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Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 3083.
<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/3083>

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CONQUERORS OR COWARDS: THE ROLE OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTED
MILITIA IN THE INDIAN WARS FROM 1768 TO 1841

By

Joel Anderson
B.S. Indiana University Southeast, 2011

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Art
in History

Department of History
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2018

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A Thesis Approved on

November 6, 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis represents several years of guidance and support from my wife, family and dedicated professors. Professionally, I need to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Daniel Krebs, Dr. Glenn Crothers, and Dr. Frank Kelderman, for their service. I would also like to thank Dr. Krebs and Dr. Crothers for their help outside of the thesis committee. I received much direction and assistance from both of them during my time at Louisville. Dr. Krebs' guidance in researching for projects were complimented with Dr. Crothers assistance in the leviathan task of improving my writing. Their advising these past four years helped make a seemingly impossible task become a reality.

It is hard to put into words the gratitude I have for my supportive wife who dealt with the stresses of course and thesis work on top of our jobs. In addition, she blessed me with the most amazing son, which she raised many nights alone while I worked on my thesis. During the difficult times of him asking me to play, this provided the necessary encouragement to persevere and finish the project. Also, I need to thank my parents, Rich and Debbie Anderson, and other family members that asked about my project while offering words of encouragement.

ABSTRACT

CONQUERORS OR COWARDS: THE ROLE OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTED MILITIA IN THE INDIAN WARS FROM 1768 TO 1841

Joel Anderson

November 6, 2018

The thesis argues that Kentuckians developed the myth that the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers were the most effective troops to fight Native American warriors in the Northwest Indian War of 1790 to 1794 and the War of 1812. The idea that these troops were the best fighters originated in the decades following the War of 1812 as Kentuckians generated a communal history. Residents of the state listened to orators mythologize the successes of mounted Kentuckians in battle, while remembering the foot militia for their sacrifices rather than their shortcomings.

This thesis also examines the battle record of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers in both conflicts to demonstrate that this myth developed despite numerous defeats on the battlefield. In memory, however, the battle record of the mounted militia in Kentucky was presented as one of repeated victories, with minimal losses, in conflict after conflict, thus encouraging the development of the myth that the Kentuckians were the best troops for fighting Native Americans.

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NOTES ABOUT TERMINOLOGY AND PERSPECTIVE

Throughout this thesis, terms such as American Indians, Native Americans, warriors, and Native people appear interchangeably to enable a more expeditious description of Native Americans who came into contact with or fought whites in Kentucky and the Ohio Country. The Ohio Indians and Northwest Indians are used to describe those who joined the Native Confederations that fought the United States and Kentuckians in the 1790s and the War of 1812. The Shawnee and Miami were the two most powerful Indian nations of the Old Northwest that fought the United States in the timeframe of this thesis, but they allied with the Wea, Kickapoo, Delaware, Wyandot, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Illinois nations in their fight against the United States.

This thesis distinguishes between those militia who were mounted and those who fought on foot. Mounted volunteers and militia refer to Kentuckians who participated in campaigns mounted on horseback. Kentuckians who participated on foot are referred to as foot militia and infantry.

INTRODUCTION

On October 9, 1814, General William Henry Harrison, commanding officer of the American Northwest Army during the War of 1812, reflected on his recent victory over combined British and Indian forces at the Battle of the Thames River, and the death of the Pan-Confederation Indian leader Tecumseh. As he recounted the battle in a report to Secretary of War John Armstrong, Harrison praised the Kentuckians, particularly Richard Mentor Johnson's regiment, who secured victory when they broke through enemy lines. He wrote:

The American backwoodsmen ride better in the woods than any other people. A musket or a rifle is no impediment to them, being accustomed to carry them on horseback from their earliest youth. I was persuaded, too, that the enemy would be unprepared for the shock, and that they could not resist it.¹

Harrison ordered Johnson's regiment to charge before he finished lining up the regular troops because of the poor placement of the British defenders at the Thames. The British troops formed a loose defensive line making them an ideal target for a cavalry charge. Harrison's assessment of the British and Indian lines was correct. Johnson's regiment succeeded in breaking through the British lines, leading to a quick rout by the Americans.

As a result of the American victory at the Thames River, the Kentuckians regularly celebrated the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers, and the force achieved a

¹ William Henry Harrison to Secretary of War John Armstrong, 9 October 1814, William Henry Harrison, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 2: 562.

mythological status in the decades after the battle. Johnson gained the vice presidency in no small measure because people believe he killed Tecumseh in the battle. Orators repeatedly reminded Kentuckians of the victory and of those who died in previous conflicts with Native Americans during celebrations of the Fourth of July and President George Washington's birthday. Speakers praised the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers as the elite force that secured the West for white settlement and allowed the United States to continue its westward expansion.

