶

The main force had arrived at the Miami villages by October 17th and found them abandoned. Evidently, those living in and around Kekionga, the dominant Miami village, were aware of the army’s approach. This knowledge came from the fact that Indian messengers delivered warnings to British agents and the neutral Indian tribes in the area that Harmar and his men were conducting an expedition against the Shawnee and Miami only; unsurprisingly, word of their intentions reached the targeted Indians who were then able to prepare for their arrival. Their preparations were rushed, though, as Harmar had sent a contingent of militia under Colonel John Hardin’s command, ahead of the main army which arrived with impressive speed. In order to arrive as quickly as they did, Hardin and his men had to traverse over twenty miles of difficult terrain. Arriving at Kekionga, evidence of the rushed evacuation lay in the smoldering ruins as the Indians had set fire to the settlements. Driven by the prospect of plunder, the militia reportedly lost all inhibitions and ran wild throughout Kekionga and other nearby villages gathering what they could.⁴⁷

While men ransacked the villages for supplies, Harmar ordered Colonel Robert Trotter of the Kentucky militia to take some men and look for any signs of the enemy. Finding two, and killing them, he and his men returned without any further efforts. Colonel Hardin, also of the militia, thought Trotter’s efforts inefficient and sought to take over the assignment himself. According to Denny, Hardin’s “men moved off with great reluctance, and [I] am satisfied that

⁴⁶Denny, *Military Journal*, 140-141; first quote, 140; second and third quotes, Sword, *Indian War*, 95. There were other reasons Harmar began his march at that time, such as the onset of poor weather conditions and issues with supplies.

⁴⁷ Sword, *Indian War*, 94, 103; for more on the Shawnee and Miami tribes, see 86.

when three miles from camp he had not more than two-thirds of his command; they dropped out of the ranks and returned to camp.” Captain John Armstrong and roughly thirty regulars were part of this group.⁴⁸

While pursuing an Indian trail, Hardin and his men found themselves at the edge of a meadow where they noticed a campfire surrounded by goods across from where they stood. Not noting how suspicious this was, they took no precautions and went straight for the items. Sadly for them, they did not notice Little Turtle, a Miami leader and skilled warrior, hiding nearby with 150 fellow Indian warriors. Soon, Little Turtle and his men fired from their concealed positions, shooting down numerous militiamen. “All instantly became chaos. The rear of the column had not yet come up, and the militia bolted to the rear, Hardin among them. Many threw down their muskets without firing a shot. Captain Armstrong and the regulars attempted to form a line in the meadow, but so many militia broke through their ranks that this line was thrown into disorder.” Militia men from all parts of the field “scattered in utter panic” and “Armstrong noticed that only nine [of them] remained with his thirty regulars.”⁴⁹

Denny described the event in his journal: upon encountering the Indians “and owing to the bad order of his men, and their dastardly conduct, [they were] entirely defeated...The greatest number of militia fled without firing a shot.” He surmised that those missing more likely deserted rather than died. Further to the disappointing performance of the Kentuckians, Armstrong, who had survived the attack by hiding in a nearby swamp, told how his men had “fought with their bayonets and sold their lives dearly while the...militia had run away;” these were indeed choice words from a soldier who escaped injury by lurking around in a bog. Further, this raises the point that perhaps the Kentuckians were not retreating out of cowardliness

⁴⁸ Denny, *Military Journal*, 145-46.

⁴⁹ Sword, *Indian War*, 107.

or neglect; rather, their decision to take flight when faced with what they perceived to be a superior force may have been a more favorable move than fighting. By retreating under such circumstances, they could potentially lessen the number of wounded and killed, return to camp with intelligence of the enemy, and thus maintain their numbers so as to increase the chances of later success.⁵⁰

Despite this defeat, Harmar and his men had succeeded in plundering and burning the abandoned villages they had come across and so began their march back on October 21st. That night, the General designated a detachment of 400 men, militia and regulars, to go back to the villages in order to ambush any returning Indians. The detachment, under the command of Major John Palsgrave Wyllys left in the middle of the night. Wyllys, separated his forces into three groups, two groups of militiamen on the wings with a center group of regular troops. An ambush led by Little Turtle and Blue Jacket, of the Shawnees, thwarted their plans. The ensuing battle resulted in a decoy group of Indians luring the Kentucky militia away from the regular portion of the force. Left depleted of manpower, Wyllys and his men were then attacked. Suffering heavy casualties, including Wyllys, the few survivors ran in the direction the militia had taken. The two groups encountered each other and together they fought off any further attacks and made their retreat. In the end, sixty-eight men were missing and most likely dead. Denny wrote that “the whole of the killed and missing of the army amounts to one hundred and eighty-three.”⁵¹

By the first week of November, the troops were back at Fort Washington, near modern-day Cincinnati. Initially Harmar’s campaign was lauded as a success. St. Clair wrote to Secretary of War Henry Knox, “last Month I had the honor to inform you generally of the Success that attended General Harmar...One thing however is certain that the Savages have got a

⁵⁰First quote, Denny, *Military Journal*, 145-46; second quote, Sword, *Indian War*, 108.

⁵¹Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*; 106-07; Sword, *Indian War*, 114-15; and Grenier, *First Way of War*, 195-96. Quote, Denny, *Military Journal*, 148-49.

most terrible stroke, of which nothing can be more decided proof than that they have not attempted to harass the Army on its return..." Unknown to the Americans, though, there was a reason that the Indians did not pursue Harmar's forces on their return to Fort Washington—a lunar eclipse. This natural phenomenon, taken as an ill omen, alarmed many of the Indians who then abandoned the plans for another attack. As other Indians followed suit, Blue Jacket, leader of this contingent of Indian warriors, was compelled to abandon any further action against Harmar. Ultimately, Harmar's efforts were deemed as a defeat once more information was ascertained by St. Clair and the national government.⁵²

At Fort Washington the militia "broke out and became altogether ungovernable," then made their way back to Kentucky where "a hue and cry will be raised against [Harmar]." Whether they were really as unmanageable as described, they certainly remained unimpressed with the general. Their disdain for Harmar and the failures of the campaign "were such as to impress Kentucky with the belief that regulars were totally unfit for Indian warfare." The militia proceeded to state that they could not respect and obey an officer of the regular army as they would their own, and that they alone were uniquely qualified to fight Indians with any effect.⁵³

The recent defeat "brought about the establishment of Kentucky's Board of War in January, 1791, by the U.S. Congress." Members of the board included Charles Scott, John Brown, Harry Innes, Isaac Shelby, and Benjamin Logan. The premise of establishing the Board centered on the fact that Kentuckians were directly affected by the troubles in the Ohio Valley, more so than any other state. They also felt they were far better equipped to deal with warfare

⁵² Quote, St. Clair to Knox, Nov. 6, 1790, in *Territorial Papers*, 309. Information regarding the lunar eclipse, Sword, *Indian War*, 117-18. For more regarding the claims of success, see St. Clair to Sargent, Nov. 27, 1790, in *Territorial Papers*, 312-13 and Grenier, *First Way of War*, 196.

⁵³Quote, Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 833; see also, Nelson, "General Charles Scott," 226-27.

against Indians than any other military group, such as the regular army, and their response to incursions could be expedited if the authority to do so were to be located closer to the action.⁵⁴

After Harmar's defeat, the Indians of the Maumee felt victorious and empowered. It was feared by the administration that they would now increase their numbers by joining forces with other tribes in the area and escalate their attacks. Therefore, a new campaign was in order. This new plan was to be a force of 3,000 men who were to march to the same Miami stronghold and erect a fort. Two thousand of these men were to be regulars. To make up the rest, the administration wanted to rely on levied soldiers, men enlisted on short-term contracts subject to the same rules and regulations of the regulars. This type of soldier would cost less than a regular one, assuage public fears of a standing army as they were not permanent, and avoid the problems that had been encountered by using militia.⁵⁵

Plans were approved and set in motion by March of 1791, which did not give much time for an army to be raised, organized, and readied before fall so as to avoid winter combat and/or encampment. As a result, preparations were generally executed in haste. Also, issues in recruitment cropped up—enlisting regular troops soon proved difficult, numbering only about 600 by August. Added to this was the fact that many levied soldiers' enlistments might run out before any expedition would begin. Thus, militiamen by desperate necessity would comprise the bulk of the force in order to ensure an expedition that summer.⁵⁶

General Arthur St. Clair had command of this latest expedition. An aged man with a spotty career who suffered from gout, St. Clair was not a favorite of the Kentucky militiamen, most of whom still held to the belief that regular soldiers were not adequate or qualified to fight Indians. Either way, Knox had urged St. Clair to use the Mounted Volunteers of Kentucky, but

⁵⁴ First quote, *Military History*, 55. See also, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 833.

⁵⁵ Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 108-10; and Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 137.

⁵⁶ Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 111-14.

St. Clair “opted instead for a three-month draft of...rank and file of ordinary militia.” The thousand Kentucky militiamen called to join St. Clair had to be “drafted...and [were] reluctantly compelled to serve under a gouty old disciplinarian, whom they disliked, and in conjunction with a regular force, which they regarded as doomed to destruction.”⁵⁷

The reluctance of the militia and the need for a draft stemmed from the fact that most officers of the Kentucky militia had no desire to serve under St. Clair. Their experiences fighting under Harmar had not warmed them to sharing the battlefield with regulars. Therefore, it is not surprising that General Charles Scott, after reluctantly agreeing to aid St. Clair in gathering militia support, “like every other general officer in Kentucky, pleaded illness (or made other excuses) to avoid leading those who came forward.” Colonel William Oldham took his place.⁵⁸

As for the sentiments of the regular troops, Denny’s journal again reflects their thoughts. At Fort Washington in September of 1791, while preparations for St. Clair’s expeditions were underway, Denny was in the company of Harmar who “conversed frequently and freely with a few of his friends on the probable result of the campaign—predicted a defeat. He suspected a disposition in me to resign; discouraged the idea. ‘You must,’ said he, ‘go on the campaign; some will escape, and you may be among the number.’” Though Harmar’s skill at commanding an army may have been questionable, he appeared to have the gift of prophecy.⁵⁹

St. Clair’s journey to Kekionga was rife with setbacks. Within the first week of October, Denny recorded four separate entries on the desertions of the Kentucky militia. The weather turned unfavorable—frost covered the ground and considerable time was spent finding suitable forage for livestock—progress was slow, supply shipments were late, and it was due to these

⁵⁷First quote, Sword, *Indian War*, 147; second quote, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 833. See also Sword, 53 and Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 25 and for a description of the Mounted Volunteers, 15.

⁵⁸Nelson, “General Charles Scott,” 234; see also *St. Clair Letters*, 298. For a scathing criticism of Harmar by President Washington, see Washington to Knox, Nov. 9, 1790, in *Territorial Papers*, 310.

⁵⁹Denny, *Military Journal*, 153.

conditions that so many deserted. “By late October, St. Clair had only fourteen hundred men left in his army.” A week into the march, St. Clair chose ground for erecting a fort, later dubbed Fort Jefferson. While construction ensued, Colonel Oldham was given orders to have some of his men escort a convoy of horses, but “[h]is men declare[d] if they are sent on that duty they [would] not return. Falconer’s company of levies escort[ed] the horses back.”⁶⁰

Not long after this incident, the army began to march northwards, following an Indian trail. Within a few days of travel, the members of the militia apparently grew impatient and unruly. Later, “between sixty and seventy [militia] march off...and [swore] they [would] stop the pack horses with provisions” which were en route. A group of regulars was then dispatched to ensure their threats were not fulfilled. The next three days were filled with difficult marches through marshy terrain, which left the men in a state of fatigue. So, on the night of November 3rd, they set up camp without taking proper defensive precautions.⁶¹

During the subsequent trial of St. Clair, the first-ever Congressional investigation of its kind, some of his men claimed that they had surmised that the camp would be attacked. Captain Oldham of the militia told Captain Slough, of the levies: “I expect the army will be attacked in the morning.” Slough then went on a patrol and after he returned to camp, having encountered Indians while out, agreed with Oldham. Slough then proceeded farther into camp to “inform the general that I think the army will be attacked in the morning.” He later found General Richard Butler and informed him of the developments. Butler, who would become the day’s highest-ranking casualty, “stood some time, and after a pause, thanked me for my attention and

⁶⁰ First quote, Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 139; second quote, Denny, *Military Journal*, 157. For entries about militia desertions, see Denny, *Military Journal*, 154. Regarding the weather, see *St. Clair Letters*, ed. William Henry Smith (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1882), 200; and also Arthur St. Clair, *The First American Frontier*. (1812; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1971), 299.

⁶¹ Denny, *Military Journal*, 162-63; 164; see also St. Clair, *American Frontier*, 223. See also, Sword, *Indian War*, 167. For insight on the trouble with provisions the men experienced, see St. Clair, *American Frontier*. For more on the lack of fortifying camp, see Alan D. Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 3.

vigilance, and said, as I must be fatigued I had better go and lie down.” A Colonel Semple’s testimony added to the veracity of the above claims.⁶² For whatever reason, no extra precautions were taken in light of the warnings.

The morning of November 4th began in the usual manner with the troops parading and being dismissed when “the woods in front rung with yells and fire of the savages.” What followed was utterly devastating to the American forces. Miamis led by Little Turtle and Shawnees led by Blue Jacket had the army quickly surrounded, excepting those members of the militia who had reportedly retreated at the first sign of trouble. Caught completely off-guard, the soldiers sought to organize themselves and return fire, but were soon overwhelmed.

[The Indians] advanced from one tree, log, or stump to another, under cover of the smoke of our fire. The artillery and musketry...did little execution. The Indians seemed to brave everything, and when fairly fixed around us they made no noise other than their fire, which they kept up very constant...indeed they seemed not to fear anything we could do. They could skip out of reach of the bayonet and return, as they pleased. They were visible only when raised by a charge. The ground was literally covered with the dead.

In addition, the Miami Indians targeted soldiers of higher rank leaving the men with few able-bodied officers to take charge. “St. Clair’s command structure had vanished, and men followed their instincts, each reacting differently under the stress of combat.” The order for retreat was given, and readily followed; “a more complete overthrow was never witnessed.” Eventually, the survivors found respite at Fort Jefferson.⁶³

Here the predictions of Harmar rang true. He was astonished “that the commanding general, who was acknowledged to be perfectly competent, would think of hazarding, with such

⁶² St. Clair, *American Frontier*, 215-18. Curiously, Captain Ebenezer Denny’s testimony stated that on the night before the attack, he was nearby when Slough “had some conversation with [Butler] and colonel Gibson: whether it was to ask advice or receive orders I know not.” (St. Clair, *American Frontier*, 226) It would seem, then, that Butler did not pass on the warnings, or, if he did, they went completely unheeded. For a possible explanation of Butler’s actions see Sword, *Indian War*, 175.

⁶³ First and second quotes, Denny, *Military Journal*, 165-66; third quote, Gaff, *Bayonets*, 5; fourth quote, Collins, 834. See also, Grenier, *First Way of War*, 198. For information on officers being targeted, see Denny, 166-67, and Gaff, *Bayonets*, 4-5.

people, and under such circumstances...” Further, President Washington himself had warned St. Clair “to guard against surprise” while en route to his destination. Overall, the losses, as listed by Denny in his journal, were thirty-seven officers and 593 privates killed in action and thirty-one officers and fifty-two privates wounded. St. Clair’s defeat became the “most humiliating defeat ever inflicted upon an American army...” Furthermore, the victory of Little Turtle’s and Blue Jacket’s warriors encouraged the Indians of the Ohio Valley. “The Indian victory at the Battle of the Wabash shattered any American hopes for quickly subjugating the Ohio Indians.... There was also the fear that the emboldened Indian confederacy might try to push the American frontier back to the Appalachian Mountains.”⁶⁴

Predictably, St. Clair had much to answer for at his inquiry. In his remarks to the committee, he discussed at length a number of issues he had in procuring adequate and proper supplies for his men and their weapons. Following this, he examined the battle itself in such terms as to make one believe he was simply placing the blame on his men, exonerating himself of any fault. He remarked that the battle of that day could possibly have been the first time many of his men had fired a gun. Also, he observed that if two armies of equal skill meet, the one with more men will be the victor. However, “when an inferior army is attacked by a superior force... nothing can turn the scale in favour of the inferior, but superior skill and bravery,” and although his men may have had superior bravery, they were lacking in the former.⁶⁵

⁶⁴First quote, Denny, *Military Journal*, 170-71. Second quote, Benson J. Lossing, ed. *Recollection and Private Memoirs of Washington, by his adopted son, George Washington Parke Curtis, with a memoir of the author by his daughter, and illustrative and explanatory notes, by Benson J. Lossing*. ed. Benson J. Lossing, quoted in Gaff, *Bayonets*, 3. Third quote, Gaff, xvii. Fourth quote, Grenier, *First Way of War*, 198. For different figures/estimates, see “Providence, January 12,” *United States Chronicle*, January 12, 1792 and “Lexington, November 11, 1791,” *Mail*, December 9, 1791. Women and children were also among the dead, as camp followers, see Gaff, 3-9. For the British perspective on the defeat see Robert Hamilton to Simcoe, Jan. 4, 1794, in *The Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe*. Vol. I, ed. Brigadier General E. A. Cruikshank (Toronto: Toronto Historical Society, 1923), 98. ‘Wabash Indians’ is a collective term for the Indians living “in or near the Miami villages along the Wabash River.” See Miller, “‘Foolish Young Men,’” 52, note 13.

⁶⁵ St. Clair, *American Frontier*, 130-31.

The militia, though having earned no accolades for their hasty retreat during the attack, regardless of whether or not it was a better choice than trying to fight under those circumstances, wasted no time in using the defeat as yet another example of the inability of the regulars to wage war on the Indians. Anti-regular sentiments reached an apex after St. Clair's miserable defeat, but Washington maintained that a combined force of regulars and militia was necessary to achieve peace in the northwest so long as peace negotiations failed. So, he sent proposals to Congress, which after being approved on March 6, 1792, resulted in the formation of the Legion of the United States, a form of a standing army, and maintained his power to call upon militia.⁶⁶

St. Clair resigned on April 7, 1792, and Anthony Wayne became Major General in his stead. Collectively, "their [Harmar's and St. Clair's] failure to correct the troubles of the Kentuckians caused the Federal Government to lose prestige in this frontier state, since Kentuckians looked upon the bungling of its protection as an evil omen, boding future destruction." That June, Kentucky was granted statehood and its citizens began establishing its state government and constitution. Meanwhile, Indian attacks continued to plague the frontiers. Late in the year, Colonel Hardin, the Kentucky militia commander who had had the misfortune of serving under Harmar, was "sent as a messenger of peace to the hostile tribes" and had the subsequent misfortune of being murdered by them. Since efforts of peaceful negotiations continued to fail, Wayne trained and organized his men in preparation of another expedition.⁶⁷

Needing to source more manpower from the Kentucky militia, Knox instructed Wayne to enlist only the Mounted Volunteers, the same advice that had been dismissed by Wayne's predecessor: "The Kentucky people dislike greatly to serve as mere Militia. Were you to call for that sort of Militia you would probably receive substitutes only—On the other hand the Citizens

⁶⁶ Nelson, "General Charles Scott," 234-36.

⁶⁷ First quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 144. Second quote, "War Dept," *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*, April 24, 1792. See also, Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 835.

of that State delight to serve on Horseback...” and if those men were enlisted, Wayne could expect “the bravest and best Men of that State.” Knox continued to point out that though they were more expensive, “considering their quality and estimated efficacy, it may ultimately be the cheapest to employ them in preference to drafted men and substitutes.” Therefore, in the summer of 1793, Governor Isaac Shelby was requested to supply 1,000 mounted men for the expedition.⁶⁸

As was the custom, Shelby first petitioned for volunteers to fill this quota, but it should not have come as any great surprise that “none would volunteer, and a draft was again resorted to” as both Harmar’s and St. Clair’s disasters were still very fresh in their memories. However, “the [drafted and mounted militia] reinforcement reached Wayne in October, and during its stay, had an opportunity of witnessing the energy and discipline infused into the regular force by its gallant commander.” The Kentuckians arrived too late for fighting season, though, and were sent back to await a future date to return, especially “given that most of their horses had received no forage since leaving home [and they would be] unable to complete such an expedition” as frost had damaged most of the grass. However, they did return home with more confidence in Wayne.⁶⁹

In the meantime, in spite of the Kentuckians’ higher opinion of Wayne and his men, friction between the militia and regulars continued. For example, in 1792, a militia lieutenant from Westmoreland County complained that “if all the troops belonging to the U.S. were stationed upon the Frontiers of that County—they wou’d not be deemed sufficient; Unless there was an addition of *Militia*.” Wayne found his complaint “idle and premature” and asserted that

⁶⁸ Knox to Wayne, May 17, 1793, in *Anthony Wayne: A Name In Arms*, ed. Richard C. Knopf (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1960), 239.