In the 1790s Northwest Indian War and the War of 1812, however, Kentuckians experienced numerous defeats and had only a few victories. Their victory at Moraviantown stands out as their lone success in a major battle. Despite such poor performances, historian John Grenier, in his recent study *The First Way of War*, writes, "By the 1810s, the mounted rangers of Kentucky were the most sought-after troops for killing the Indians of the Transappalachian West."²

This thesis explores the attitudes of Kentuckians towards the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers, tracking the development of the myth that this force was the best and most sought after Indian fighters in the Trans-Appalachian West. Kentuckians fought Northwest Indians beginning in the 1770s when the earliest white hunters began arriving in the Trans-Appalachian West, but large-scale campaigns assisted by the federal government did not begin until the Northwest Indian War of the 1790s. Prior to the federal government's involvement, local militia and government leaders organized raids that usually consisted of a few hundred militiamen retaliating for attacks against white settlements. Between the Northwest Indian War of the 1790s and the War of 1812,

² John Grenier, *The First Way of War : American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 36.

Kentuckians participated in six offensive operations. In these six campaigns, Kentuckians suffered three losses, one draw, and two victories, including one which they played a supporting role to the regular army.

This thesis argues that the mounted rangers of Kentucky or Kentucky Mounted Volunteers actually had a dismal battle record. Their lone success came at the Battle of Thames River against an enemy cut off from resupply and reinforcements and struggling with low morale, which led to many desertions in the days before the battle. Kentuckians' participation in numerous offensive operations in the 1790s and War of 1812 reveals that three essential components were necessary for them to win. First, by fighting on horseback rather than as foot militia, the Kentucky volunteers managed to defeat their opponents. Second, Kentucky officers that the militiamen respected and proved themselves capable leaders also helped them emerge victorious. Last, better fighters participated when they volunteered for campaigns instead of being drafted as foot militia.

Despite this rather checkered record, Kentucky Mounted Volunteers nevertheless achieved mythological status in the decades following the War of 1812. The aura originated among newspaper correspondents who wrote inflated stories about the militia, was enhanced by Kentucky citizens who defended the militia from citation after their defeats, and cemented by orators who remembered the militia's few victories in the decades following the 1790s Northwest Indian War and War of 1812. The Battle of New Orleans and the subsequent arguments with General Andrew Jackson, commander of the American forces at the battle, acted as a catalyst for Kentuckians to defend and eventually inflate the accomplishments of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers in the subsequent decades. Jackson critiqued Kentucky militiamen for cowardly behavior at

New Orleans. These arguments between Jackson and the militia's defenders encouraged speakers in Kentucky to inflate the accomplishments of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers, with a lasting impact on Kentuckians.

The historiography of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers contributed to the expansion of the myth that they were the most capable Indian fighters in the West, and the myth survives into the twenty-first century, partially promoted by Grenier. In addition to Grenier, Wiley Sword's *President Washington's Indian War* provides a thorough overview of the Northwest Indian War. Sword places the Kentuckians in context as the new federal government fought its first war. His overview of the entire conflict argues that federal officers' ignorance of the enemy hindered the war effort and resulted in more offensives than necessary. He also argues that the mounted Kentuckians proved more effective in combat than the state's foot militia. He adds that officers in the regular army failed to recognize the importance of employing men who understood the skulking way of war. Native Americans employed the skulking way of war against whites. The tactics used in this style of warfare include ambushes, firing at the enemy from covered positions, and raiding vulnerable settlements and towns.³

In addition to Sword, Jack Jule Gifford's dissertation, "The Northwest Indian War 1784-1794" provides a detailed analysis of the four major American offensives. Gifford's argues that in the 1780s the American army was too small and weak to patrol in the Ohio Valley. The inadequate American force could not prevent whites from crossing the Ohio River to attack Native American villages or establish farms, nor could it effectively guard

³ Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War : The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

against Indian raiding parties entering Kentucky. His work convincingly shows that the small U.S. Army of the 1780s could not control the large border expanse of the Ohio Country, making it impossible for the national government to negotiate peace in good faith with the Ohio Indian nations.⁴

Carl Edward Skeen's *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* and Alan Taylor's *The Civil War of 1812* both provide overviews of the conflict and its many fronts. Skeen's work explains how the militia transformed as threat of Indian attack lessened in Kentucky. As Kentuckians felt more secure, their militia companies stopped maintaining their weapons and assembling for training. In effect, Kentucky's militia became a paper army. Skeen's detailed accounts of the war reveal that the militia was not ready for war. When the United States declared war, the militia failed in nearly every engagement in which it participated. The lone exception was the Kentuckians participation in the second invasion of Upper Canada in the fall 1813.⁵

Taylor's work provides an alternative perspective of the conflict and he does not place the militia at the center of his narrative. His work enables readers to understand how East Coast leaders and the British perceived the Kentuckians, whom they believed depended on hunting, dressed like Native Americans, and used military tactics similar to Indian warriors. Kentuckians took pride in the skulking tactics they employed in combat, and they refused to abandon these tactics despite critics. In the War of 1812, Kentuckians proved themselves capable mounted soldiers during the second invasion of Canada.⁶

⁴ Jack Jule Gifford, "The Northwest Indian War 1784-1795" (Phd diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1964).