⁶⁹ Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 835; first two quotes, 840; Gaff, *Bayonets*, 171-73, third quote from 172; recall that St. Clair had continued his march despite frost, see *St. Clair Letters*, 200; and See also, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 27, and Knox to Wayne, April 12, 1792 in *Anthony Wayne*, 15-16.

he had forces under his command that were patrolling the area “which affords a much better security, to the frontiers of that County, than all the Militia in the Western Country.” Almost a year later, Wayne alluded to a letter between Generals Benjamin Logan and James Wilkinson of the Kentucky militia declaring the volunteers as being “the most proper people to enterprize against the Indians.” Wayne found this declaration “rather too idle and ridiculous to merit attention,” but implied that 200 militia could do the work of 2,000, as in either instance they would leave the “Legion to contend with the combined force of the Savages” while pursuing their own goals.⁷⁰

Prior to the departure of the Kentucky militia, Wayne wrote to Knox that “Five Hundred of [General Scott’s] people in the course of One night” deserted the campaign. He did point out that General Scott, and the other militia officers, were not to blame, though. Further, he felt compelled to “express my highest Approbation of the Conduct of those Gentlemen & the Officers in General from the time of their Arrival...until their departure from this place...” In February the following year, Shelby wrote Knox that Kentucky was not receiving adequate protection from attacks and the army’s approach to fighting the Indians was to blame:

It is with concern that I am compeled to say that it is a universal opinion in this state, that the system of warfare which is pursued at present by the United States will never humble the Indians or induce them to commit to make a lasting peace. It is also believed that the Citizens of the Country are fully Compliant to that task if they can be properly employed in it. I scruple not to declare that I am fully of that opinion, and that I will, with the Citizens of this Country, also engage to attack and defeat any part of the Indian Tribes northwest of the Ohio against whom the President may think proper to wreck our operations.

⁷⁰ Wayne to Knox, Sep. 28, 1792, in *Anthony Wayne*, 107-08; Wayne to Knox, June 20, 1793, in *Anthony Wayne*, 244-45.

Over the course of the next few months there were numerous other correspondences in which those associated with the militia criticized the regulars and vice versa.⁷¹

When the Kentucky militia did return to join Wayne's forces, they did so under General Scott's command and with a round total of 1,500 mounted *volunteer* militia. These men were divided into two brigades, one under Brigadier-General Robert Todd and the other under Brigadier-General Thomas Barbee. Joined by these men, Wayne gave the orders to march northwards. Taking defensive precautions every night, a lesson learned from St. Clair's past failure, the troops eventually took control of Grand Glaize, an abandoned Indian town, in August where he built Fort Defiance. During its construction, a scouting party was met with resistance at Roche de Boeuf, located to the east of Fort Defiance. Another scouting party reconnoitered and the information from the two parties combined revealed that a mass of Indian warriors were gathering at Roche de Boeuf with assistance from British troops under Major William Campbell. "Wayne now realized there was not a moment to lose in recommencing his army's march, so on August [15] he put his troops in motion eastward along the north bank of the Maumee River."⁷²

On the morning of the twentieth, they began marching towards the enemy with "one brigade of mounted volunteers on the left, under Brigadier General Todd, and the other in the rear, under Brigadier General Barbee" while the Legion took the right. Todd's brigade was re-organized to create a battalion of 150 men led by Major William Price that would act as an advance guard and "was to give timely notice for the troops to form in case of action" as Wayne did not know the Indians' intentions. Traveling through "a close thick wood...the ground being

⁷¹ First and second quotes, Wayne to Knox, Nov. 15, 1793, in *Anthony Wayne*, 282; third quote, Isaac Shelby to Knox, Jan. 10, 1794, in PWD. See also Shelby to Knox, Feb. 10, 1794, Filson Club: Isaac Shelby Papers and "Head Quarters, Hobson's Choice, 26th September, 1793," *New-Jersey Journal*, November 13, 1793. The fact that the first Kentucky recruits had to be drafted while the second volunteered was testament to the positive impression Wayne had on the first group. See, Nelson, "General Charles Scott," 239-45, for more detail on the formation of these two groups.

⁷² Nelson, "General Charles Scott," 246-47. Nelson states the army began marching on Aug. 14, but in Wayne to Knox, August 28, 1794, in *Anthony Wayne*, 351, Wayne states they began the march on August 15.

cover'd with old fallen timber probably occasioned by a tornado," Price and his men soon engaged the enemy. They drew heavy fire that compelled them to retreat to the main force, and Wayne reacted accordingly. He ordered the mounted volunteers of the militia to ride ahead and "gain and turn the right flank of the savages." The mounted men of the Legion were to do likewise but from the left flank. The front line was to approach the enemy directly, cause them to flee at bayonet point, hold fire until the last instant, and immediately pursue them.⁷³

Both of the mounted groups sent to the flanks saw no real action as the front line's advance was so successful. The Indians and their allies soon retreated to Fort Miami where they found no support from the British. The battle lasted around an hour and the Indians lost only around forty warriors while Wayne's forces suffered about 133 losses. Regardless, Wayne and his men remained in the area for a few days during which time "all the Houses and Corn fields were consumed & destroyed for a considerable distance both above & below Fort Miamis" including Colonel McKee's property, the British Indian agent. The British having not taken any action whatsoever to protect the Indians or their property demonstrated to the defeated natives that their help could no longer be relied upon.⁷⁴

The Americans continued to destroy "Villages & Corn fields for about Fifty miles on each side of the Miamis" as they made their way back to Fort Defiance. Regarding the mounted volunteers' role in the battle, Wayne was impressed despite the fact that they did not engage the enemy. He told Knox that he "never discover'd more true spirit & anxiety for Action that appeared to pervade the whole of the Mounted Volunteers, & I am well persuaded that had the

⁷³ Wayne to Knox, August 28, 1794, in *Anthony Wayne*, 351-52. For more on Generals Todd and Barbee, as well as other militia soldiers, see Gaff, *Bayonets*, 166-68. For more on the Battle of Fallen Timbers, see Gaff, 301-13 and Sword, *Indian War*, 299-307. For more on the organization of the Legion, see John F. Winkler & Peter Dennis, *Fallen Timbers 1794: The US Army's First Victory* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 24-26.

⁷⁴ Wayne to Knox, August 28, 1794, in *Anthony Wayne*, 354. See also, Sword, *Indian Wars*, 299-307 for more on the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the effect it had on the Indians.

Enemy maintained their favorite ground but for one half hour longer they wou'd have most severely felt the prowess of that Corps.”⁷⁵

The effects of this victory were exponential. Although a few minor skirmishes occurred afterwards, the Indians generally gave up and engaged in peace talks with the United States. “The effect in Kentucky was scarcely less propitious. A better feeling towards the general government was instantly visible.” Wayne and his forces marched to the site of Harmar’s defeat where they would began to build Fort Wayne. A number of the Kentuckians found themselves with the onerous task of moving supplies from Forts Greeneville and Recovery to the construction site of Fort Wayne. “The volunteers’ final services were mind-numbingly prosaic, for they were merely laborers in fatigue parties...”⁷⁶

By October 14, 1794, the volunteers were marching from Fort Wayne to Fort Washington where they were to be discharged. In a letter to Knox, Wayne commented that “the conduct of both Officers & men of this Corps in General has been better than any Militia I have heretofore seen in the field for so great a length of time” even if, as he continued, they took to complaining while fulfilling the aforementioned tasks. Although, it must be pointed out that Wayne still did not fully approve of the militia, whether drafted or volunteer, as a reliable force. In the very same letter, he sought to prove “the mistaken policy & bad economy of substituting Mounted Volunteers in place of Regular troops.” Likewise, the Kentuckians felt the same towards Wayne and the regulars; they found Wayne an impressive man, but held on to the belief that state troops were still more efficient than regulars. “General Wilkinson spoke for many of his fellow

⁷⁵ Quote, Wayne to Knox, August 28, 1794, in *Anthony Wayne*, 354. See also, Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 165. For a unique perspective from within the British fort, see John Anderson, *A Short History of the Life of John Anderson*, transcr. Richard C. Knopf. (Columbus, Ohio: The Anthony Wayne Parkway Board, 1965). For Wayne’s actions regarding the British fort, see *Correspondence of Simcoe*, 9-10. For more on the British not offering aid to the retreating Indians, see *Centinel of the North Western Territory*, Oct. 18, 1794.

⁷⁶ Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 841; Nelson, “General Charles Scott,” 250.

Kentuckians when he asserted that Wayne's achievement at Fallen Timbers with an expensive regular army could have been accomplished by the Kentucky volunteers alone in only thirty days.”⁷⁷

After examining the three campaigns in some detail, focusing on how the Kentucky soldiers behaved and were utilized, one can now draw conclusions as to why the Kentucky militia, as a whole, was characterized by some as crude and ineffective. Their inclusion in the campaigns of the 1790s was arguably based on the simple fact that more soldiers were needed, but without the ability to raise a sufficient standing army, the national government had to rely on militiamen as a cost-efficient way to increase the manpower of each expedition. Additionally, as the Kentuckians demonstrated a propensity and inclination to fight Indians despite federal laws against it, the administration felt it would be wise to lend a sense of legality to their actions and use their anti-Indian sentiments to the nation's advantage. Lastly, there was a political motive; by involving the Kentuckians in the fight for the Ohio Valley, Washington helped dissuade them from seceding and proved to them that the national government did take their concerns seriously. Overall, the idea that they were called to fight because well-trained regular troops were lacking, Kentuckians would have continued to fight Indians without any regard to laws, and all the while they were threatening to leave the Union led numerous people to view them as impulsive and unrefined.⁷⁸

Regarding the Kentuckians' effectiveness and how they were utilized, there were many similarities between Harmar's and St. Clair's treatment of the militia. For instance, both recruited militiamen as infantry soldiers. As Kentuckians preferred to fight as Mounted

⁷⁷ First and second quote, Wayne to Knox, October 17, 1794, in *Anthony Wayne*, 360; Third quote, General James Wilkinson to John Brown, August 28, 1794, in Nelson, "General Charles Scott," 250-51. Wilkinson had hoped to be put in charge of the this expedition. When Wayne received the commission instead, Wilkinson, as was his character, did what he could to discredit the man. See Nelson, 237-38 and 244-45.

⁷⁸ For insight into the second reason listed, see Sword, *Indian War*, 83.

Volunteers, this doomed the generals to receiving inexperienced, poorly supplied substitutes as well as other drafted men. Also, both Harmar and St. Clair expected the militia soldiers to behave just as the regulars. Harmar relied heavily on Baron von Steuben's instructions to train all his forces which was unwise because that style of warfare "made little sense for a colony chiefly endangered by forest Indians." Even newspapers chided his efforts. Calling to mind the success of the Kentucky volunteers when acting on their own, one paper stated:

The successful expeditions carried on from Kentucky...far exceeds the present school taught theory...But our Secretary at war is of a different opinion, the mechanism of the Manual exercise and the evolution of Steuben are so essential in his view as not to be dispensed with.

Additionally, in both of these campaigns, the militia grew unruly, and Harmar and St. Clair reacted by increasing the frequency and severity of punishments, which further antagonized these frontiersmen.⁷⁹

Successfully disenchanted with their commanders, the militiamen under Harmar and St. Clair lacked motivation to fight for them. The number of deserters from the militia companies bears testament to this. Also, the manner in which they were employed led to disaster after disaster. In Harmar's case, each time he sent out detachments of both regulars and militia, they were defeated. In each case, the militia seemingly abandoned the regular troops. Perhaps, if Harmar had sent a detachment comprised of only one or the other, he would have met with more success as a homogenous group of soldiers would be more inclined to act in unison as each man would be more aware of what to expect his comrades to do.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See Sword, *Indian War*, 24. First quote, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 89. Second quote, *Centinal of the North Western Territories*, Feb. 8 and 15, 1794. See Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 117, for Harmar's reaction and Sword, *Indian War*, 164-67, for St. Clair's reaction. More discussion is lent to the disapproval and criticism of Baron Von Steuben's work later in the thesis.

⁸⁰ Denny, *Military Journal*, 145-46; Sword, *Indian War*, 107; and Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 106-07.

St. Clair used the militia in a similar manner to Harmar—applying the same expectations to them as he did to the regular soldiers. Also, before his horrific defeat, he stationed the militiamen outside the main confines of the camp. By doing so, he positioned a group of men prone to taking flight when overwhelmed on the outskirts of his camp. It cannot be a surprise that once the militia saw they could not possibly fend off the attack they fled to what they thought would be the safety of the bulk of the army. Furthermore, once the Kentuckians realized even amid the regular troops they were doomed, it is not shocking that they fled once again.⁸¹

General Anthony Wayne encountered many of the same problems as Harmar and St. Clair; however, his reaction to these issues altered the outcome of his expedition. When seeking to enlist Kentucky militia, he found the same hesitation and a draft was enforced just as it had been before. The difference with Wayne's use of the non-regulars, though, was that he actually listened to Knox and recruited the Mounted Volunteers. As such, he avoided the problems that inexperienced and under-equipped substitutes brought with them. He also kept the Mounted Volunteers separate from the regular army and gave them different tasks that exploited their particular expertise. His overall plan was based on the distinctions between the frontiersmen and the regular soldiers. Wayne was aware of the volunteers' distaste for fighting alongside regularly enlisted men, and Wayne himself was not fond of fighting with non-regulars either. He decided that giving these mounted men different tasks would be best, and allow him more time to build up the regular troops, which would lessen the need for militia/volunteer supplements in the future.⁸²

Wayne also had to contend with the restlessness of the Kentuckians. Unlike his predecessors, though, instead of simply increasing disciplinary action, he sent them on scouting

⁸¹ Denny, *Military Journal*, 165-66; Gaff, *Bayonets*, 5; and Grenier, *First Way of War*, 198.

⁸² Nelson, "General Charles Scott," 239.

excursions to assuage their bloodlust and keep them busy. Additionally, en route to their destination, he maintained steady and consistent marches and ended each day with fortifying the camp. This must have bolstered the Kentuckians' confidence in Wayne more so than it had for either Harmar or St. Clair. When it came to engaging the enemy, Wayne continued to keep the different forces separate from each other as was evident with the description of how he divided them at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.⁸³

As can be observed, both Harmar and St. Clair mismanaged the Kentucky militia from the moment they were recruited. They failed to exploit the talents and abilities that were unique to the fighting frontiersmen, and thus doomed their expeditions. Conversely, Wayne employed them in a far different manner. First, he listened to Knox's advice to accept Mounted Volunteers. Second, he harnessed their unique skills for the benefit of the expedition rather than attempt to transform them into regular soldiers. By doing so, he significantly improved the efficiency of his force as a whole. However, the presence and use of the Kentuckians is not the sole decisive factor in the outcomes of these expeditions.

Harmar and St. Clair both were subject to demands of expediency which left them at the mercy of poor weather conditions. Also, there were severe problems with the supplies in all three campaigns, St. Clair's in particular. Regarding the commanders themselves, all three were at some point suspected or accused of being drunks, both St. Clair and Wayne suffered from gout during their command, and St. Clair and Harmar both gravely underestimated their enemies.

From these observations and the examination above, it must be concluded that although a multitude of factors were responsible for the different outcomes of each expedition the role the Kentucky militia played in them did have a significant effect. Furthermore, the collective effect these expeditions had on this region of the United States demonstrated to the residents of the area

⁸³ Gaff, *Bayonets*, 130.

that the national government did indeed consider their security and territorial interests. “Because national leaders were willing to define United States territory very expansively in the Ohio Valley, and to commit considerable military resources to defend their claims, they strengthened national loyalties in a region that was otherwise intensely localist in its politics and outlook.” It would be almost two decades before the Kentucky militia would once again be called upon to serve in a major national war effort, the War of 1812.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Quote, Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1637-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 244. Expediency: Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 63 and Sword, *Indian War*, 165-67; Supply issues: St. Clair, *American Frontier*, 206-10 and Sword, 265; Being drunk: Sword, 120; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 199; and Kohn, 125; St. Clair’s gout: Sword, 165-67; Wayne’s gout: Gaff, *Bayonets*, 288 and 292; Underestimating enemy: Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 117; Grenier, 195.

CHAPTER IV

KENTUCKY IN THE WAR OF 1812

The War of 1812 received its name due to the fact that Congress officially declared war in that particular year; however, the causes of this declaration find their origin in the years before 1812. Britain and France were once again at odds with each other, and as was the case in the Seven Years' War, the effects were felt in the America. As stated earlier, American maritime endeavors suffered greatly under the impressment of sailors by the British. France, too, caused angst for the Americans with their wartime trade policies, such as the Berlin Decree of 1806, which called for a blockade of the British Isles. France declared that any neutral ships which had visited a British port could not touch upon a French-held port, and any British goods were subject to confiscation regardless of the origin of the ship which carried them. Conversely, the British passed legislation which forbade any country from conducting trade with a nation that prohibited trade with the British themselves. Hickey asserted that the effect of these policies were not as significant as they might sound for trade was still possible, just more difficult. Even so, "[t]he war clouds in Europe continually affected the United States, leaving war a mere step away."⁸⁵

Other issues that led to the declaration of war include the desire for westward expansion, continued conflicts with Indians, and national pride. The British maintained their presence in the Ohio Valley and continued to interact with the tribes of that region. Thus, the Americans' desire to extend their borders and settle that area was impeded. This went along with the persistence of sporadic warfare between western settlers and the local Indian tribes, and when these two

⁸⁵ Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 38-39; Clark, *A History of Kentucky*, 176. Quote, Eugene M. Wait, *America and the War of 1812* (Commack, NY: Kroshka Books, 1999), 4. See also Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, introduction, for a discussion on ideological aspects of contention between the U.S. and Britain.

grievances were combined with the aforementioned problems experienced on the high seas, the country as a whole felt their authority and legitimacy as a nation slighted and disrespected.⁸⁶

When Thomas Jefferson was elected the third president in 1800, he faced a delicate situation of needing to make preparations for a potential conflict while also attempting to maintain neutrality and simultaneously defending the rights of American merchant vessels. In the latter years of his presidency, he grappled with passing legislation aimed at applying economic pressure to Britain in a bid to force them to let up on their oppressive policies, but to no avail. In fact, during his presidency Jefferson constantly sought non-military solutions to the existing problems with Britain. Furthermore, he greatly decreased the size of the military. In 1802, he wrote that such downsizing led to the termination of internal taxes, comparing said taxes to “a parasite limb.” Then, on June 22, 1807, the British ship *Leopard* attacked an American warship, the *Chesapeake* near the Virginian coast. The British fired upon the American ship because they suspected British sailors were on board. Newspapers reported the action with much indignation, particularly as this attack was upon an American military vessel rather than a merchant ship. One paper stated that “the honor and independence of our nation [was] insulted beyond the possibility of further forbearance.” Another proclaimed it an “outrage on the AMERICAN FLAG.” Accounts of the action filled the pages of many publications and a genuine alarm that war was imminent spread through the states.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Fred Coyne Hamil, “Introduction,” in *After Tippecanoe: Some Aspects of the War of 1812*, ed. Philip P. Mason (Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1963), 5. The issues regarding maritime rights and trade greatly affected Kentuckians, too, despite the fact they were geographically distant from the seas. This theme will be explored later.

⁸⁷ First quote, Thomas Jefferson to General Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Apr. 2, 1802, in *Thomas Jefferson Writings* (TJW), Merrill D. Peterson, ed., (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1984), 1103. Second quote, “From the Norfolk Ledger, June 24,” *Western Sun* (Aug. 8, 1807). Third quote, *Liberty Hall & Cincinnati Mercury* (July 14, 1807). See also, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 176. See Hickey, *War of 1812*, 37-38 for more on the war scare. For more on Jefferson’s activities regarding the US military, see Jefferson, *Autobiography*, in TJW, 299-302 for more on his distaste for public spending on military endeavors.

Although the US ultimately avoided a war immediately following the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair, the reality of the possibility became abundantly clear. However, Jefferson's inclination to avoid war and consequent downsizing of the army left the country in a state of unpreparedness. When Jefferson's tenure as president ended and James Madison took office in 1809, Madison continued to pursue a non-military yet equally bellicose approach in his dealings with Britain, but when the Twelfth Congress convened in March of 1811, such non-confrontational sentiments were pushed aside. Just a few months after this Congress assembled the American frigate *President* exchanged fire with the British vessel *Little Belt* near the American coast. "The fight took place at night, and it was never clear who fired first." It later became known that the American ship engaged *Little Belt* in order to prevent the impressment of any of the men. Upon hearing the news, "[m]ost Americans saw the engagement as just retribution for the *Chesapeake* affair and celebrated accordingly." All in all, the actions of the two nations, the US and Britain, paved the road to war. Before formal declaration, though, another event further spurred the Americans to come to their decision, this time it was on land at the Battle of Tippecanoe.⁸⁸

Since 1805, Tenskwatawa, or the Prophet as this Shawnee Indian was also known, had instigated resistance against the encroaching Americans. Together with his brother, Tecumseh, he established Prophetstown, a multi-tribe Indian settlement on the Wabash River near the Tippecanoe River in present day Indiana. Members of this town actively engaged in armed conflict with settlers spurring William Henry Harrison, then Governor of the Indiana Territory, to write to the Secretary of War in 1811 requesting the authority to assemble a force in

⁸⁸ Quotes, Hickey, *War of 1812*, 44. For more on sentiments of possible war, see Michael D. Doubler, *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War: The Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 80; for more on Jefferson and the army, see Wait, *America and the War*, 3; for more on Madison's disposition, see Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 179; for more on the 12th Congress, see Edward C. Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 16.

anticipation of taking on these Indians in battle, a request deemed highly prudent by the majority of residents in the region. During this same time, the British continued to engage in trade with and support of the Indian tribes of the Northwest in case they would need to rely on their loyalty in the event of war with the US. The Americans obviously found this intolerable and felt that the British involvement with the Indians instigated the Natives' acts of hostility (because, of course, it could not have been the Americans' fault). "We have had but one opinion as the cause of the depredations of the Indians, they are instigated and supported by the British in Canada."⁸⁹

Harrison received the authority he requested and raised an army of 1,000 men consisting of both regulars and militia, which included some very enthusiastic Kentucky volunteer militia. These frontiersmen were quite passionate about this campaign as they had wanted such military action to take place in the Northwest for some time. The army marched to Prophetstown in early November to demand that the Indians there hand over those members of their town who had instigated attacks. The troops were eager to fight and officers even approached Harrison with the hope of persuading him to call for an attack on the town. Harrison, however, refused as he was waiting for word from friendly chiefs who had gone ahead to ascertain the Prophet's disposition. He acknowledged that he suspected a peaceful resolution was highly unlikely, but felt inclined to delay any action until he could ascertain "precisely the situation of the town, and the ground adjacent to it" as he believed the Indians would only attack "by surprise, or on ground which was entirely favorable to their mode of fighting."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Quote, *Niles' Register*, March 7, 1812, quoted in Hickey, *War of 1812*, 44. See also William Henry Harrison (WHH) to Secretary of War, July 2, 1811, in *The Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison, 1800-1816*, Vol. I, ed. Logan Esarey (New York: Arno, 1975), 526-28. See Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 214-15 for more on the preparation for Harrison's expedition and the support his proposal received.

⁹⁰ "The Battle of Tippecanoe, Nov. 7, 1811," in *Messages and Letters* Vol. I, 608-13, quote, 610. See John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Owl Book, 1999), 331, states Prophetstown was comprised of Winnebagos, Shawnees, Kickapoos, and Miamis.

While on march to their place of encampment, Harrison emulated Wayne in its organization, with the infantry in two columns alongside the road and the riflemen and cavalry to the front, rear, and flanks. And like Wayne, Harrison took precautions every night placing sentinels around the camp perimeter and ensuring groups of men were ready to fight at any given moment. Therefore, Harrison and the troops conducted an extremely cautious advance towards the Prophet's town. The men broke up into groups and approached in single lines in which the men maintained ten feet of distance between themselves. Thusly situated, the men would have been able to quickly form into a battle line if the occasion arose. "The Indians appeared much surprised and terrified at our sudden appearance before their town; we perceived them running in every direction about the village, apparently in great confusion" apparently attempting to gain cover of the log wall that encompassed the town. A chief ventured out of the town, approached the men, and sought a word with Harrison, which was granted. The chief ensured Harrison that they had no intention of fighting, but rather wished to have a meeting the next morning to discuss peaceful terms, "but the treacherous villains merely made this promise to gain sufficient time to put their infernal scheme in execution."⁹¹

One soldier wrote a journal of the events stated that after establishing camp "we were soon after ordered to lay with our cartridge boxes on, and our guns at our sides—and in case of an attack (as was always the order, while on the march), each man [would step] five paces in front of his tent, which formed the line of battle." Multiple accounts from other soldiers present in the camp attest to the orders of readiness enforced by Harrison as well as his prudence in keeping the perimeter under constant guard. On the night of November 6, the men observed their usual routine of keeping their arms near and maintaining sentinels, but unfortunately

⁹¹ Quotes, "Journal," in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 700 and 701, respectively. See also, WHH to Secretary of War, Nov. 18, 1811, in *ibid.*, Vol. I, 618 and 622 for more on the marching arrangement and similarities with Gen. Wayne.

neglected to fortify the camp itself. One man on guard duty, a private named William Brigham, described the difficult conditions of under which they kept watch: “It was so very dark that no object could be discerned within three feet of me, and I could hear nothing except the rustling noise occasioned by the falling rain among the bushes.”⁹²

In the early morning of November 7, the sound of rainfall was interrupted “when only a single gun was fired by the guard, and instantly [the men] were aroused by the horried yells, of the savages close upon [their] lines.” Captain Barton’s regulars and Captain Geiger’s Kentuckians were the first to receive the enemy. Not having adequate warning of the attack they suffered some moments of confusion before forming their lines, but other men fared better, firing on the enemy while simultaneously organizing. Brigham noted that if the Indians had waited just ten more minutes, the whole of the camp would have been awake and ready, and he stated that Harrison himself had already been awake for some minutes when the attack did commence. As such the men, although not completely surprised, were indeed not completely prepared. Their camp fires still burned brightly affording the Indians the advantage of being able to see their targets. Even so, the Americans kept up a good measure of fire and despite their bravery and advantage of striking first, the Indians were forced into a retreat due to a want of ammunition. In the end, “the awful yell of the savages, seeming rather the shriek of despair, than the shouts of triumph—the tremendous roar of musquetry—the agonizing screams of the wounded and dying, added to the shouts of the victors, mingling in tumultuous uproar, formed a scene that can better be imagined than described.”⁹³

⁹² First quote, “Journal,” in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 701. Second quote, “Statement of William Brigham,” in *ibid.*, Vol. II, 703. See also, “Statement of Sergeant Orr” in the *ibid.*, 702; Owens, *Jefferson’s Hammer*, 217, regarding Harrison’s peculiar failure to fortify the camp.

⁹³ Quotes, “Journal,” in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 701 and 702, respectively. See, WHH to Secretary of War, Nov. 18, 1811, in *ibid.*, Vol. I, 618-30 ; for more regarding the campfires “Statement of William Brigham,” in *ibid.*, 703. The attack by the Indians was meant to be a stealthy infiltration of the camp in order to assassinate Harrison.

Harrison's performance during the attack ultimately endeared him even more to his men. One soldier observed that "his voice was frequently heard and easily distinguished, giving his orders in the same calm, cool and collected manner with which we had been used to receive them on a drill or parade." Luckily for the general, he had already earned a great deal of respect from his men, regulars and volunteer militia alike. He had rid the whole contingent of what many deemed to be "petty punishments" and thus earned the loyalty of his men; "[t]he benefit of which was fully realized in the conduct of the troops in the engagement, as throughout the campaign."⁹⁴

This respect and approval was mutual, too, as is evident in multiple letters and accounts regarding the Battle of Tippecanoe that Harrison wrote. In a letter to the secretary of war written shortly after the engagement, Harrison stated that despite the difficult conditions the men "took their places without noise and with less confusion than could have been expected from Veterans placed in a similar situation." He distinguished Major General Samuel Wells, Kentucky Militia 4th Division, and his Mounted Volunteers as "the most conspicuous for undaunted valour" and lauded the entirety of the non-regulars that served him. Later, Harrison did admit some of the deficiencies he noted during the battle. For instance, he wrote that "[a] few Indians might have passed undiscovered between the militia centinels, who, you know, are not very remarkable for their vigilance"⁹⁵

All in all, the estimated 500 Indians did indeed retreat. The Americans suffered forty-one dead and 147 wounded. By November 8, the Indian town had been abandoned. The American performance was lauded by one newspaper as "the hardest contest we have ever had with the

Not anticipating an all-out firefight, they soon ran out of ammunition. For more on this see, Owens, *Jefferson's Hammer*, 217-18.

⁹⁴ "Statement of William Brigham," in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 704.

⁹⁵ First two quotes, WHH to Secretary of War, Nov. 18, 1811, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. I, 623 and 626. Third quote, WHH to Dr. John Scott, Dec., 1811, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. I, 690. For more on Harrison's praise of the militia, see "Message to Assembly, Nov. 19, 1811," 635; WHH to Secretary of War, Nov. 26, 1811, 649-52, especially 652; WHH to Legislature, Dec. 6, 1811, 662-64 in which he questions why the Kentucky militia has not received formal recognition of their service; all in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. I.

Indians, & the most glorious victory” and the men, both “the regulars and militia vied with each other in acts of heroism and valor—from the commander in chief down to the lowest soldier, all have done their duty—all have covered themselves with laurels.” However, not everyone shared this opinion. Some newspapers initially reported that the battle was a failure for the American side. Also, Harrison had a hard time explaining why he failed to fortify his position while also receiving criticism for the fact that a number of officers died in the fighting: “[T]he death of so many prominent frontier citizens...led many to criticize Harrison’s tactics in the campaign.”⁹⁶

One of these “prominent frontier citizens” was Joseph Hamilton Daveiss. Born in Virginia, his family moved to Kentucky when he was five years old. Becoming a well-educated lawyer, he vied to serve Harrison in this campaign, and told the general as much in a letter: “I am very desirous to be with you in this service.” He explained his enthusiasm in light of the news that military action was finally going to happen in that quarter and how relieved and joyous he was when he learned that Harrison himself was to lead the expedition. Wishing to serve in any capacity, for as he wrote, “You see, sir [Harrison], I am a true militia-man...” Daveiss called for volunteers and ultimately led a company of Kentucky and Indiana dragoons. During the battle, Daveiss repeatedly requested permission to take some men and attack a group of well-hidden Indians so as to distract them while others found a more favorable position from which to attack the concealed. Harrison finally acceded; however, “when within 30 or 40 yards of his object he fell, shot between the right hip and ribs.” He died shortly after the battle ended.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ First two quotes, “Vincennes,” *Western Sun*, Nov. 16, 1811. That article also stated the number of Indians at 700. Other sources vary in their tally of the numbers of Indians present. See also, WHH to Secretary of War, Nov. 8, 1811, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. I, 614 for more on accolades for both regulars and militia. Third quote, Owens, *Jefferson’s Hammer*, 220. See also Owens, 219-23 for more on the negative reactions to Harrison’s conduct.

⁹⁷ First two quotes, Daveiss to WHH, Aug. 24, 1811, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. I, 558 and 559, respectively. Third quote, “Funke’s Narrative, The Tippecanoe Campaign,” in *ibid.*, Vol. I, 722. See also, [Daveiss to] Volunteers, Aug. 29, 1811, in *ibid.*, Vol. I, 561-62; “Journal,” in *ibid.*, Vol. II, 697-98; “Statement of William Brigham,” in *ibid.*, Vol. II, 704; and Asperheim, *Double Characters*, 59-62. Asperheim offers more background on Daveiss.

On the return march to Vincennes, from whence they came, the army remained cautious in case of another attack. They carried with them lessons learned at Tippecanoe. The men no longer maintained fires within the perimeter of the camp, but rather placed them a short distance from the guards. Some of the sentinels adopted a new technique, as well. They took to draping a blanket over a post that they had placed in the ground, and after donning it with a cap, they would stand a short distance off from these rudimentary decoys. "It was said that arrows had been found in some of the blankets put up in this manner, which is very probable, as they would approach within a few feet of a sentinel in the stillest of night, without being discovered."⁹⁸

The Battle of Tippecanoe lasted but a few hours; however, its ramifications resounded for some time. It predictably intensified the animosity between the US and the Northwest Indians. For some Indians, the forced abandonment of their town drove them closer to the British, which increased the suspicion and anger of the Americans towards their Anglo foe; not only did Great Britain rob American ships of their men, inhibit their maritime trade, but now they harbored their Indian enemies. Such conclusions further stoked the embers of discontent of the American public towards the British and the Northwest Indian tribes. Finally, in June, 1812, President Madison called for war.⁹⁹

The course of events leading to war was closely followed by citizens of Kentucky. Not only that, but this westerly state had contributed a substantial amount of manpower to Harrison during his campaign against the Indians at Prophetstown. Additionally, it was men from Kentucky who proved to be some of the strongest advocates for war in the Twelfth Congress, also dubbed the War Congress, namely Henry Clay and Richard M. Johnson. On the whole, Kentuckians had become an ardently patriotic people by the turn of the century, and by looking

⁹⁸ "Statement of William Brigham," in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 705.

⁹⁹ Hickey, *War of 1812*, 47; see also Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 41.

at how Kentuckians reacted to the aforementioned events that led to war, one can garner a deeper understanding of their mentality and how it influenced the further development of their militia, which would go on to participate in both the northern theater and southern theater of the War of 1812.¹⁰⁰

After the victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the organization and conduct of the Kentucky militia had deteriorated. The passage of new militia legislation in December, 1798, had increased the number of professions that were exempted from militia duty, and endorsed the hiring of substitutes. It did reiterate and clarify the various financial penalties a man may incur if he did not fulfill his requirements, but the new law taken as a whole indicated “a growing tendency to view militia duty as a type of taxation, not as a universal form of compulsory service.” Furthermore, even though the young male population of Kentucky was “[p]hysically toughened by farm labor” and a great number “were skilled marksmen as well,” the majority of the population was rural. Being asked to muster, even if just once or twice a year, seemed a great inconvenience to those who had to travel quite a ways in order to do so. In some circles, militia duty was a thing of jokes. One newspaper published the following:

A parish-officer perambulating his districts to take a list of such of the inhabitants as were liable to be drawn for recruiting the militia, saw an old *comb maker* at work, and thus addressed him: ‘Pray honest friend, how old are you? “Not old enough (answered he) to be chosen a militia-man; I am a mere infant: —Don’t you observe that I am *cutting my teeth*?’

So, from the end of the 1790s engagements and leading up to the Battle of Tippecanoe, the militia system was generally in a state of neglect regarding their readiness to serve in an actual wartime engagement.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 179. See also, Asperheim, *Double Characters*.

¹⁰¹ First two quotes, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 37 and 38, respectively. Not very funny newspaper joke, “A Poor Pun,” *The Globe*, Oct. 17, 1810. See also *Sword*, 39.

The older generations in Kentucky, particularly those who had fought in the Revolution and/or the Indian Wars of the 1790s, expressed worry regarding the readiness of their youth for battle, and wondered if they would stand up to scrutiny as their “fathers” had. Laver quoted a poem written in 1811:

“New Yankee Doodle”:

I guess if father was not dead
He’d think us very blandly
And ask where all the fire had fled
Of yankee doodle dandy.

Once the possibility of war became more imminent, Governor Scott did take measures to help ensure the militia would be ready. Additionally, anticipating the declaration of war, General Wilkinson “established a recruiting office in Lexington on May 2, 1812.”¹⁰²

Aside from these issues surrounding the militia, the general population of Kentucky was clamoring for war. For most, “the war to come was in fact a Kentucky conflict.” Though not in close proximity to the coast, the Kentucky economy relied on the trade conducted down the Mississippi from where it would journey farther afield and their goods could then end up confiscated by a foreign power. “Kentuckians everywhere were ready to go to war with Britain, with the Indians of the Northwest, with Spain, and even with France if it interfered with their trade and aspirations in the West.” Throughout the state, residents went to “[t]averns, public squares, and other public meeting places” where they “engaged in ‘war talk.’ These Kentuckians had an hereditary hatred of the western Indians, and the ‘War Hawks’ had played upon this hatred and fear to good advantage.” Jefferson himself stated in a letter that he felt “the

¹⁰² Harry S. Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers*, 138. Second quote, *Military History of Kentucky*, 79.

acquisition of Canada this year, as far as the neighborhood of Quebec, will be a mere matter of marching.”¹⁰³

Therefore, when Kentuckians got the news that war had been officially declared, they celebrated. In Lexington, “there was a firing of cannon and musquetry commenced, and kept up until late in the evening.” Such revelry occurred across the state. They viewed this war as an opportunity to cement the ideals fought for in the Revolution and an opportunity to assert their patriotism. “In the moment of Joy, when the citizens saw their country, a SECOND time declared independent—it is reported that at Nicholaville, Winchester, and Richmond, Mr. Pope our Senator who opposed the War was burned in *effigy*.” It is no wonder that after the celebrations men from every part of the state answered the subsequent call for service. It had not been long since Harrison made his call for men to join him on his expedition to Prophetstown, and Kentuckians eagerly answered.¹⁰⁴

Although their contributions to that battle have been already been discussed, a journal of a northerner offers insight into the nature of the Kentucky militiamen themselves. He wrote that upon arriving in Vincennes “a rabble soon gathered about the boats and assisted in hauling [the men] ashore—their whooping and yells and their appearance caused us to doubt whether we had not actually landed among the savages themselves.” These men were members of the Kentucky and Indiana militias. The journal then described their manner of dress as consisting of “a short frock of deer-skin, a belt around their bodies, with a tomahawk and scalping knife attached to it, and [they] were nearly as destitute of discipline as the savages themselves.” He concluded that

¹⁰³ First two quotes, Thomas D. Clark, “Kentucky in the Northwest Campaign,” in *After Tippecanoe*, ed. Philip P. Mason, 79 and 81 respectively. Third quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 81; fourth quote, Jefferson to William Duane, Aug. 4, 1812, from “Founders Online.”

¹⁰⁴ Quotes, “News of the Declaration of War,” *Kentucky Gazette*, June 30, 1812. See also *Kentucky Gazette*, July 7, 1812 for other instances in which Pope was burned in effigy. It appeared to be a popular way to celebrate the 4th of July that year.

they “were decent soldiers, yet the large knife and hatchet which constituted a part of their equipment, with their dress, gave them rather a savage appearance. The hatchet, however, was found to be a very useful article on the march—they had no tents but with their hatchets would in a short time form themselves a shelter from the weather, on encamping at night.” This manner of dress offered a sense of homogeneity to the Kentucky militiamen. Regulars wore formal uniforms, but Kentuckians fought in their own clothes, which were oftentimes homemade.¹⁰⁵

Over the years, the members of Kentucky’s militia consisted of not only average members of the Kentucky public, but also statesmen and congressmen, including Richard M. Johnson and Samuel Hopkins, both of whom led Kentucky volunteers. This state did in fact contain “more than one-third of the Americans in [the western region],” and eventually, after war was formally declared and the federal government called for volunteers, “more than the quota of this State rallied round their country’s standard, ready to assist in a vigorous prosecution of the war, in order to hasten a speedy and honorable peace.” The *Kentucky Gazette* reported in October, just a few months after the nation declared war, that “Volunteers are marching to the frontiers from all parts of the state... And most of them go without any regular commission, not expecting and not caring whether they receive any remuneration from the government or not. This is practical patriotism.” The article also claimed that upwards of 15,000 citizens were “under arms.” It must be noted, though, that men did eventually desire wages and the figure of 15,000 was an exaggeration.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Quotes, “Journal,” in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 697. See also, *Military History*, 80.

¹⁰⁶ First quote, Elias Darnell, *A journal containing an accurate and interesting account of the hardships, suffering, battles, defeats, and captivity of those heroic Kentucky volunteers and regulars, commanded by General Winchester, in the years 1812-13: also two narratives by men that were wounded in the battles on the River Raisin and taken captive by the Indians* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1854), 6. For a list of all Kentucky congressmen that fought, see *Kentucky Gazette*, Sep. 29, 1812.

CHAPTER V

RETURN TO THE NORTHWEST, THEN SOUTH FOR THE WINTER

Even before the formal declaration of war, Kentuckians anticipated that there would be a need for soldiers so in May, 1812, Governor Charles Scott had made a call for men. By the time Congress declared war, ten regiments, totaling about 5,500 men, were already being formed by volunteers. Within the weeks following the declaration of war, Kentucky men began to volunteer for service in the Northwest. As early as June 30, the *Kentucky Gazette* contained multiple articles regarding the need for volunteers and how one should conduct himself if wishing to serve. In early August, Governor Harrison had arrived in Lexington seeking men to join him “to the Indiana territory, and under [his] command a campaign against Indians on Lake Michigan and Huron, and ultimately to co-operate with Gen. Hull” in the Michigan Territory. This same article reflected the favor that Harrison still had in the state: “We are convinced that nothing would so well please the volunteers of this state as to be placed under the command of Harrison.” Another esteemed individual, Kentuckian Henry Clay, gave a rallying speech to troops gathered at Georgetown in early August. He lauded their desire to serve and stated “Kentucky was fam’d for her bravery” and “they had the double character of Americans and Kentuckians to support.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ *Kentucky Gazette*, Aug. 11, 1812, first, second quotes; third and fourth quotes, “Volunteers,” *Kentucky Gazette*, Aug. 18, 1812. See *Kentucky Gazette*, May 12, 1812, for Scott’s call for volunteers and another early call. *Kentucky Gazette*, June 30, 1812, for later articles calling for volunteers; William Atherton, *Narrative and Suffering of the North-Western Army, Under General Winchester: massacre of the prisoners, sixteen months imprisonment of the writer and others with the Indians and British* (Frankfort: A.G. Hodges, 1842), 5, stating Kentuckians left Aug. 12th, 1812, to gather at Georgetown under the commands of Colonels Winfield Scott, John Allen, and William Lewis. See Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1868), 320-321 for more on Kentucky filling its quota prior to the declaration of war. *Kentucky Gazette*, Feb. 18, 1812 gives a brief report on debates in Congress over militia authority, how to call for men to serve, appoint officers, and what to expect/ask of them.

In early September, 1812, after many had already answered Harrison's call for men, Scott authorized Harrison to call on an additional 500 Mounted Volunteers in addition to the those men he already had. He pointed out that their service would not be under the auspices of the War Department; therefore they would have to "trust the justice of the Government for their compensation and to the dispositions which are practicable to be made for their subsistence." The fact that men did respond to this call even though their financial compensation was not guaranteed added further support to the patriotism and dedication of Kentuckians. Those who saw the gathering of these militiamen and Mounted Volunteers described them as appearing to be the "true representatives of those old warriors, who first conquered and defended, and then settled Kentucky. They will support the reputation which Kentucky has acquired for valour and patriotism."¹⁰⁸

Kentuckians continued to travel to recruiting cities, such as Louisville, in order to offer their services. By the end of September, though, more men from this state had marched off to serve than could be reasonably handled. One paper reported that, "a greater number of Kentucky volunteers had arrived at Vincennes than the service required!!! In consequence of which, the governor had discharged a number of them at Louisville. More than 1200 are said to be returning home, *mortified*, because it is not put in their power to fight their country's battles." Meanwhile, there were still men traveling to Kentucky cities who had not heard the news that the ranks were full. One "old Kentucky warrior" received the news that no more men were needed while he was on his way to Louisville to volunteer. His quipped the following reply: "Well,

¹⁰⁸ First quote, "General Orders," *Kentucky Gazette*, Sep. 1, 1812; see Atherton, *Narrative*, 6, and Darnell, *A Journal*, 19, regarding the arrival of the 500 men at Fort Wayne on September 18th. Darnell, 19, also tells how one Kentuckian accidentally shot another one in the head. Second quote, "Kentucky Volunteers," *Kentucky Gazette*, Sep. 8, 1812. See also, "The Brave, Independent and Patriotic Freemen of Kentucky," *Kentucky Gazette*, Aug. 25, 1812, for a call made by Congressman Richard M. Johnson for mounted men in which he acknowledges the lack of guaranteed pay.

Kentucky has often glutted the markets with flour, hemp, pork and tobacco—and now *quite in character*, she has done it with VOLUNTEERS!!”¹⁰⁹

It is all well and good that a state would commend its own citizens, but according to a letter from one Kentucky volunteer who was encamped near Dayton, people in the Northwest region had a positive opinion of these men as well. He wrote that “[t]he high respect entertained for the Kentuckians in these parts, and the great praise bestowed on them by people of every description, on their march from Cincinnati, has given them an idea of their importance” and he reiterated the words of Clay when he wrote, “they have, indeed...a double weight of character to support; they will surely maintain the high reputation of Kentuckians and American citizens.” In light of such emotions, it is no surprise that when a man decided he did not want to serve and preferred to return home, he was ridiculed or hazed in some manner prior to leaving. One soldier’s journal recalls such a situation. He wrote that Harrison, in a speech he made en route to Fort Wayne, had explained to the men some of the rules and expectations of their service and he “stated the absolute necessity of such regulations and restrictions in an army, and if there were any who could not feel willing to submit to those articles and go on with him, they might then return home.” One Kentuckian decided he was incapable of doing so and wished to leave. Consequently, two men “got him upon a rail and carried him to the river; a crowd followed after; they ducked him several times in the water, and washed away all his patriotism.”¹¹⁰

Originally, the different companies were marching to the relief of General William Hull in Detroit, and later to assist at Fort Wayne, which came under siege by Indians. Journals detailing the trip from Kentucky to these far reaches of the Northwest Territory commented on

¹⁰⁹ First quote, “Kentucky Volunteers,” *Kentucky Gazette*, Sep. 29, 1812; following quotes, “A Glut in the Market,” *Kentucky Gazette*, Sep. 29, 1812. See also, Lossing, *Field Book*, 323.

¹¹⁰ First quote, “From General Payne’s Army,” *Kentucky Gazette*, Sep. 8, 1812. Remaining quotes, Darnell, *A Journal*, 11; see Darnell, 7, for another example of men being “drummed out of camp” for choosing to leave.

the difficulties they encountered. One issue was the weather. Initially it rained a substantial amount creating difficult, muddy terrain over which the men had to travel and upon which they had establish encampments. “These hardships tended a little to quench the excessive patriotic flame that had blazed so conspicuously at the different musters and barbecues” remarked one Kentuckian in his journal. At this time, rumors spread of the fall of Detroit. Disbelief followed by disappointment spread among the soldiers that had been traveling to reinforce that city: “This we could not believe until confirmed by handbills and good authority; when thus confirmed, it appeared to make serious impressions on the minds of officers and privates. Those high expectations of participating with General Hull in the laurels to be acquired by the conquest of Malden and Upper Canada, were entirely abandoned.” Various reports of Hull’s surrender of Detroit on August 16, 1812, criticized him for lacking courage, apparently not even attempting to fight the British, and/or capitulating without even suffering a significant siege. Although somewhat vindicated in the end, Hull’s actions still created the indignation and disapproval of many, especially in Kentucky.¹¹¹

With Hull’s surrender, General James Winchester inherited the command of the Northwest Army. Kentuckians had harbored a great fondness for Harrison, as previously discussed, and had no desire to serve under Winchester. Therefore, in true pioneering fashion, Governor Scott of Kentucky commissioned Harrison as a brevet major general of the Kentucky state militia (which would include both drafted men and volunteers) putting him at a higher rank than Winchester. Due to discrepancies of legality and the fact it was a “brevet” rank, Harrison

¹¹¹ Quotes, Darnell, *A Journal* 7 and 8, respectively. See *Western Sun*, September 1, 1812, for initial report of Hull in Detroit being in a precarious situation; and Sep. 15, 1812 for another example of tentative news on fall of Detroit. See *The Farmers Watch-Tower*, Oct. 28, 1812; Darnell, 8; Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 183 for more on anger towards Hull. See W. Kaye Lamb, “Sir Isaac Brock: The Hero of Queenstown Heights,” in *After Tippecanoe*, ed. Philip P. Mason, (Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1963), 24; Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 81-82 and Lamb, 24; Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 82-83; and *Western Sun*, Sep. 1, 1812, for sources that purport Hull’s actions can be somewhat justified. See also, G. Glen Clift, “War of 1812 Diary of William B. Northcutt,” in *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (April, 1958), 168.

“deferred to Winchester as the commanding officer.” This news was not welcome among the ranks of Kentuckians, which was evident in the fact that it almost caused a mutiny in one camp.¹¹²

Soon after Harrison stepped down, though, President Madison formally appointed him commander of the Northwest forces, perhaps in deference to the differing sentiments the Kentucky men harbored for the two officers. In any event, the appointment was celebrated in the Bluegrass State: “The president of the United States has since conferred on Governor Harrison the command of the *whole* North-Western Army, where general Winchester may remain or not, at his option... The confidence reposed in Harrison by the people of Kentucky and Ohio, are said to have influenced the president in adopting this measure.” The whole of this saga was set against the backdrop of the surrender of Detroit and the re-focusing of the army’s goals in light of that city’s fate. One paper commented, in retrospect, that after Detroit fell and Harrison had “legitimate” command of the army, it was “[o]n these brave men it may be truly said, the revolutionary mantle has fallen. The sacred fire of seventy-six glows in their breasts, and events will show that they are worthy.”¹¹³

Despite Hull’s surrender, there was still cause for Kentuckians to be in the Northwest, namely to reinforce threatened areas, such as Fort Wayne which was under siege in early September. The main force of Kentuckians was still some distance from Ft. Wayne when instructed to march there. The rains had now given way to high temperatures and an unforgiving sun, which had increased the need for water; however, with low supplies, the men often had to rely on finding local sources of water to quench their thirst. A journal entry dated September 9th,

¹¹² First quote, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 58; mutiny, Darnell, *A Journal*, 20; see Lossing, *Field Book*, 322 and 326.

¹¹³ First quote, “Lexington, September 29,” *Kentucky Gazette*, Sep. 29, 1812; third quote, *Farmers Watch-Tower*, Oct. 28, 1812. For more on the happy troops after Harrison’s formal appointment, see Darnell, *A Journal*, 25; for more on the appointment itself, see *Western Sun*, October 6, 1812. See also, Clift, “Diary,” 171.

1812, states that a contingent of men was passing through a field with no water at hand. “[The] water in the wagon-ruts was the only drink we could get to cool our scorching thirst, and but very little of that.” Under these trying circumstances, the men also suffered from apprehension of Indian attacks. A number of alarms that ultimately amounted to nothing led many men to become quite nervous and vexed. “This alarm [near a swamp on the way to Fort Wayne] and the one the night preceding [while encamped] seemed to shake the boasted valor of some of our bravest heroes.” Further to the alarm in camp mentioned here, another journal details the restless night the men had. “It was a dark rainy night, just such a time as the Indians would choose to make an attack. We anticipated danger, and made arrangements to meet it.” There were false alarms throughout the night, sentinels firing their weapons as they thought they detected Indians lurking about. “As this was the first campaign with most of us, and also the first alarm worthy of notice, it is not easy to imagine the degree of excitement produced throughout the camp.”¹¹⁴

The army eventually arrived at Fort Wayne to find that the besieging Indians had now left. They proceeded, under orders, to two different Indian towns nearby and destroyed them. Upon returning to Fort Wayne, they found a company of Kentucky Mounted Volunteers commanded by Colonel James Simrall. From here, the men set off for Fort Defiance, which was just across the border in Ohio, as they had received word the British were in the area. Harrison had in the meantime divided the army into two columns, one he led personally and the other Winchester commanded. Both columns were meant to journey towards Detroit with the intention of re-taking the city. Winchester’s column consisted of “three Ridgements of Ky. Volenteers, Capt. Wm. Garrard’s troop of Horse and some Regulars under Col. Wells.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ First two quotes, Darnell, *A Journal*, 12 and 16-17, respectively; third, Atherton, *Narrative*, 5-6; see also, Clift, “Diary,” 169-170 for more on false alarms.

¹¹⁵ First quote, Clift, “Diary,” 172. For more on siege of Ft. Wayne, see “Articles from the Reporter,” *Kentucky Gazette*, September 29, 1812; this article has a general summary of the army’s arrival at Ft. Wayne, the excursion

The men under Winchester's command, though, particularly the Kentuckians, were extremely displeased with their commander. Before discussing their movement from Fort Wayne, it is crucial to briefly discuss their displeasure. The reactions of Kentucky troops to the news of Winchester taking command after Hull's surrender, Harrison's illegitimate appointment, his subsequent deferment to Winchester, and then his formal appointment by Madison most certainly demonstrate where their loyalties and preferences were. However, even though Harrison ultimately maintained overall authority of the Northwest armies, a number of the Kentuckians found themselves placed in Winchester's columns after their beloved general split the army. Once Harrison journeyed on with his column, these men set about what they viewed as the loathsome task of following Winchester's orders.

They made no secret of their sentiments towards their general; they actively played pranks on him when encamped. In one instance, they skinned a porcupine that someone had killed and "stretched the Skin over a pole that [Winchester] used for a particular purpose in the night..." When the general made use of said pole "it like to have ruined him." Another example of their antics involved this very apparatus. On a different occasion, presumably after the porcupine incident, the men sawed the pole almost in two so that when he used it "let his Generalship, Uniform and all fall Backwards in no very decent place, for I [William B. Northcutt] seen his Rigementals hanging high upon a pole the next day taking the fresh air." Overall, the Kentuckians, who proved fairly unruly in the best of times, were spurred to further

executed by the two companies, and the fate of the Captain Rhea, who commanded Ft. Wayne. See also, Atherton, *Narrative*, 6-10, Clift, 170-71; Lossing, *Field Book*, 325-26.

misbehavior by the fact that they detested serving under Winchester, who was indeed an older man, even needing assistance to mount and dismount his horse just like St. Clair.¹¹⁶

Before Winchester's column had received any orders to journey towards Detroit, they fulfilled the task of re-building Fort Defiance, which was later dubbed Fort Winchester. Their work began in the late Fall, and it was at this camp where the men greeted the onset of frequent rains that signaled the coming of winter. Finding the ground at Fort Defiance/Fort Winchester undesirable due to the showers, the men moved some distance off to create a new camp; Winchester deemed this second location undesirable as well and moved the men again. This last place became known as Camp No. 3 and it was where the men remained for most of November and December. Having remained in these various camps, which were really not far from each other, the men grew complacent and some "would hunt game and fruit far and near—often strolling miles from the camp without guns." On one occasion, a sentinel fired at what he suspected was an Indian and fled back to camp to spread the word. A group was formed to chase down the Indian, "and behold! they found Michael Paul cutting a bee-tree."¹¹⁷

Even with taking liberties to venture outside the camp, the men suffered from a scarcity of supplies and illness. Having been on half rations for the majority of the time, fights started to break out among the men over food. The supplies that were meant to arrive had been held up by both weather and fear of the British who had previously been in the area. Many men had also fallen ill. One man wrote in his journal "About the first of November the men became very sickly—the typhus fever raged with violence—three or four would sometimes die in a day. It is

¹¹⁶ Quotes, Clift, "Diary," 176. Northcutt was a Kentucky Volunteer in Captain Garrard's Light Dragoons. See also, Clift, 177; Clark, "Northwest Campaign," 88. For a reference to St. Clair's inability to mount his horse without assistance, see Gaff, *Bayonets*, 292.

¹¹⁷ First quote, Atherton, *Narrative*, 18; second quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 35. See Darnell, 31-32 for more on the changing of encampment grounds. For more on Fort Winchester, see Darnell, 31 and Clift, "Diary," 172. See Lossing, *Field Book*, 330-31, for Harrison's visit to Ft. Defiance in which he offered a rallying speech and dispensed orders for the new fort to be built.

said upwards of three hundred was on the sick list at one time.” Another man lamented that “the fever is very prevalent in camp; nearly every day there is one or more buried.”¹¹⁸

As November became December, the rains increased and the men struggled to enhance their shelters as there was no possibility of marching to new grounds under such circumstances. Their situation deteriorated. “We now saw nothing but hunger, and cold, and nakedness, staring us in the face.” The suffering continued through December provoking one Kentuckian to question their very presence there: “And would it not have been better if this army had been disbanded? Our sufferings at this place have been greater than if we had been in a severe battle. More than one hundred lives have been lost, owing to our bad accommodations!” Under such circumstances, the men endured the beginning of winter.¹¹⁹

A prominent source of discomfort in addition to low food stocks was the inadequacy of the men’s clothing. Stories of men leaving Kentucky with the clothes on their back and not much more were common, and considering most left in late summer and felt the country’s objectives might be accomplished in just a couple months, they did not carry with them heavy winter clothes. By the time they reached Fort Defiance, their clothes were severely worn out. “What clothes we took with us when we left our homes had worn very thin. Many left home with their linen hunting-shirts, and some of these were literally torn to rags by the brush.” The men eventually got news that Harrison had appealed to the women of Kentucky to supply clothes for the men, and they eagerly awaited their arrival.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ First quote, Atherton, *Narrative*, 18; second quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 32; Fights over food supplies and the delay in the arrival of more, see Clift, “Diary,” 172, 174-175 and Darnell, 38. Supplies low, see, Atherton, 13-14; Darnell, 26, 38-40; and Lossing, *Field Book*, 328.

¹¹⁹ First quote, Atherton, *Narrative*, 19; second quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 40; in Darnell’s journal, there is a month’s worth of entries describing the lack of supplies, discomfort, and severity of their situation, see pgs. 37-43.

¹²⁰ First quote, Atherton, *Narrative*, 14-15. Scarcity of clothing, see Clift, “Diary,” 167; Atherton, 14-15 and 25-26; Darnell, *A Journal*, 41-42. See, Clark, “Northwest Campaign,” 84 concerning the timing of marching to the

At the end of December, Harrison ordered General James Winchester to “occupy the [Maumee] rapids as soon as possible for the purpose of securing a quantity of corn which had been raised by the inhabitants.” In order to move provisions along with his manpower, Winchester ordered the construction of sleds “each to be pulled by a packhorse, which has been without food for two weeks, except brush, and will not be better fed while in our service.” These horses, predictably, did not endure for long and neither did the sleds leaving the men to pull the sleds in teams or carry the plunder and supplies. Furthermore, the sleds were unsuited for transporting the sick men; thus, those that were too ill to make the journey were simply left behind at Camp No. 3, which one Kentuckian later dubbed “Fort Starvation.”¹²¹

Averaging about ten miles a day in deep snow with few provisions, and those they had getting damaged by the elements, the army plodded along. Along the way, Winchester received orders from Harrison to divert his course from the Rapids back to Fort Jennings. Harrison called for the change in destination due to fears of Tecumseh and his men being able to attack Winchester and his troops if they continued. Winchester chose to ignore these orders and maintain their march. At this juncture, multiple men “were bare of clothes, and almost barefooted.” About this time, the clothing promised to the men began to arrive. Even though the troops had been in great need of new clothing for some time, they were now in a desperate situation as many men were reported to be lacking shoes at this point. By January 10, 1813, they had arrived at the Rapids.¹²²

Northwest and the idea that their work would be done in a short period of time. See, Lossing, *Field Book*, 329 for more on Harrison’s request for clothing from Kentucky women.

¹²¹ First quote, Atherton, *Narrative*, 11; Maumee Rapids is near present-day Toledo, Ohio. Second quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 41; third quote, Darnell, 42. See also, Darnell, 42-43; Atherton, 26

¹²² First quote, Atherton, *Narrative*, 25. See also, Atherton, 25-30; *Military History*, 82; Lossing, *Field Book*, 348-49.

Not long after their arrival in the area, French residents of nearby and aptly named Frenchtown ventured into their camp pleading for help and protection from a combined force of British and Indians. Their town was on the north side of the River Raisin, which ran in an easterly direction, had low banks, and was surrounded by even land. One of these supplicants stated that there were two British companies newly arrived and that the Indians “were collecting, and intended to burn Frenchtown in a few days.” With the increasing number of them requesting help, the officers of the army met and decided by a majority to advance on the location and take advantage of the opportunity to attack their foe. So, on January 17th Colonels William Lewis and John Allen, commanding about 650 men the majority of whom were Kentucky volunteers, embarked on an advance to Frenchtown. At this time, Winchester sent word to Harrison of his decisions and intentions to defend Frenchtown in the hopes of preventing the town’s supplies from going to the enemy.¹²³

On January 18, 1813, the men crossed the frozen River Raisin with difficulty as it was very slippery and initiated a general charge. The British and some Indians, who were indeed there, fired cannons into the charging American forces, but caused no injuries and so the charge continued. Exchanging fire, attacking from both sides and the officers doing a sufficient job of commanding the troops, the enemy was eventually sent into retreat. “[T]hey gave way, and we soon had possession of the village without the loss of a man!” Lewis and Allen led a pursuit of the retreating forces, which took them into the surrounding woods. Both sides maintained fire until night approached. Leaving their dead where they fell, the Americans retrieved their wounded and returned to Frenchtown. Those that died did so as a result of the pursuing the

¹²³ First quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 46; See Darnell, 44-46, 50; see also, Atherton, *Narrative*, 32-33 and *Military History*, 82. The number of troops varies from source to source. For example, *Military History* stated Lewis had 990 men. Atherton wrote that Lewis had 550 men and Allen had 110. Stone, *Brittle Sword* asserted that 800 Kentuckians served under Winchester, but did not mention specific numbers of this particular action. The number used here are from Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 84.

enemy through the woods, a tactic that often proved Kentuckians' Achilles' heel. One private remarked: "It would have been better for us if we had been contented with the possession of the village, without pursuing them to the woods."¹²⁴

After this engagement, Lewis ensured that his men had established a camp behind a puncheon fence and that the wounded were laid up comfortably. He then lauded the troops, both officers and men. "There was not a solitary instance of a retreat on our part. Both officers and soldiers supported the double character of Americans and Kentuckyans." He stated these words in a speech to the troops and in a letter to Winchester. Taking the letter as a whole, it is evident that the men were formed and well-organized prior to engaging the enemy, and each set of troops had capable officers in charge of them. He stated the losses at twelve killed and 55 wounded, one of whom died later. Winchester wrote to Harrison a couple days following the action and happily reported the success. He then mentioned that the area of encampment was "not very favorable for defence...but it is my only alternative unless I abandon the protection of the village. No pains or reasonable expense shall be spared to acquire the necessary information concerning the enemy." In another correspondence, Winchester told Harrison that "the troops, to a man behaved in this action in a manner that would do credit to the oldest veterans."¹²⁵

In the aftermath of this success, Harrison wrote to the secretary of war concerning the events at Frenchtown, but revealed his fears concerning their situation there. "I fear nothing but that the enemy may overpower Genl. Winchester before I can send him a sufficient

¹²⁴ Quotes , Darnell, *A Journal*, 48 and 49, respectively. See also, Darnell, 47; Atherton, *Narrative*, 26; and Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 84.

¹²⁵ First quote, Lewis to Winchester, Jan. 20, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 321. Second quote, Winchester to WHH, Jan. 21, 1813, in *ibid.*, 325. Third quote, Winchester to WHH, Jan. 19, 1813, in *ibid.*, 316. See also Payne to Shelby, Jan. 20, 1813, in *ibid.*, 318, and Atherton, *Narrative*, 37-38. See Lossing, *Field Book*, 353 regarding the encampment. Lossing described puncheons as "made of sapling logs split in two, driven in the ground, and sometimes sharpened at the top," 353. These puncheons had been placed by the residents of Frenchtown to protect a large garden and formed a fence behind which the camp was made.

reinforcement. I have however the highest confidence in the General and the Troops.” A few days after that letter, he did assert that the initial march upon that area was “not only without any authority from me, but in opposition to my views.” Harrison excused Winchester’s disobedience by placing the blame on his officers, whom he asserted had forcefully compelled Winchester to march upon Frenchtown. In any event, portion of the army that had recaptured Frenchtown, which was indeed predominantly comprised of Kentuckians, remained in the area while Winchester marched there with the rest of the column. These reinforcements arrived on January 20th.¹²⁶

After suffering so greatly in their previous encampments and on the grueling march to the Rapids, the men thoroughly enjoyed the respite they found at Frenchtown. A number of the officers, including Winchester, partook of the apples and cider at hand “having been deprived of every kind of spirits nearly two months.” In the meantime, officers had designated land for an encampment but neglected to fortify it. Winchester took no pains whatsoever to send out scouts to reconnoiter the area, distribute ammunition he had received, or even place himself within close proximity to his men; he instead established his quarters at a home nearly a mile from the main army. Additionally, he placed the regular troops under his command in an open, exposed field. As night descended, Winchester received multiple warnings that the enemy had regrouped and were making their way towards Frenchtown. The general paid no heed to a single one.¹²⁷

The next day, “just as the *reveille* was beaten, between four and five o’clock in the morning, and the drummer-boy was playing the *Three Camps*, the sharp crack of the sentinels’

¹²⁶ First quote, WHH to Secretary of War, Jan. 20, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 317; second quote, Harrison to Meigs, Jan. 24, 1813, in *ibid.*, 330. See Darnell, *A Journal*, 50.

¹²⁷ Quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 50. See Darnell, 50-51; Lossing, *Field Book*, 353-54; Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 184; McClanahan to WHH, Jan. 26, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II 338-341.

muskets firing an alarm was heard by the still dull ears” of the waking men. The British forces began their assault by utilizing their artillery, without much effect. Next, they charged on the Kentuckians who were behind the picketed fence, but again had no success. The regulars who had been encamped on the right side suffered dearly. Being so exposed they retreated with a number of Indians in close pursuit. Some of these men sought the protection of the picket line, but were cut down. Those who occupied that area left it and attempted to assist the retreating men, but with the on-rush of the Indians they were all “thrown into the greatest confusion, and fled pell-mell across the river [Raisin], carrying with them a detachment of one hundred men which Lewis had sent out for their support.” In light of this, these panicking troops then looked for shelter in the woods, but again the Indians overpowered them leaving scores dead. “Death and mutilation met the fugitives on every side, whether in flight or in submission, and all about that little village the snow was crimsoned with human blood.”¹²⁸

During the retreat of the right wing, the British once again charged the puncheon fence, but yet again had to retreat. The Americans maintained a controlled fire from gaps in the fence so as to save ammunition, which was running low. “After a long and bloody contest, the enemy finding they could not, either by stratagem or force, drive us from our fortification, retired to the woods, leaving their dead on the ground, except a party that kept two pieces of cannon in play on our right.” Indians off to their left proved a minor threat as well, but being so secure behind their barricade, the men were actually able to pass out bread. They “sat composedly eating and watching the enemy at the same time.” At this point, they noticed a figure bearing a white flag towards their line. Initially, they took it to be the enemy intending to seek a ceasefire so as to collect their dead, but that was not the case. One private described what followed: “how were

¹²⁸ Quotes, Lossing, *Field Book*, 354-55; Majors Madison and Graves remained in the picketed area and became the ranking officers.

we surprised and mortified when we heard that Gen. Winchester, with Col. Lewis had been taken prisoners by the Indians in attempting to rally the right wing, and that Gen. Winchester had surrendered us prisoners of war to Col. Proctor!”¹²⁹

Major George Madison, who had taken command as the highest-ranking officer remaining, reluctantly surrendered, but only upon the conditions that their property be respected, the dead buried, the prisoners kept safe from the Indians, and the wounded given care and protection. Giving his word that these terms would be respected, Colonel Procter, British commanding officer of the attacking joint forces, then took the healthy soldiers prisoners. Upon viewing the picketed area, the British became confused by the lack of dead bodies, and after inquiring to the amount of casualties they suffered, which was less than ten, they became incredulous. They accused the Americans of concealing their dead because they could not fathom how they suffered so few deaths while the remainder of the army was virtually annihilated.¹³⁰

Overall, the demise of Winchester’s army could not be blamed on the Kentucky volunteers. Rather, these men fought bravely and outlasted the regular troops. According to some reports, the British had actually spiked their own cannons in anticipation of a retreat due to the strength of the picketed line, but through a fluke Winchester surrendered. Despite the veracity of that claim, the failure boiled down to the ineptitude of the commanding officer in failing to properly fortify the camp, pay heed to warnings, and dispatch scouts to ascertain the enemy’s movement. As for the Kenuckians, news of the loss was deeply disheartening.

¹²⁹ Quotes taken from Darnell, *A Journal*, 53-54; see also, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 84-85.

¹³⁰ Darnell, *A Journal*, 52-56; Lossing, *Field Book*, 355-57; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 44-45. Procter’s name often appears as “Proctor” as well; hence the discrepancy between the text and some of the quotes.

Although reassured by Harrison that the state had “lost none of her [*sic*] reputation for valor, for which she is famed,” they were soon to feel greater pangs of loss and grief.¹³¹

While the prisoners marched to Fort Malden under British authority, Drs. John Todd and Gustave M. Bowers accompanied by a few attendants remained with those too wounded to travel to Malden. During the surrender, Procter had promised that he would send sleighs the following morning to collect the wounded and take them to Malden. Additionally, as agreed upon during the surrender, Procter told the doctors and their attendants that “[the British] would leave a sufficient guard, so that they should not be interrupted by the Indians.” Once the bulk of the British and their prisoners left, some Indians began to harass the wounded Americans. Those left to care for them reported the behavior to the few British guards left, who quelled the situation. Still, the Indian threat persisted throughout the night, and was not improved by the departure of the British guards after nightfall. The men feared for their lives and well-being until, finally, the sun rose granting them much relief. They began preparing for the arrival of the promised sleighs, “but, alas! instead of the sleighs, about an hour by sun a great number of savages, painted with various colors, came yelling in the most hideous manner!”¹³²

The Indians plundered the village first then turned their attention to the wounded, stripping the ailing men of their blankets, clothing, and any other items they found. Then the violence escalated. The written words of Darnell, a volunteer, reflect the horrors the American troops endured:

¹³¹ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 85; *Western Sun*, Feb. 13, 1813, but most of the information in this article is incorrect; *Western Sun*, Feb. 13, 1813 “Head Quarters;” Winchester to Sec of War, Jan. 23, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 327-29. See *The Telegraph*, June 15, 1813, for a list of some of the more prominent men who were taken prisoner.

¹³² First quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 56; second quote, Darnell, 59. See also, Lossing, *Field Book*, 358; Medard Labbadi to Harrison, Feb. 11, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 360-62, although this account has a few mistakes, such as stating that the wounded were left without any physicians or able-bodied men, it serves as an interesting eye-witness report; WHH to Secretary of War, Feb. 11, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 356-360. See also, Atherton, *Narrative*, 57-61 for his account on these events. He, too, remained with the wounded. See also, Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 337-338.

My feeble powers cannot describe the dismal scenes here exhibited. I saw my fellow soldiers, naked and wounded, crawling out of the houses to avoid being consumed in the flames. Some that had not been able to turn themselves on their beds for four days, through fear of being burned to death, arose and walked out and about through the yard. Some cried for help, but there were none to help them. “Ah!” exclaimed numbers, in the anguish of their spirit, “what shall we do?” A number, unable to get out miserably perished in the unrelenting flames of the houses, kindled by the more unrelenting savages. Now the scenes of cruelty and murder we had been anticipating with dread, during last night, fully commenced.

The Indians killed and scalped the wounded men who were able to run out of the burning shelters and “cruelly mangled their naked bodies while they lay agonizing and weltering in their blood.”¹³³

When most of the wounded had been killed, the Indians forced the remaining able-bodied men on a march towards Malden. Those men incapable of maintaining a steady pace on the journey were executed by the Indians in the same fashion as the men at the River Raisin.

Darnell, who lost his brother in this manner while marching to Malden, summarized his fear: “My feelings at the sight and recollection of these inhuman butcheries cannot be described. In addition to these deep sorrows for the mournful fate of my companions, and the cruel death of a dear brother, I expected every moment, for a considerable time, that the same kind of cruelty and death would be my portion.” The events of this tragic morning came to be known as the River Raisin Massacre, of which the following poem was written:

How dread was the conflict, how bloody the fray,
Told the banks of the Raisin at the dawn of the day;
While the gush from the wounds of the dying and dead

¹³³ Quotes, Darnell, *A Journal*, 60-61; see also, Lossing, *Field Book*, 358-59; Atherton, *Narrative*, 61-66. Atherton’s account of these events are somewhat second-hand as he was moved around by different Indians and eventually placed inside a building by one Indian that later took him back to his family as an “adopted” prisoner. Multiple sources stated that the Indians were drunk, see *Military History*, 83; Atherton, 70; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 45; Medard Labbadi to Harrison, Feb. 11, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 362, as just a few examples.

Had thaw'd for the warrior a snow-sheeted bed.

But where is the pride that a soldier can feel,
To temper with mercy the wrath of the steel,
While Proctor, victorious, denies to the brave
Who had fallen in battle, the gift of a grave?¹³⁴

When news of the massacre reached Kentucky it “caused mourning in almost every family. The first shock of grief was succeeded by intense exasperation, and the war-cry of Kentucky soldiers after that was, *Remember the River Raisin!*” Kentucky lost a number of loved men including Major Benjamin Franklin Graves of the Kentucky volunteers who was noted by many for his bravery on the field; Captain Paschal Hickman of the Rifle Regiment who had also served under General Wayne in 1794; and Captain Nathaniel Gray Smith Hart who was an inspector and also the brother-in-law of Henry Clay. The state did not mourn for long; the news acted as a catalyst to another flood of volunteers. “Four regiments quickly tendered their services, these under Colonels Dudley, Cox, Boswell, and Caldwell” all of which were under the command of Major General Green Clay. Richard M. Johnson also had command of his own Mounted Volunteers. Some of these men set out for Fort Meigs to join Harrison who had established headquarters there while others journeyed to Fort Defiance. So, in the words of William B. Northcutt, Kentucky volunteer, who kept an account of the military engagements in the Northwest, “We will now take leave of Winchester and his unfortunate Expedition, for they are all gone into the lion’s claw and will figure no more in the war of 1812 & 13.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Quote, Darnell, *A Journal*, 62; Poem, Lossing, *Field Book*, 338. Verses like this marked the beginning of each chapter in Lossing’s work, and Lossing named the author of many of them. This particular poem had no such attribution, so it might be assumed Lossing himself wrote it. Clift, “Diary,” 177, offered a second hand account of the events of the massacre. Darnell, 62-75 and Atherton, *Narrative*, 66-145, for their accounts of adoption into Indian tribes, imprisonment under the British, grueling march to Niagara where they were paroled and later returned to Kentucky.

¹³⁵ First quote, Lossing, *Field Book*, 360; second quote, *Military History*, 84; third quote, Clift, “Diary,” 177. See also, Lossing, 357-59; Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 185; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 45; *Military History*, 84-89. Northcutt was a volunteer in Captain Garrard’s Light Dragoons of Kentucky.

In the fall of 1812, a number of Kentuckians had remained under the command of Harrison after he had separated the army into different columns. Of these, there were three companies of mounted riflemen under Captains Roper, Bacon, and Clark as well as three regiments under Colonels Joshua Barbee, Robert Poague, and William Jennings. After the activities at Fort Wayne, Harrison's strategy for the Northwest campaign involved overpowering the hostile Indian tribes in the region and retaking Detroit. However, the severity of the winter inhibited him from acting immediately. In the meantime he did oversee raiding expeditions into Indian towns which were generally successful. At the beginning of 1813, it was evident that until the Americans could garner control of Lakes Erie and Ontario, their efforts in this region would remain predominantly defensive. "Because of the dense wilderness and lack of good roads, the lakes offered the only efficient means of moving men and material on the northern frontier. Whoever controlled the lakes controlled the border," and considering the Americans' lack of success in 1812 (and early 1813) Britain maintained the upper-hand in the area.¹³⁶

Another obstacle for the men serving in the Northwest came in the form of newly appointed Secretary of War John Armstrong. The new secretary did not approve of extensive use of militias, whether conscripted or not, seeing them as a waste of money. As the idea of raising a significant amount of regular troops for the western region was not a promising one, Armstrong shifted the focus east. Additionally, Armstrong "had no confidence in Harrison," and these issues taken all together led Armstrong to restrict "Harrison's authority to call out the militia, draw supplies, and engage in offensive operations." Hindered by these restrictions, Harrison did what he could. He had previously begun the construction of Fort Meigs, at the Maumee Rapids in Ohio, which was to act as both a supply depot and headquarters. This fort

¹³⁶ Quote, Hickey, *War of 1812*, 146. See Lossing, *Field Book*, 328; Hickey, 106. Among these expeditions was the Battle of the Mississinewa River in mid-December, 1812, in which the Miamis were defeated. See also, Hickey, 145-48.

was exceptionally well constructed. “Ringed by picket logs and reinforced by mounds of dirt, it was protected by blockhouses and batteries that commanded all approaches and later included interior earthworks, known as traverses, that afforded additional protection.” Thus, acting under new restrictions and headquartered at Fort Meigs, Harrison welcomed the arrival of new troops and greeted the coming of spring.¹³⁷

In late April the British, still under Procter’s command, left Fort Malden with a 1,000-man strong force of militia and regulars. Joined by Tecumseh and his force of approximately 1,200 warriors, they journeyed towards Fort Meigs, where Harrison and 1,100 men waited. Procter’s goal entailed laying siege to the fort until those who dwelled within her walls surrendered. To do so, he employed his heavy artillery, beginning the attack on May 1. However, due to the remarkable structure of the fort, his onslaught had but little effect. The two sides continued to exchange fire over the next few days when on May 5 Brigadier General Clay and 1,200 men, most from Kentucky, arrived in the area. With these reinforcements, Harrison concentrated his efforts on the eastern side of the British force and sent orders to Clay to disable the artillery on the western side. Col. William Dudley and his Kentuckians led the attack on the artillery, and at first it proved successful. Unfortunately, in spite of orders to the contrary, “the militia launched a disorganized pursuit of the retreating enemy and ran into the jaws of a powerful Anglo-Indian counterattack.” The fighting lasted upwards of three hours during which time the enemy received reinforcements “which enabled him [the Indians] *now to surround us*. Our troops were generally much exhausted, owing to the swampiness of the ground over which they had fought, and many of them with their guns wet, or without ammunition.” The natives

¹³⁷ Quotes, Hickey, *War of 1812*, 147-48. Skeen, 86-87.

then turned on the Kentuckians' left side forcing the call for a retreat which soon devolved into a full flight.¹³⁸

Many of these fleeing men later fell victim to other enemy soldiers upon reaching the cannons they had just spiked. "Thus, upwards of eight hundred men, who had set out with the most flattering prospects of success, led on by imprudence, were overwhelmed by numbers, cut up, and defeated. About one hundred and seventy only having *made good* their retreat before the close of the battle, escaped across the river in our boats." Those that survived the fighting were taken as prisoners. Thereafter, they were subject to brutal treatment, often resulting in death, at the hands of the Indians while British officers watched without interceding. The massacre continued until Tecumseh arrived and put a stop to it.¹³⁹

In the end, the engagement could be counted an American success. The British, their Indian allies, and the Canadian militiamen that made up their force eventually retreated. However, Harrison did not overlook the blunder caused by Dudley's actions. Unable to scold the man himself, as Dudley was among those killed in their ill-devised pursuit, he lamented their ineptitude in writing:

It rarely occurs that a General has to complain of the excessive ardour of his men yet such appears always to be the case whenever the Kentucky militia are engaged. It is indeed the source of all their misfortune. They appear to think that valor can alone accomplish anything. The General is led to make this remark from the conduct of Capt. Dudley's Company of the Regiments as he has understood that the gallant officer was obliged to turn his espartoon [pike] against his company to oblige them to desist from a further pursuits of the enemy in compliance with an order from

¹³⁸ Hickey, *War of 1812*, 148; Leslie Combs to Green Clay, May 5, 1813, in *Col. Wm. Dudley's defeat opposite Fort Meigs: May 5th, 1813*, by Leslie Combs (Cincinnati: Spiller & Gates, 1869), 7; description of the fighting, Combs, *ibid.*, 6-7. See also WHH to Secretary of War, May 5, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 1813, 431-33; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 46.

¹³⁹ Quote, Combs, *Dudley's defeat*, 7-8. For more on the retreat, treatment of prisoners, and Tecumseh's intervention, see Combs, *ibid.*, 7-12.

the General. Such temerity although not as disgraceful is scarcely less fatal than cowardice.

After examining the battlefield, the men found forty-five bodies of those killed, and “[a]mongst them was the (weak and obstinate but brave) leader of the detachment Col. Dudley.” Further, Harrison had cause to believe that some of the Kentuckians may have very well retreated towards Fort Winchester.¹⁴⁰

After the action at Fort Meigs, Governor Shelby made a call for men to join him in journeying to the Northwest to accompany Harrison on his next venture: “I will lead you to the field of battle, and share with you the dangers and honors of the campaign.” What was impressive about this was not so much that the governor of the state was accompanying the men, but that, at sixty-three years old, he was a fairly aged man by this point. While he recruited the men and prepared to leave, a young major in command of Fort Stephenson in northern Ohio earned quite a reputation.¹⁴¹

In late July, Procter had attempted to lure men out of Fort Meigs, which was now under Clay’s command, by “staging a sham battle nearby.” Clay saw through the deception and remained within the fort. Dismayed, the British and their Indian allies sought out another fort. Their sights landed on Fort Stephenson, commanded by Major George Croghan. Harrison ordered Croghan to leave the fort as he felt there was no way the twenty-one year old could defend it against the enemy forces. Croghan decided to defy orders and defend the fort. In a letter to Harrison he stated, “We have determined to maintain this place, and by heavens we can.” On August 2, the British charged the fort. Kentucky and Ohio militiamen made up part of

¹⁴⁰ First quote, General Orders, May 9, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 437-38. Second quote, WHH to Secretary of War, May 13, 1813, in *ibid.*, Vol. II, 443. This second letter also contained WHH’s suspicion of the retreating Kentuckians. See also, Skeen, *Citizen Soldier*, 89.

¹⁴¹ Shelby to Militia, July 31, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 504. Shelby’s age varies from source to source, but all ages were within the range of 60-66 years. The number used here is based on Hickey, *War of 1812*, 153.

the fort's manpower and it was purported that because of these men's skilled sharpshooting, the Americans were able to take down a number of the officers and men who charged. These losses persuaded Procter to retreat back to Malden. Had it not been for the skill of these militiamen, the story might have ended quite differently.¹⁴²

Meanwhile, Harrison had increased his force, which now included Shelby and his company. Many of the Kentuckians who arrived with Shelby were on horseback, but were ordered to leave their mounts in a corral. "Only, 1,200 volunteers under the command of Colonel Richard M. Johnson (who was still a member of Congress) were permitted to take their mounts into battle." By this point, the Americans had control of Detroit and Fort Malden, the British having vacated both when falling back. In September, naval successes on Lake Erie had put the British forces in a weakened state forcing Procter to fall back to Burlington Heights along the Thames River, much to the chagrin of his Indian allies. Tecumseh had managed to get Procter to agree to make a stand "somewhere on the Thames," and that was where Harrison and his men ventured next.¹⁴³

From their camp on the Detroit River they prepared to pursue Procter, but this involved crossing the border into Canada. The Kentucky men had "no constitutional scruples about going into Canada," but the Pennsylvania militia was another issue. Of the estimated 500 men from that state, only about 100 continued with Harrison; the rest remained on American soil.

¹⁴² First quote, Hickey, *War of 1812*, 148; second quote, Croghan to WHH, July 30, 1813, in in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 503. See WHH to Croghan, July 29, 1813, in *ibid.*, 502, for Harrison's orders to vacate the fort; WHH to Croghan, July 30, 1813, in *ibid.*, 503, where Harrison expresses his disapproval of Croghan's actions and states he is sending Col. Samuel Wells to relieve him; Croghan to WHH, Aug. 3, 1813, in *ibid.*, 509, where Croghan tells Harrison news of their victory; WHH to Secretary of War, Aug. 4, 1813, in *ibid.*, 510-13, in which Harrison lauds the work of those at the fort; and Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 187, regarding the presence of militia, sadly Clark was one source that rarely distinguished between drafted militia and volunteer; however, with the massive turn out of Kentucky volunteers at this point, combined with insinuations from other sources, the assumption is that these men were volunteer militia.

¹⁴³ Hickey, *War of 1812*, 153. See also, Hickey, 149-152 for more on the Americans taking control of the lake region as well as Perry to Secretary of War, Sep. 12, 1813, in *Messages in Letters*, Vol. II, 540, regarding the victory on Lake Erie.

Travelling quickly, the Americans soon closed the gap between them and Procter's force spurring the British commander to cease his march and form his troops into battle lines. "The British were arrayed in open order in two thin lines extending from the river to a large swamp, while the Indians, headed by Tecumseh, took positions in the underbrush near the swamp on the British right flank." The Indians numbered roughly 500 while Procter had 800 regulars, not all of whom could be considered experienced.¹⁴⁴

After marching sometime, on October 5 the army came to a densely wooded area. Suspecting this to be a prime place for an Indian attack, Harrison organized his men. On the right, he had placed the Kentucky volunteers under Shelby. On the left, Harrison had placed men under the following officers: Lieut. Col. James V. Ball, Generals Duncan McArthur and Lewis Cass. Harrison created this formation in order to place "the regular troops in the open ground on the lake, where they will probably be opposed by the British regulars, and the Kentucky volunteers in the woods which it is presumed will be occupied by the enemy's militia and Indians." Procter's left wing consisted of his regulars and on the right his Indian allies led by Tecumseh "held broken ground dense with trees and thickets." Thus situated, the two armies prepared to meet in battle.¹⁴⁵

Before they engaged their enemy, Johnson asked permission to take the initial charge. Although an unusual move for the cavalry, Harrison allowed it. Known as the "forlorn hope" due to the potential of meeting their deaths, James Johnson, Richard M. Johnson's brother, took a battalion straight on towards the British while Congressman Johnson then took his battalion

¹⁴⁴ First quote, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 92; second quote, Hickey, *War of 1812*, 153. See also, Hickey, 153; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 42; and Skeen, 96-140 for more on the militia attitudes regarding crossing into Canada. See WHH to Secretary of War, Oct. 9, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 558-65, for mention of the successful pursuit of Procter.

¹⁴⁵ Quote, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 49. General Orders, Sep. 27, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 546; WHH to Secretary of War, Oct. 9, 1813, 558-65, for full report of the battle.

towards Tecumseh and his men. Crying out, “Remember the Raisin!”, the brothers charged forward. The assault against the British met with quick success, those men surrendering soon after. The other attack lasted some while longer. Johnson incurred a number of wounds while fighting from horseback against the Indians. Despite his injuries, he fought valiantly and the Indians eventually fled. During the melee, Tecumseh was killed, and his death is often accredited to Richard M. Johnson, though there can be no certainty. The mystery stems from the fact that after the battle, a number of Kentuckians cut off pieces of his skin to keep as souvenirs, preventing even General Harrison from being able to correctly identify the body.¹⁴⁶

The Battle of the Thames, as this engagement came to be known, cemented America’s hold on the Northwest. “Tecumseh was dead and his Indian confederacy broken. The British had been defeated at the Battle of the Thames, and the West and Lake Erie were safely in American hands.” The achievements in the Northwest were greatly influenced by the action taken by volunteers from Kentucky. Although, it seemed for every Kentucky success a failure was close behind. With the performance of Johnson’s Mounted Volunteers at the Battle of the Thames, collectively speaking “the American militiamen had redeemed their reputation.” Overall, this battle ended the major campaign to wrest authority of the region from the British and their allies, and it also marks the last significant role Kentuckians played in the Northwest. However, the war was not yet won. So, when in late 1814 Major General Andrew Jackson needed more men in New Orleans, Kentuckians traveled south.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ First quote, Hickey, *War of 1812*, 154. See, Harrison to Sec of War, Oct. 9, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 562; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 49, Skeen, *Citizen Soldier*, 92; Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers*, 13; and Clark, *Military History*, 188-89, for brief description of the battle. See, Owens, *Mr. Jefferson’s Hammer*, 229-30, for an accurate discussion on Tecumseh’s remains.

¹⁴⁷ Quotes, Skeen, *Citizen Soldier*, 27 and 93, respectively. See Hickey, *War of 1812*, 154, for the fate of Procter; Skeen, 94-95; Hickey, *War of 1812*, 155; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 49. The fourteen months after the Battle of the Thames involved many battles in the Northeast and South. As the Kentucky militia did not play an active role in these, they are neglected here, but the following sources do offer discussions on the engagements: Hickey, 156-83 and 235-36; Skeen, 158-67; Taylor, *The Civil War*, 420-21.

The Kentucky volunteer militia marched to New Orleans under the command of Major General John Thomas and Brigadier General John Adair, arriving on January 4, 1815. Reporting to Edward Livingston, Jackson's advisor, the Kentuckian informed him that they were unarmed, supply boats having been delayed. Upon learning this Jackson purportedly exclaimed, "I don't believe it. I have never seen a Kentuckian without a gun and a pack of cards and a bottle of whiskey in my life." In the end, only enough weapons for about a quarter of the 2,300 Kentuckians could be procured. Also, Thomas fell ill so Adair inherited the command of these Kentucky backwoodsmen. Inadequately armed and once again poorly clothed, the Kentuckians awaited orders from Jackson.¹⁴⁸

Prior to their arrival, Jackson had been immensely busy in strengthening the American line. When he had entered the city in early December, 1814, he was dismayed by the lack of defense precautions. He immediately set about establishing defensive measures at all water access points to the city and ensuring batteries were placed at tactical locations. He also ensured that he had a system by which he could remain aware of the enemy's movements while also maintaining a channel of contact to the citizens of the city in the event of an attack. Further, he accepted the help of the Baratarians, a group of privateers who insisted on being involved in the defense of the city. By mid-December, British forces under the command of Major General Edward Pakenham arrived. His total force ultimately amounted to about 5,300 men and made their camp on the other side of the Rodriguez Canal directly across from the American line. For

¹⁴⁸ First quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 190. See also, Jackson to Monroe, Jan. 3, 1815, in *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, Vol. III, 1814-1815, Harold D. Moser, ed. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 228. *Military History*, 96-7 and Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 869-70. See Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 169-70 and For more on the Kentuckians arriving with weapons, see "Late from New Orleans," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 6, 1815. Regarding supply boat delays, lack of weapons, inadequate clothing, and change in command for Kentuckians. See Clark, "Northwest Campaign," 92.

whatever reason, Pakenham delayed an all-out attack on the Americans until the beginning of January. His lack of action allowed Jackson many days in which to continue to fortify the earthworks along the canal and extend them from the Mississippi to a swamp about a mile away.¹⁴⁹

A number of minor skirmishes filled the days between the arrival of the British and that of the Kentuckians. By the end of the first week of January, Jackson had established an impressive and secure line behind which he positioned his troops. Regular troops and a Tennessee Brigade with a Kentucky volunteer militia detachment took the center. The west wing, the point where the canal met the Mississippi, was undoubtedly the least protected. Jackson ordered Col. John Davis and 400 Kentuckians to reinforce General David B. Morgan and his Louisiana militiamen at that weak point. However, only approximately 260 actually made the trip to his side as the rest were still unarmed and understandably did not want to venture to a poorly fortified position without any way to protect themselves. Those Kentucky troops who did join Morgan's side were also positioned in advance of the main line. The left side, near the swamp, was heavily protected and manned by another contingent of Tennesseans. Adair and the remainder of the Kentuckians were to remain on stand-by as reinforcements.¹⁵⁰

In the early morning fog of January 8, 1815, the British initiated their attack. Their original plan entailed an assault on the weakly fortified west side led by Colonel William Thornton followed by a concentrated effort against the American center. However, due to a delay in traversing the river, the central charge preceded the assault on the American right. Nevertheless, Thornton reached the ill-prepared force under Morgan and sent them into almost

¹⁴⁹ Preparation, see Hickey, *War of 1812*, 139. British motives, see Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 85. For more on the involvement of Baratarians, see Hickey, 238-39. The Rodriguez Canal connected to the Mississippi and ran eastward from it towards a swamp. For more on Jackson taking advantage of the delay of the full assault, see Hickey, 240-43.

¹⁵⁰ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 171; Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 874; *Military History*, 96-7.

immediate confusion and retreat. They rallied for a short while, but once again retreated leaving the cannon undefended which allowed the British to spike them. The charge against the center of the American forces had completely different results. Safe behind their previously constructed defense, “the Americans achieved a concentration of firepower that mowed down the orderly British ranks and killed Pakenham.” One British officer who took part in the center charge later wrote of witnessing the haunting proficiency of one Kentucky rifleman. He stated that as he and his fellow officers approached the American line, they surveyed the positions of their enemy behind their defensive wall of mud. “It was a strange sight, that breastwork, with the crowds of beings behind, their heads only visible above the line of defense. We could distinctly see their long rifles lying on the works, and the batteries in our front, with their great mouths gapping toward us.”¹⁵¹

As this officer drew closer to the American line, he and those around him spotted “the figure of a tall man standing on the breastworks, dressed in linsey-woolsey, with buckskin leggings, and a broad brimmed felt hat that fell round the face...” This description of clothing fits perfectly with the typical attire of a Kentucky hunter. “The right arm was extended, the hand grasping the rifle near the muzzle, the butt of which rested near the toe of his right foot. With the left hand he raised the rim of the hat from his eyes, and seemed gazing intently on our advancing column.” At this point, the American cannons began to fire, but according to this account the figure remained unmoved by the sound of their discharge. The British officer continued to advance and observe the man, who at last moved. Shifting his hat back upon his head, he raised his weapon and directed it toward this officer. “Our eyes were riveted upon him; at whom had

¹⁵¹ First quote, Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 85; second quote, Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 191. This second quote comes from a manuscript of the Durrett Collection, currently housed at the University of Chicago Library. It was an anonymously written account by a British officer. See also Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 170-71. See also, “Note,” in *Papers of Jackson*, Vol. III, 234.

he leveled his piece? But the distance was so great, that we looked at each other and smiled. We saw the rifles flash, and very rightly conjectured that his aim was in the direction of our party. My right hand companion...fell from his saddle.” The marksman paused, reloaded, and once again fixed his aim at the officers:

This time we did not smile, but cast glances at each other, to see which of us must die. When again the rifle flashed, another one of our party dropped to the earth. There was something most awful in this marching on to certain death. The cannon and thousands of musket balls playing upon our ranks, we care not for; for there was a chance of escaping them...but to know that every time that rifle was leveled toward us, and its bullet sprang from the barrel, one of us must surely fall; to see it rest motionless as if poised on a rack, and know, when the hammer came down, that the messenger of death drove unerringly to its goal, to know this, and still march on, was awful. I could see nothing but the tall figure standing on the breastworks; he seemed to grow, phantom-like, higher and higher, assuming, through the smoke the supernatural appearance of some great spirit of death.

The account did not state exactly how many men this figure took down, but before the “sulphurous clouds gather[ed] round us, and [shut] that spectral hunter from our gaze” these men suffered greatly under his fire.¹⁵²

Immediately following the end of the battle, though, Jackson railed against the performance of the Kentuckians on the right side. He stated that, “the want of Discipline, the want of Order, a total disregard to Obedience, and a Spirit of insubordination, not less destructive than Cowardise itself, this appears to be the cause which led to the disaster.” Further, Jackson pointedly placed the blame on the Kentuckians: “The Kentucky reinforcements, ingloriously fled, drawing after them, by their example, the remainder of the forces; and thus yielding to the enemy that most fortunate position.” After the war, there was a formal inquiry into the actions

¹⁵² Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 191-92. The marksman was later discovered to be Ephraim McLean Brank, of Greenville, Kentucky. In the Spring of 2014, citizens of Greenville erected a statue of Brank in honor of his service. It is the first, and so far, only memorial in Kentucky dedicated to the War of 1812. For more on the typical attire of Kentuckians, see Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 14-15; Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 95-96; and *Military History*, 80.

on the west bank during the Battle of New Orleans which generally exonerated the Kentucky volunteer militiamen. After the war formal inquiry led by General William Carroll of Tennessee, who was in the battle, into the events on the western bank absolved the Kentuckians of performing poorly. After examination, it became obvious that there existed a number of shortcomings on that side of the line before the battle even began. Jackson had not exerted as much effort to fortify that section as he had on the center and left. Also, failure was a strong possibility considering the fact that Jackson placed a number of unarmed, state-soldiers under the command of someone they had never met, and whose ability as an officer was questionable.¹⁵³

Despite the dismal performance of Morgan's men, the battle was a great success for the Americans. The center of Jackson's line quickly repelled the British who soon retreated. Skeen noted, too, that regardless of the militias and regulars, the most significant contribution to the American victory at New Orleans came from the Baratarians' artillery. In the end, the British forces completely vacated the area and with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, in December of 1814, and the subsequent ratification on February 16, 1815, the War of 1812 came to a close.¹⁵⁴

All in all, the War of 1812 was both a victory and failure for the US. It did indeed open up western lands in both the northern and southern regions, and with the death of Tecumseh, the threat of Indian reprisals in the Ohio Valley greatly diminished. However, America's attempts to conquer any part of Canada failed. Further, the reason the British ceased impressment and activities that inhibited maritime trade was not due to the war with America, but because of the

¹⁵³ First quote, "Jackson's Address to his Troops on the Right Bank," Jan. 8, 1815, quoted in Skeen, *Civilian Soldiers*, 171; second quote, Jackson to Monroe, Jan. 9, 1815, in *Papers of Andrew Jackson*, Vol. III, 240. See also, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 50-51; Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 193-94; Skeen, 171-74.

¹⁵⁴ *Military History*, 100; ballad attributed to Samuel Woodworth. See, or hear, also singer Johnny Horton's 1959 rendition of "The Battle of New Orleans." See also, Skeen, *Civilian Soldiers*, 172. For information regarding the Treaty of Ghent, see Clark, *History of Kentucky*, 196-97; Skeen, 171; and Hickey, *War of 1812*, 306-323.

defeat of Napoleon, which ended their war with France. The Treaty of Ghent established the *status quo ante bellum*, which basically meant that the grievances Americans had cited as cause for war were not directly affected by the war. Considering such a tepid conclusion to a long and trying war that claimed multiple lives, the very Republicans who had minimalized the military, declared war, and failed to achieve any of the original goals of the war began to white-wash these shortcomings.

Focusing heavily on the post-treaty emotions of jubilation and relief, lauding the “lop-sided” victory at New Orleans, the Madison administration diverted attention from the government’s failings. When announcing the termination of the war to Congress, the president said that the war “has been waged with a success which is the natural result of the wisdom of the Legislative councils, of the patriotism of the people, of the public spirit of the militia, and of the valor of the military and naval forces of the country.” However, a greater sense of nationalism did prevail and many did feel that this was indeed a continuation of the Revolutionary War in that they once again had to fight Britain in order to be recognized and respected as a sovereign nation. Despite the shortcomings of the treaty and the ambiguity of the war itself, Americans found themselves residents of a nation that had fought against the powerful British army twice, and had survived twice. Once news of the war’s end spread, one paper asked, “*Is there the man among us, who is not proud that he is AN AMERICAN?*”¹⁵⁵

Amidst this spirit of patriotism rose the image of the legendary Kentucky rifleman. Fitted in his hunting attire, Kentucky rifle in hand, gazing from under the brim of his hat with focused and determined eyes, he entered the field of battle with confidence and celerity. Far from home he traveled to fight for his country, and many an Indian and British officer did he

¹⁵⁵ First quote, James Madison to Congress, Feb. 18, 1815, quoted in Hickey, *War of 1812*, 322; second, “Highly Important and Glorious News,” *City Gazette* (Charleston, South Carolina), Feb. 8, 1815.

mow down with his unparalleled marksmanship. Valiant, ruthless, and wild, this Kentuckian of lore danced victoriously in the minds and on the news pages of Americans everywhere. But then there is Dudley. And those Kentucky militiamen who fled in New Orleans. And those poorly-clothed, unarmed individuals with no gun training who arrived at rendezvous points. So, how does one reconcile this duality? How did a group of men with such a spotty combat record become celebrated in tales of heroism and immortalized in song? To gain a better understanding of this conundrum, one must first analyze the performance of the Kentuckians in the War of 1812, keeping in mind their mixed results in past engagements.

In the months, and even years, following the War of 1812 a great deal was written about the effectiveness of the militia and volunteers and about their particular exploits. Kentucky itself had contributed approximately 25,000 men to the war effort in the form of regulars, militiamen, and volunteers. Out of these men, 1,200 died in combat. The total number of American lives lost was recorded as 2,260, which meant about fifty-four percent of those were Kentuckians. Other states, of course, contributed manpower and the more populated ones contributed higher numbers than Kentucky; however, “none can rightfully claim troop contributions as heavy as Kentucky when proportionate state populations are taken into consideration.” Furthermore, Kentuckians participated in some of the most salient engagements in the Northwest: “The largest part of the northwestern army under General William Henry Harrison was made up of Kentucky troops. The men who dared and died at the River Raisin, Fort Meigs, Fort Stephenson, and earlier at Tippecanoe, were principally Kentuckians,” not to mention their contributions to the Battle of New Orleans.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ First quote, *Military History*, v; second quote, Clift, “Introduction,” in *Kentucky Soldiers of the War of 1812*, Minnie S. Wilder, ed. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1969), NA. Numbers for Kentucky taken from G. Glenn Clift, “Introduction,” NA. Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 51, used similar numbers he attributed to James Hammack, author of *Kentucky & the Second American Revolution: The War of 1812*, 1976. Hammack did not use

Considering first their involvement in the northwestern engagements, their record was spotty at best. At the Battle of Tippecanoe, the Kentuckians followed Harrison's orders without hesitation and, based on initial reports after the battle, had acted admirably during the fighting. The failure to fortify the camp allowed the Indians to attack so readily in the early morning of November 7, 1811. Whether or not their initial charge was truly a surprise for the Americans, the troops rallied, formed their lines, fought in a generally organized manner, and ultimately saw their enemy retreat, even if said retreat was namely the result of low ammunition and not of the efforts of the American army. The men, including the officers, learned from the experience of this battle by no longer maintaining fires within the camp and taking various precautions while on sentry duty. Any criticism regarding the engagement fell predominantly on the commanding officer, Harrison, and not on his men. In light of this, one might conclude that the Kentuckians performed well under the circumstances and were not directly responsible for any fault that may be identified with the Battle of Tippecanoe.

The next action in which Kentuckians played a significant role occurred at Frenchtown. At the first Battle of Frenchtown on January 18, 1812, Cols. Lewis and Allen and a contingent of 650 men met with great success. They quickly pushed back both the British and Indian forces and then Lewis ordered the establishment of a camp in a fortified location. Here is an example of Kentuckians conducting themselves in a capable manner in the field of battle and taking the precaution of encamping in a defensible position. Yes, they haphazardly pursued their enemy into the surrounding woods, a trademark of theirs apparently, but mostly due to luck they did not suffer significant losses. At the second battle two days later, success was far out of reach for the US forces as a whole. Lewis and Allen maintained their position behind the puncheons, but in

citations, though, but his numbers closely matched Clift's. Clift, "Introduction," Sword, and Hammack all set the number of total US dead at 1,876, which would mean Kentuckians comprised about sixty-four percent of all battle deaths. See also, Asperheim, *Double Characters*, 84.

the end they all became prisoners of the British. So, what variables in this failed second engagement were absent in the successful first one? In a word, leadership.

Winchester completely botched the plan of encampment, leaving his regular troops entirely exposed. He ordered no fortification of the camp, neglected to send out scouts to ascertain the enemy's movements, failed to act upon the multiple warnings of an impending attack by a reinforced enemy, and to top it off, based himself in a home a mile from his men. By gleaned journals, letters, and secondary sources, it is evident that those Kentuckians behind the picketed line performed not only admirably, but skillfully. Suffering minimal casualties and wounded and thwarting the enemy time and again, one does wonder how the engagement might have ended had Winchester not surrendered. In both battles at Frenchtown, the Kentuckians achieved success, first for their whole column, then for themselves. Obviously, the slaughter of the wounded the following day at River Raisin and the imprisonment of the remaining men may lead one to conclude their performance a total failure, but when their actions are examined in isolation, they did truly prove themselves worthy soldiers.

The siege of Fort Meigs presents a very different situation. Dudley and his men undermined their initial success against the British artillery when they failed to follow orders and pursued their enemy into the woods where they met a disgraceful, not to mention highly fatal, defeat. Of course, this could be somewhat attributable to bad luck, just as Lewis and Allen's success at the first Battle of Frenchtown can be boiled down to good luck. The difference here though was that Dudley defied a direct order of a superior officer because his desire to avenge those killed at the River Raisin overpowered any other sensibility. As Harrison succinctly put it: "Here [the western side at Fort Meigs] the work of our men was done. But that confidence which always attends Militia when successful proved their ruin." A comparable situation to the

siege of Fort Meigs was the siege of Fort Stephenson. Here the conduct of all the men could be classified as measured, planned, and ultimately triumphant. Just like at Fort Meigs, Fort Stephenson was under siege by the very same enemy—the British accompanied by their Indian allies. The main difference though, as far as the Kentuckians are concerned was their location. In this siege they were acting from a fortified position; there was no real opportunity to go flying off through the woods after their enemy.¹⁵⁷

The final major combat in the Northwest Territory in which the Kentuckians partook occurred at the Battle of the Thames. Prior to his pursuit of Procter, Harrison had requested more men from Gov. Shelby who happily acquiesced and even took command. He did inform the Secretary of War that, “As mounted volunteers, a competent force can, I feel confident, be easily raised.” Successfully raising a mounted force, they rendezvoused with Harrison at the Detroit River in September, 1813. Shelby did remark that his men were “but lads and quite careless,” but no Dudley-esque fate befell them. Also joining Harrison was Richard M. Johnson, his brother James, and their Mounted Volunteers. These men arguably out-performed every other soldier in Harrison’s army on the day of the battle. Organized, obedient, and brave enough to not flee at the sight of the enemy, the Mounted Volunteers under James Johnson successfully charged the British line. “Desperate to avoid capture by the dreaded Kentuckians, Procter raced away as fast as he could spur his horse.” Richard M. Johnson and his men met more resistance from the Indians and despite casualties and many wounded, eventually forced their retreat as well when Tecumseh fell. Shelby’s force acted as reinforcements where necessary and did not necessarily distinguish themselves in any way, good or bad. Here, one can see the greater success of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers over their un-mounted counterparts. Although

¹⁵⁷ WHH to Secretary of War, May 5, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 432.

there is always some measure of luck in battle, the volunteers' success was more attributable to their ability than chance whereas the opposite held true in the cases of Lewis and Dudley.¹⁵⁸

Following the Battle of the Thames, Harrison reported to the Secretary of War regarding Johnson's request to advance on horseback upon the enemy that "American backwoodsmen ride better in the woods than any other people. A musket or rifle is no impediment to them being accustomed to carry them on horseback from their earliest youth." Harrison also offered accolades to Shelby and his volunteers for their "great zeal and activity" and that for Shelby "no eulogium of mine can reach his merits." Later, in December, Harrison exulted the militia as a whole when he said "They possess the Roman spirit and when our government shall think proper to give them that organization and discipline of which they are susceptible, they will perform deeds that will emulate those of the legions led by Marcellus, and Scipio." After the Battle of the Thames, Kentuckians were not involved in any more prominent battles in the Northwest.¹⁵⁹

Throughout the course of the war activity in the Northwest, Kentucky's initial enthusiasm and willingness to serve waned. One of the major turning points for their support resulted from a lack of payments to the men serving under Shelby at the Battle of the Thames. As late as August, 1814, Shelby was writing to Secretary of War Armstrong inquiring as to why his men had not yet been financially compensated. He observed that the delay in payment was dampening their spirits and the fact that Johnson's men had already been paid created a feeling of animosity among the men. Armstrong's reluctance to act centered on his estimate that "Shelby's militiamen cost about \$300,000 more than a regular force, because they had enough

¹⁵⁸ First quote, Shelby to Secretary of War, Aug. 1, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 505; second quote, Shelby to -----, Sep. 10, 1813, quoted in Hickey, *War of 1812*, 153; third quote, Taylor, *The Civil War*, 245. It should be remembered here that Shelby's men arrived on their mounts at the Detroit River, but Harrison ordered them to leave their horses there and only allowed the Johnson brothers ride into battle

¹⁵⁹ First quote, WHH quotes, Harrison to Sec of War, Oct. 9, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 562; second quote, *ibid.*, 564. Third quote, WHH to Militia, Dec. 1813, in *ibid.*, 610. See also, Asperheim, "Double Characters," 84.

officers for twelve regiments but had fewer bayonets than four regiments of regulars.” Overall, Shelby worked for months to obtain the pay owed to his men while maintaining “no patience with a mediocre president, a dismal secretary of war, or niggardly congressmen who failed to deal honestly with his state...”¹⁶⁰

According to Skeen, when considering the entirety of the western/northwestern campaign of the War of 1812, “[t]he military successes...were attributable to the militia. Overall, however, the record was undistinguished.” Further, it seemed that any victory they achieved was then equalized by a defeat, or even a disaster. Militiamen from any state also posed problems for the war effort in general when refusing to cross borders. Such hesitancy would understandably incite worry in an officer who knew crossing into Canada was a definite possibility, if not a flat-out expectation seeing as there were machinations of taking that country at the start of the war. As noted, the Kentuckians had no qualms whatsoever in crossing into Canada when pursuing Procter, but many of the Pennsylvanian men refused to do so. Another issue with non-regulars was their inexperience, lack of discipline, and tendency to retreat upon encountering the enemy. However, how much blame can truly be placed on them for these faults? These same complaints existed decades before in the Indian Wars of the 1790s, and those in charge were definitely aware of these traits and tendencies, as is attested in numerous correspondences of officers and those in the national government.¹⁶¹

As for the Kentuckians, these men did distinguish themselves in open combat when led by competent officers. At the Battle of Tippecanoe, they initially took flight at the arrival of the Indians, but were soon rallied and formed their battle lines. At the first Battle of Frenchtown, a

¹⁶⁰ First quote, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 146. Armstrong referred to Shelby’s militiamen in general, not just those men he led into Canada under Harrison. Second quote, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 50.

¹⁶¹ First quote, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 95. See Skeen, 95 for more on hesitation to cross national borders. See also Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 86.

predominantly volunteer company routed their enemy and encamped in the only terrain that offered any protection, unlike their regular counterparts who seemed content enough to not fortify their exposed position. In the defeat that followed, it was the Kentuckians who held their ground the longest and later more Kentuckians aided in the resistance shown at Fort Stephenson. Then, at the Thames, one is hard-pressed to identify any fault in the performance of the non-regulars, not including those who refused to cross the border. However, it did seem that for every triumph earned in the Northwest, there was a failure to match, and a similar situation awaited them in New Orleans when their major contributions to the war effort in the Northwest ended at the Battle of the Thames.¹⁶²

In New Orleans, while eagerly awaiting the arrival of his reinforcements from Kentucky and elsewhere, Jackson wrote to the Secretary of War that they were “very deficient in arm[s]” and that there was “also a great scarcity of flints.” He also asserted his preference for regular troops: “Permit me to suggest the propriety & the necessity of Regular troops for the defence of this country.” Under such circumstances and with such a disposition, Jackson nevertheless welcomed the arrival of the Kentuckians in early January. Even though he was fully aware that most of them were unarmed, and many of those that were possessed sub-par weapons, he still ordered 400 of them to Morgan’s camp, the least fortified position on the whole of the American line. As noted, only a fraction of these 400 actually followed the order, but one must question why Jackson sent under-armed and under-trained militiamen, volunteer or not, to the weakest

¹⁶² There were indeed some Kentuckians in the Northwest after the Battle of the Thames under the command of Brigadier General McArthur, who succeeded Harrison, but their activities are not examined here as there as they were minor in comparison to those actions which are discussed. See, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 95-96 for more on these men.

point of his line. Nonetheless, considering his command at New Orleans collectively, he proved to be an able, energetic, and foresighted leader.¹⁶³

In the end, the majority of those active in the Battle of New Orleans earned their laurels of victory. The Kentuckians, and others, who retreated on the west bank, however, received harsh judgment from their commander. An independent inquiry later cleared these men of fault placing the blame on leadership, a vindication that Jackson never openly acknowledged. John Adair, the commander of the Kentuckians, published a passionate defense of them, calling upon Jackson, Morgan, and Commodore Patterson, all of whom criticized the retreating men, to recant their statements in light of the inquiry's verdict. Adair pointed out that the Kentuckians initially followed orders appropriately, even though they were badly armed. When the assault on their camp occurred, they were positioned on the right with the better-armed Louisiana militia in the center supported by the artillery. Under these circumstances, Adair wrote, that "[n]o attempt was made no order given to support the Kentuckians by a detachment from the breast work [the center]," and those men facing "inevitable destruction" only managed to fire off a few rounds before being forced to retreat or die. Furthermore, the accusations that the Kentucky men fled without firing a gun were "false & unfounded." In the end of his defense, he also noted that Jackson had neglected to acknowledge the positive contributions of the other Kentuckians held in reserve." Despite Adair's efforts, Jackson never took any action regarding his treatment of the Kentuckians after the battle.¹⁶⁴

Taking the overall performance of the Kentucky militiamen and volunteers in both the Indian Wars of the 1790s and the War of 1812, one can easily identify numerous trends. Firstly,

¹⁶³ First two quotes, Jackson to Monroe, Dec. 29, 1814, in *Papers of Jackson*, Vol. III, 224. Third quote, in *ibid.*, 224-25. See, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 174.

¹⁶⁴ Quotes, John Adair to Jackson, Mar. 20, 1815, in *Papers of Jackson*, Vol. III, 319. See, Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers*, 13; *Military History*, 97; For more on the inquiry, see "General Orders" and "The Kentucky Troops," *Kentucky Gazette*, Mar. 10, 1815; "Vindication of Kentucky," *Kentucky Gazette*, Apr. 3, 1815.

the quality of leadership proved to be an extremely decisive factor in the quality and outcome of their battle performance. Stone noted that, “the regular-army generals of 1812 were cast more in the mold of Harmar and St. Clair than of Wayne.” It was with these commanders, like Winchester, where one finds the greatest the amount of discontent among the troops and the direst of results, as with the second Battle of Frenchtown and the River Raisin Massacre. Stone also pointed out that it was from “the militia system itself that the ablest American generals finally emerged: officers with native ability, a grasp of how to make effective use of their men, and leadership emanating from personal magnetism,” such as Harrison and Jackson. When making comparisons of the various commanding officers’ use of the state militias and/or state volunteers similarities between Harmar, St. Clair, and Winchester abound while Wayne, Harrison, and Jackson come across as men from the same mold—active, competent men who inspired confidence in their troops. Thus, when considering the performance of both the militia and volunteer groups under their various commands, it is easy to agree with Doubler’s assertion that the “key to the militia’s success was forceful leadership.”¹⁶⁵

Two other repeated themes were the quality and ability of the troops. Oftentimes, the men who arrived at the various rendezvous points lacked the appropriate attire and possessed a relic for a gun, or had no weapon at all. Furthermore, those who were issued a weapon did not always know how to use it nor were they properly trained. “Such raw militia could hardly be expected to master the twenty-three distinct motions required to prime, load, ram, and set a firelock in a flintlock musket in the brief time before they were marched off to engage the enemy.” In both wars, numerous people pointed out that the Mounted Volunteer was a much higher quality fighter than the conscripted militiaman, who could very likely be a hired

¹⁶⁵ First two quotes, Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 42; third quote, Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 86. For the sake of clarity, Wayne, unlike Harrison and Jackson, did not come out of the militia system. However, the point being made here is that their leadership technique regarding militia and volunteers was remarkably similar.

substitute, but this information was not always heeded. Seeing as the predominant difference between a volunteer and a militiaman was the circumstances under which they rendered their service, one doing so willingly and the other ordered to do so under penalty of law, it begs belief why an officer would prefer the latter when the former was available. There were instances, though, in which volunteers of any kind may have been preferred, but the federal government simply did not feel they would have the means to ever compensate them so called the militia instead.¹⁶⁶

When it came to actually commanding militiamen, those officers who wished to treat them as they would regular troops were the ones who often met with failure. Harmar and St. Clair especially, adhered to the tenets laid forth in Baron Von Steuben's *Manual*,¹⁶⁷ which were inapplicable to the militia. The rules and regulations were too formulaic and did not account for unexpected situations. The style of warfare Kentuckians employed reflected that of their frontier enemies, the various Indian tribes. As such, instructions on how to march, create formal battle lines, remain organized during armed conflict, and obey an officer out of respect for his rank rather than the merit of his character were all foreign and quite frankly frivolous concepts to a frontiersman. In the woods of Kentucky, these men did not don uniforms, tap a reveille, and march after Indians in an orderly line all the while receiving by express orders from an officer who was headquartered miles away. They were accustomed to sporadic calls to arms, pursuing their enemy through forests, attacking when they could, and retreating when death seemed imminent. An article in a Kentucky newspaper discussed deficiencies of Von Steuben's *Manual*. The most salient issues it discussed were the lack of involvement and efficiency of officers that it

¹⁶⁶ First quote, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 2. See also, Skeen, 18 and 21.

¹⁶⁷ The *Manual* referred to here is actually Friedrich Wilhelm Von Steuben, *Regulations for the order and discipline of the troops of the United States: to which is added, an appendix, containing the United States militia act, passed in Congress, May, 1792; and the act for forming and regulating the militia in New-Hampshire* (Exeter, NH: Henry Ranlet, 1794), but for the sake of brevity within the text, the colloquial *Manual* is used.

promoted: “we have Generals who are not competent to move a Battalion on a parade, without consulting a Book, or memorandums in their sleeves; Field-officers, who could not form or discipline a company, and whose appointments are not the result of their knowledge or qualifications, but of intrigues.”¹⁶⁸

Wayne, Harrison, and Jackson veered away from such practices and sought to employ militiamen and/or volunteers in ways that paid homage to their skill and ability, or lack thereof. In a letter to Richard M. Johnson in 1813, Harrison offered him a great deal of advice on how to command such men. To thwart their practice of impulsively pursuing their enemies without knowing what they may expect, he stated: “You must constantly have in mind that a partial success will be much better than to run any considerable risk to obtain a greater.” He continued to state that one of the greatest perils when commanding militia was their tendency to neglect to protect against surprise attacks and how easily they become over-confident when they get their first taste of success. He strongly advised that Johnson create a battle plan prior to any engagement and ensure the officers and men fully understood it.¹⁶⁹

Additionally, Johnson should tell his men that those who distinguish themselves will receive honor while those who do not will be “publicly and everlastingly disgraced.” However, there was an inherent danger in this statement. Using this concept as motivation could easily spur the militiaman or volunteer to be overzealous in their conduct. For example, at Dudley’s defeat, one survivor wrote that: “Our troops, impelled more by *incautious valour* and a desire for military distinguishment than prudence, pursued [the enemy].” As noted, that particular situation did not end well for the majority of those involved. Therefore, even though Harrison was far

¹⁶⁸ Quote, “A Sketch,” *The Telegraph* Georgetown, Kentucky, Apr. 22, 1813.

¹⁶⁹ Quote, WHH to Richard M. Johnson, June 11, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 469.

more capable at commanding a variety of troops than other officers, he too fell victim to erroneous practices.¹⁷⁰

Jackson offered advice in a letter to Tennessee congressman John Rhea. His advice regarded reform of the militia system rather than direct comment on commanding them, but his words do reflect the general attitude towards these oft-times unruly soldiers. He hoped that militia reform would occur in which the system could be put into a state “that when called for, they can be relied on.” He suggested that any man deserting from the militia should, once caught, be forced to serve in the regular army “during the present war” so as to deter such behavior. Also, Jackson recommended that the terms of service should be extended to a year as short term soldiers proved to be “the greatest curse to a nation in a state of war” leaving the army incapable of functioning fluidly.¹⁷¹

On the whole, evaluating the efficacy of the Kentucky militia and volunteers in the War of 1812, and the Indian Wars for that matter, can prove difficult when studying the writings of the officers and then comparing them to those of their soldiers. If a battle were lost, the officers often blamed their men, particularly the non-regulars. Even when victory was achieved, if anyone was to receive criticism, it was not the regular troops. Obviously, these men wished to vindicate themselves of misconducting their troops, so it was a common case to make that valid, wise orders were given but went unheeded. However, after examining the Kentucky’s contributions to two different wars, observing the trends that existed through the different battles, and studying the remarks they received afterwards, it can be stated that victory or failure relied more on the quality and conduct of the officer, rather than that of the soldier. Due to budget constraints of the national government, the militia and volunteers were employed simply to make

¹⁷⁰ First quote, WHH to Richard M. Johnson, June 11, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 469; second quote, Combs, *Dudley’s defeat*, 6.

¹⁷¹ Quotes, Jackson to Rhea, Oct. 10, 1814, *Papers of Jackson*, Vol. III, 156-57.

up numbers and give reinforcement to the regular troops. Thus, their ability and quality was at times below what they should have been, but with the opportunity to learn from the experiences of using these type of troops in the Indian Wars of the 1790s, the officers in charge of these men in the War of 1812 should have been more capable in commanding them.¹⁷²

¹⁷² See Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 3, 77-78 and 184.

CHAPTER VI

SEE YOU LATER, HALF-ALLIGATOR

Now having established the *reality* of the Kentucky militiaman and volunteer in the War of 1812, it is worth noting the process by which these men achieved the almost fantastical persona alluding to earlier. Before they partook in the armed conflicts of the war, they already had a national reputation that set them apart. Once they set about traversing the country, their reputation as unique warriors spread. So having contributed such high numbers of troops and having been involved in so many well-known battles, it is no wonder that an air of mystique and heroism came to surround them. For example, William Atherton, a Kentucky volunteer who had been taken prisoner after the River Raisin Massacre, was brought to Montreal along with other Kentucky prisoners. “[T]hey landed us above the city, to be seen as a rare curiosity. Word had reached the town before us, that a number of Kentucky prisoners were to pass through that day; and it appeared that the whole city had collected into that street to see the great sight...The reader may perhaps imagine my feelings at this time, for I shall not attempt to describe them.” When they arrived in Quebec and were housed in a prison, Atherton recorded that locals of that city would often come to view them. One man in particular said, “Why, they look just like other people,” and Atherton noted that “[i]t seemed from this that an idea prevailed that we were wild men, or an order of beings that scarcely belonged to this earth.” Then again, if people claim to be “half-horse and half-alligator,” they should not be surprised to be treated as a curiosity.¹⁷³

Another Kentucky volunteer militiaman present at both of the battles that occurred at Frenchtown, noted in his journal of the events a curious anecdote in which the reputation of

¹⁷³ First quote, Atherton, *Narrative*, 118; second quote, Atherton, 125.

Kentuckians was set against that of Ohioans. Apparently, while the American troops were making their approach, there was an elderly Indian man in conversation with a local French resident. When word spread that the Americans were near, he said, “Ho, de Mericans come; I suppose Ohio men come, we give them another chase,” which was an allusion to their actions against General Tupper, an Ohio militiaman. Next, “[h]e walked to the door smoking, apparently very unconcerned, and looked at us [the Kentuckians] till we formed the line of battle, and rushed on them with a mighty shout! he then called out ‘Kentucky, by God!’ and picked up his gun and ran to the woods like a wild beast.” Obviously, the veracity of this claim cannot be verified, but the fact that other sources exist in which Kentuckians were perceived as vicious while their counterparts in Ohio had a reputation for weakness lead one to believe that something of the sort could very well have happened. Asperheim discussed the generalizations of Ohioans being “lukewarm” and “cowardly” and how that contrasted with idea of Kentuckians being brave, daring, and capable of setting the enemy to flight. An anonymous diary kept by a Kentuckian who was a scout in the regular army under Colonel Samuel Wells, another Kentuckian, described the Ohio militia as cowardly, as well. He stated that he came across about 600 of them while he was en route to assist in the relief of Fort Wayne. He stated these 600, though “well mounted” were “affraid to go on and do what they had set out to do—The belief was that the *Devil* in the shape of Indians would be seen before they could reach the place of destination...”¹⁷⁴

Perhaps one of the most striking comments made about the unique character of Kentuckians came from the British. When Harrison wrote to a British officer rebuking him for his use of Indians in the war he stated: “I have never heard a single excuse for the employment

¹⁷⁴ Story of the Indian at Frenchtown, Darnell, *A Journal*, 47. See Asperheim, “Double Characters,” 100. Quote, Milo M. Quaife, “A Diary of the War of 1812,” in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Sep., 1914), 275.

of the Savages by your Government unless we can credit the story of some British Officer having dared to assert that ‘as we employed the Kentuckians you had a right to make use of the Indians.’” Taylor noted, too, that the British felt Americans “employed their own savages: the frontiersmen of Kentucky. The British regarded Kentuckians as bloodthirsty brutes, who had devolved from civilization by adopting the Indian mode of war.” Recalling that even Americans living in the eastern regions viewed Kentuckians as being of lower standing due to their similarities with natives, it could be concluded that this reputation was indeed a widespread one.¹⁷⁵

Further, mythmaking regarding the accolades of the militia became the theme for its treatment in the press and in correspondences written by the officers. For instance, Jackson had somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 troops on his side. There were 3,000, mostly unarmed, troops in reserve as well. “Jackson also had with him many able and experienced officers.” However, in his correspondences he downplayed how many troops he had and purported that those under his command were of lower quality. Such assertions created a great sensation that such a small amount of unruly, inexperienced troops were able to defeat the renowned British regular troops.¹⁷⁶

Newspaper articles following the Battle of New Orleans revealed a mixed description of the Kentuckians’ performance. One Ohio newspaper reported that “[t]he fire of the Kentuckians and Tennessee forces on the left was particularly fatal to the enemy.” Another paper announced: “The ‘raw militia’ of the West have vanquished the ‘Heroes of the Peninsula.’” The *Kentucky Gazette* reported that “the reputation of the Kentucky militia, for promptitude of action,

¹⁷⁵ First quote, WHH to Gen. Vincent, Nov. 3, 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, Vol. II, 594. Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 208.

¹⁷⁶ Quote, Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 172. See, Jackson to Winchester, Jan. 19, 1815, in *Jackson Papers*, III, 252. Jackson to Brown, Jan. [27], 1815, *ibid.*, 259; and Doubler, *Civilian in Peace*, 86.

patriotism and valor, has been tried in the crucible of battle, without sustaining a blot” and “the newspapers throughout the union teem with private letters filled with [evidence] on the valour and intrepidity displayed by the Kentucky militia on the memorable 8th of January.”¹⁷⁷

This belief popularized even more the image of the Kentuckian as a brave, ruthless, able, and somewhat feral figure, and most likely played into the Republicans’ attempt to avert attention from the realities of the ineffective aspects of the war and the deficiencies in the Treaty of Ghent. Having a caricature of such a man as this legendary Kentuckian associated with the War of 1812 was preferable to the fact that all the causes of the war were ignored at its end. Shortly after the war, this mythical Kentuckian and his exploits against the British at New Orleans became immortalized in a song, “The Hunters of Kentucky”:

We are a hardy free-born race, each man to fear a stranger,
Whate’er the game we join in chase, despising toil and danger;
And if a daring foe annoys, whate’er his strength and forces,
We’ll show him that Kentucky boys are alligator horses.

I s’pose you’ve read it in the prints, how Packenham attempted
To make old Hickory Jackson wince, but soon his schemes repented;
For we with rifles ready cocked, thought such occasion lucky,
And soon around the general flocked the hunters of Kentucky.

You’ve heard, I s’pose, how New Orleans is famed for wealth and beauty
There’s girls of every hue, it seems, from snowy white to sooty.
So Packenham he made his brags, if he in fight was lucky,
He’d have their girls and cotton bags in spite of old Kentucky.

But Jackson he was wide awake, and wasn’t scared at trifles,
For well he knew what aim we take with our Kentucky rifles;
So he led us down to Cyprus swamp, the ground was low and mucky,
There stood John Bull in martial pomp, and here was old Kentucky.

A bank was raised to hide our breast, not that we thought of dying,
But then we always like to rest unless the game is flying;

¹⁷⁷ First quote, “Jackson’s Victory,” *Weekly Recorder*, Feb. 2, 1815;” second quote, “New-Orleans gloriously Defended!” *Salem Gazette*, Feb. 10, 1815; third quote, “The Kentucky Troops,” *Kentucky Gazette*, Mar. 20, 1815; fourth, “Vindication of Kentucky,” *Kentucky Gazette*, Apr. 3, 1815; last, “Highly Important and Glorious News,” *City Gazette*, Feb. 8, 1815. See also, “Jackson’s Victory,” *Weekly Recorder*, Feb. 2, 1815.

Behind it stood our little force, none wished it to be greater,
For every man was half a horse and half an alligator.¹⁷⁸

Whether brave or weak, able or inept, willing or drafted, thousands of Kentuckians served in the frontier excursions against combative natives, fought under a variety of officers alongside regular troops in national campaigns, or both. They tasted victory and suffered defeat, sometimes on their own soil, but oftentimes far from home. Known as vicious, crude, and virtually feral by many, they also had a reputation for being bold, determined, and proficient with a rifle. Of course there were individual Kentuckians that rightfully earned this reputation, but on the whole, Kentucky militiamen and volunteers were average soldiers with an inconsistent battle record. Their characterization as heroic and intimidating soldiers in spite of their wanting reality was a result of political spin. As with the Republicans' treatment of the War of 1812 itself, the Kentuckians' glorified reputation in retrospect helped to embellish both their contributions to the war as well as give the federal government a means by which to divert the public's attention from the realities of the country's second fight against Great Britain. Moreover, the imposing nature of the Kentuckian regaled the imagination of many, incited fear in some, and fed the curiosity of others, whether such repute was truly deserved or not. Following these men from the settlement of their state through their service in the War of 1812, one certainly discovers an intriguing character, a double character, a Kentuckian.

¹⁷⁸ Ballad, "Hunters of Kentucky", from *The Poetical Works of Samuel Woodowrth*, Vol. II, ed. Frederick Woodworth (New York: Charles Scribner, 1860). Only a few select verses are included here. For more on the Republican reaction to the war's end, see Hickey, *War of 1812*, 321-23.

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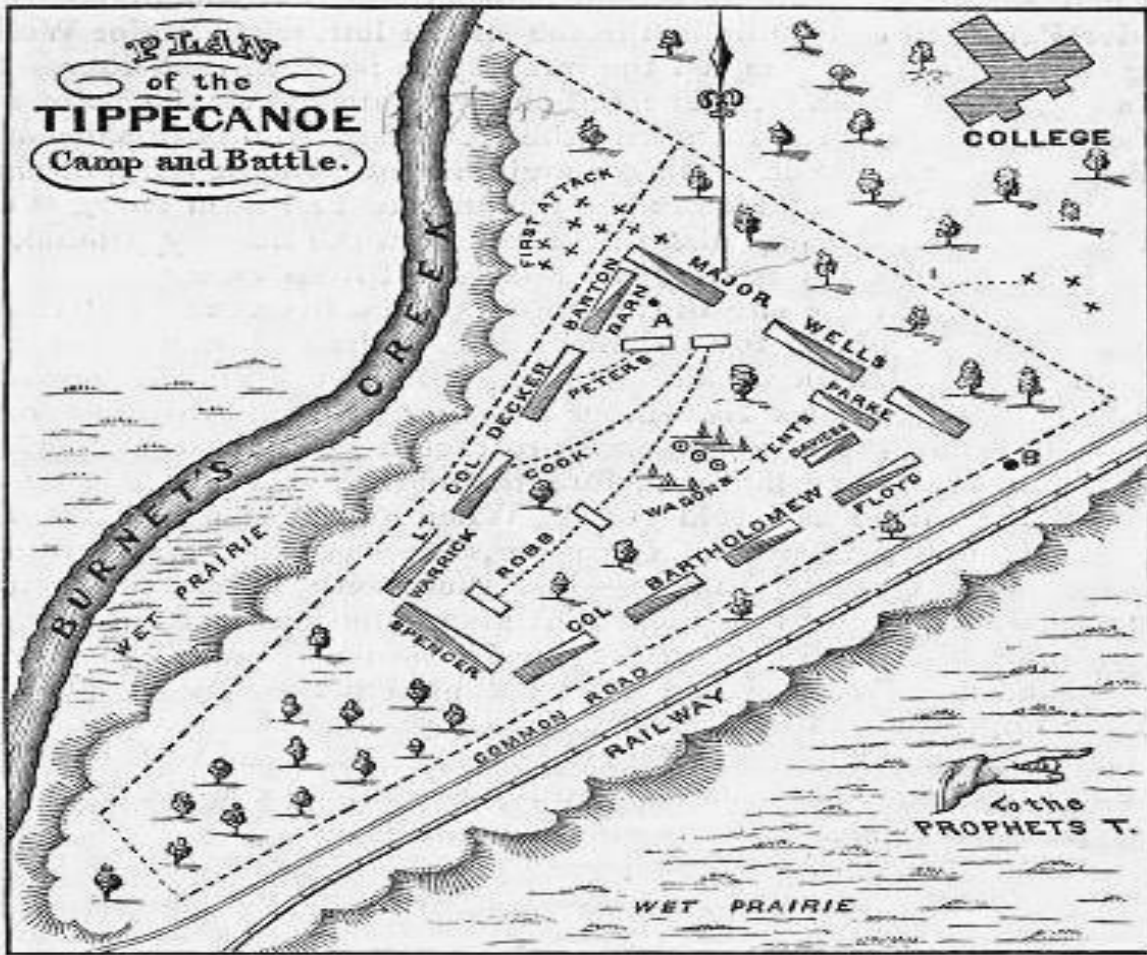
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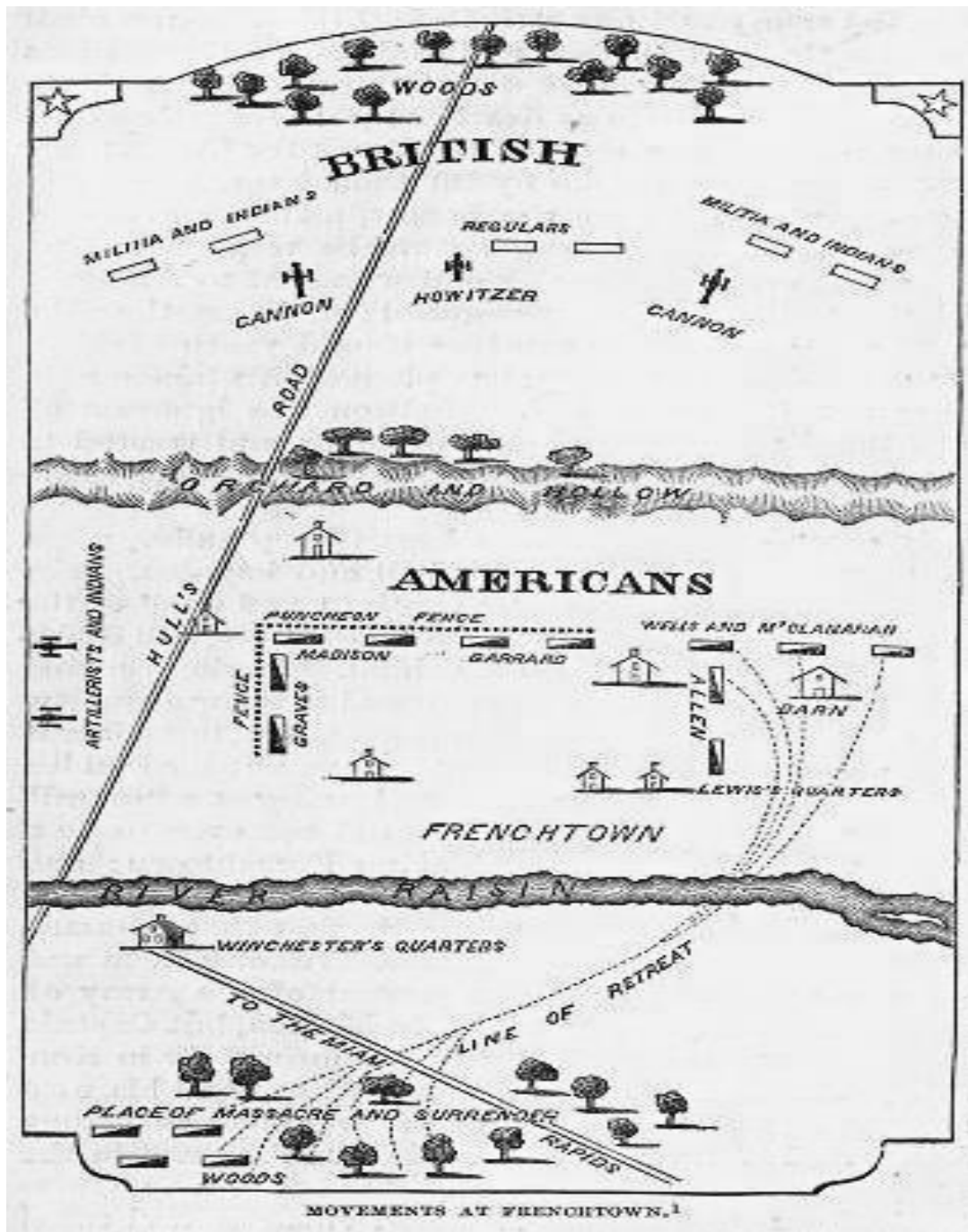
APPENDIX



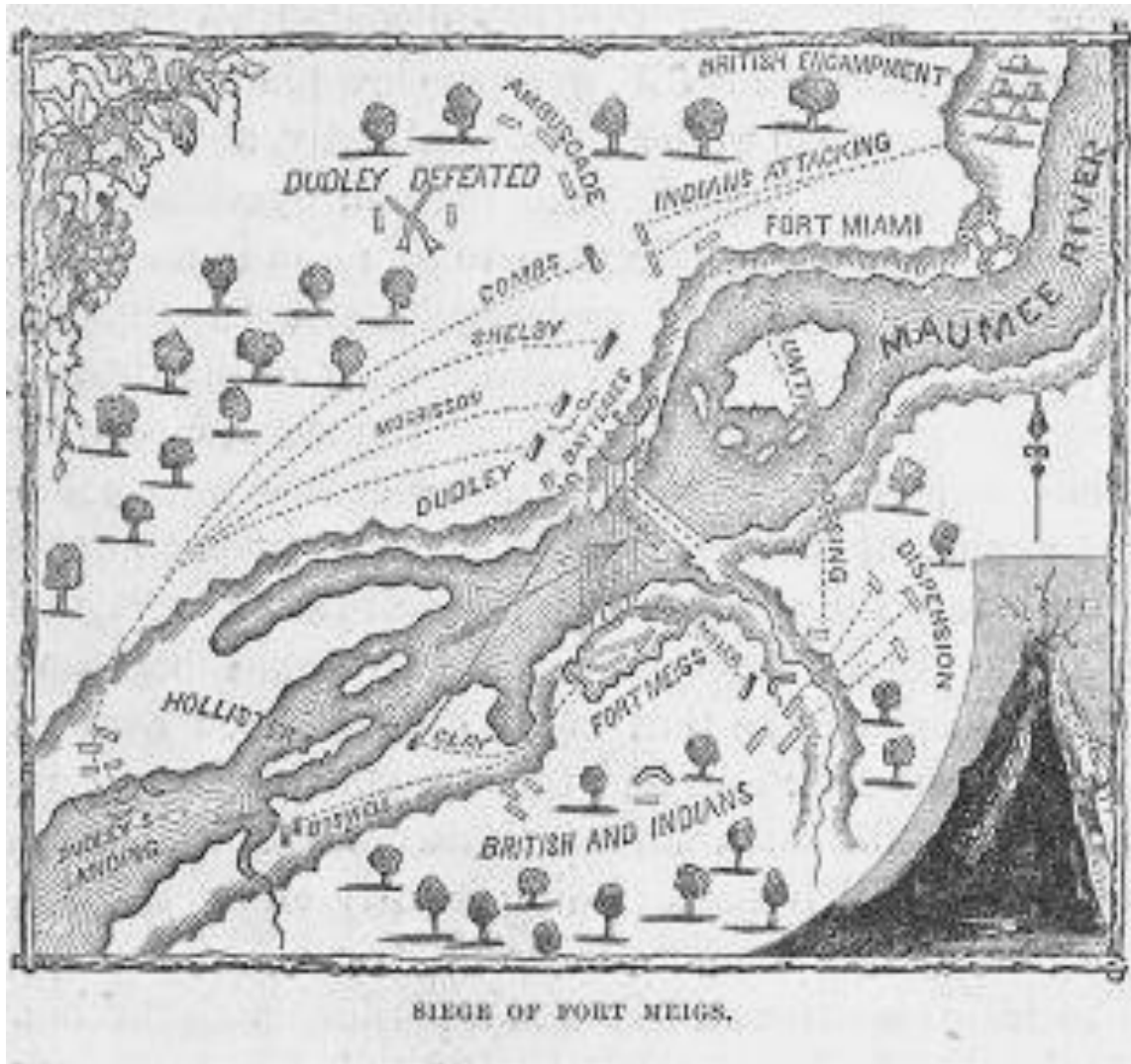
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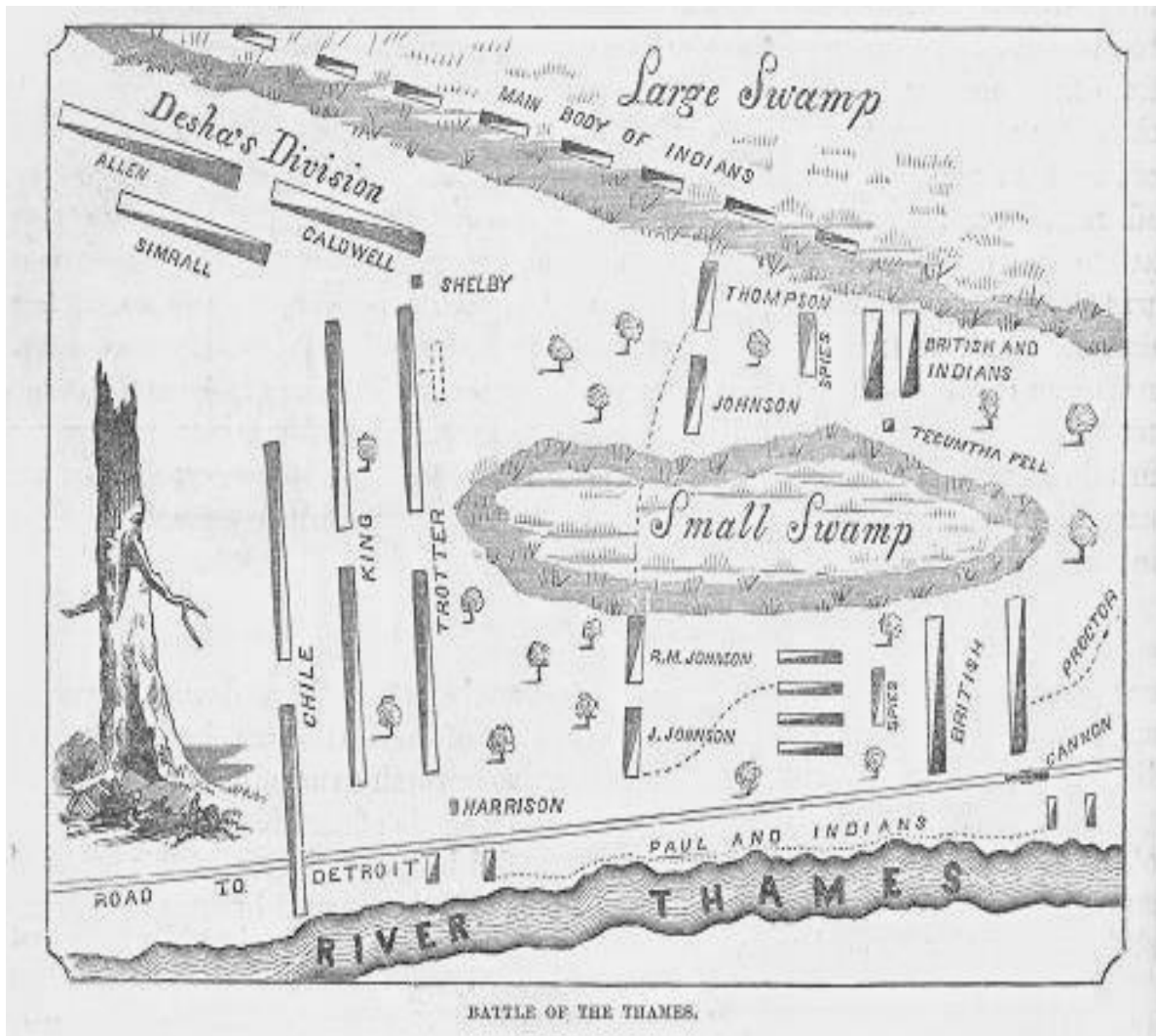
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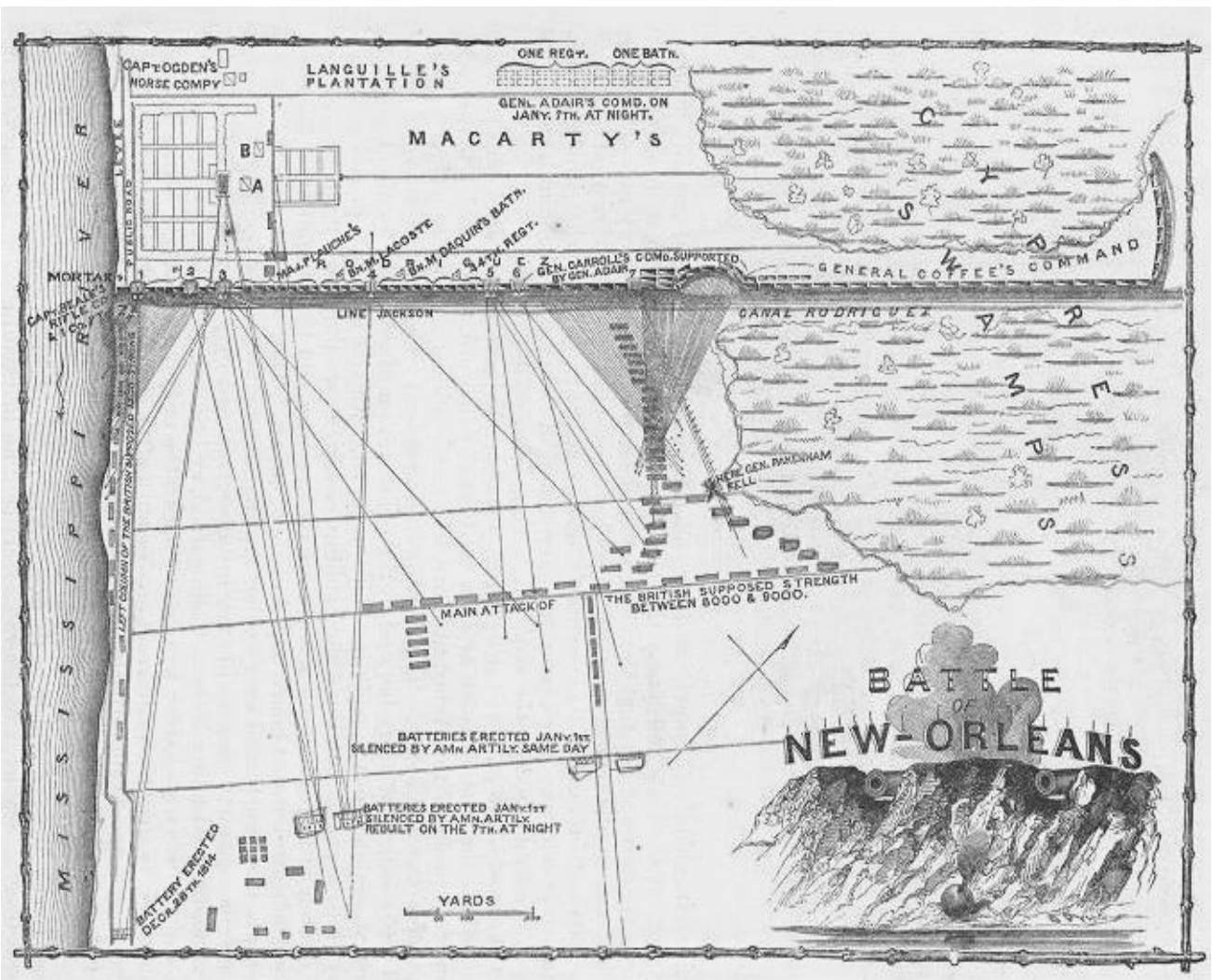
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