⁵ Carl Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999); Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

⁶ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 208

Harry Laver thoroughly explores Kentucky's civic and cultural development through the lens of the militia in *Citizens More than Soldiers*. Laver's work examines the importance of militia units to the political, societal, racial, and economic development of the state. When they gathered for celebrations or anniversaries, citizens of Kentucky developed and later refined a national, state, and western identity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Kentucky's distinctive identity developed alongside a new national identity. Laver shows that the Kentuckians viewed themselves as equally American as residents of the eastern seaboard despite their geographic distance from the East. At gatherings, the militia took center stage. They put on martial displays for the crowd and speakers enthralled listeners with stories of conquest along with memorials to the militiamen killed in battle.⁷

Among the primary sources used in the thesis, the *American State Papers: Military Affairs* and *Indian Affairs*, along with *the Kentucky Gazette*, proved invaluable. These sources cover both conflicts and reveal the opinions of political officials at the national and state level, as well as those of U.S. Army and Kentucky militia officers.⁸ The *American State Papers* include correspondence from leaders such as President George Washington, General Anthony Wayne, and Governor William Henry Harrison, reports from field commanders to national leaders, and court of inquiry findings that designate

⁷ Harry S. Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers: The Kentucky Militia and Society in the Early Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

⁸ *Kentucky Gazette*, 1809; *The Kentucky Gazette*, 1789; United States Congress, *American State Papers Indian Affairs* (Buffalo, N.Y.: W.S. Hein, 1998).(hereafter ASPIA); *American State Papers Military Affairs* (Buffalo, N.Y.: W.S. Hein, 1998).(hereafter ASPMA).

the reasons for military defeats. The reports and letters of American commanders offered detailed descriptions about the failed offensives.

The Kentucky Gazette described the conflicts from the perspective of Kentuckians. The newspaper published public calls for volunteers to participate in campaigns in both conflicts. The *Kentucky Gazette* also published many contemporary speeches that recalled and memorialized the exploits of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers. These speeches reveal how the citizens in Kentucky created their state, western, and national identities.

The first chapter of this thesis describes how Kentuckians learned Indian hunting methods after their arrival in the West in the 1770s. The earliest European arrivals to Kentucky depended solely on hunting for their survival. Because Indian hunting methods and skulking warfare tactics closely resembled one another in warfare, recently arrived whites also became familiar with the Indian way of war. White hunters were not as capable as their Indian counterparts, but replicating their methods and technology improved their skills. As more white hunters arrived in Kentucky, tensions with Native Americans increased, and white hunters began using skulking tactics in battle.

The second chapter discusses the transition of the Kentucky militia during the American Revolution and the years immediately following the conflict. Kentuckians modified their tactics. Building fortifications enabled whites to occupy more land despite a limited population. In addition, Kentuckians adopted the horse for use in battle. The benefits of the horse became apparent in the years after the Revolutionary War when Kentuckians began attacking targets as far north as the Great Lakes.

The third chapter examines the battle record of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers in the Northwest Indian War of the 1790s. Kentuckians participated in four campaigns during Northwest Indian War. The campaigns of 1790, led by General Josiah Harmar, and 1791, led by General Arthur St. Clair, ended in disastrous defeat. The third operation consisted of raids led by General Charles Scott and General James Wilkinson that destroyed many villages and food supplies with minimal casualties on both sides. The fourth offensive, led by General Anthony Wayne, ended in a decisive victory for the United States, but Kentuckians played a minor role in the campaigns lone battle. The outcome of these offensives was largely determined by the commanding officers' methods of preparation. The chapter ends with the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, following Wayne's 1794 victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.

The fourth chapter is an overview of the Kentuckians' participation in three operations in the war of 1812: the winter offensive of 1812-1813, the late summer invasion of Upper Canada in 1813, and the Battle of New Orleans. The winter campaign of 1812-1813 ended in defeat. The Battle of New Orleans ended in victory for the United States, but Andrew Jackson berated Kentuckians for cowardice on the battlefield. Jackson's critique initiated a series of arguments between the general and Kentucky leaders in the decade after the War of 1812. Kentuckians' lone success during the War of 1812 was the summer offensive in 1813 when mounted Kentuckians under the command of Colonel Richard Mentor Johnson harassed the vanguard of the retreating British forces and prevented them from establishing a strong defensive line against the American forces.

The fifth chapter explores the role of memory in elevating the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers to mythological status as the force most capable of ending Indian threats. Kentuckians developed a collective memory of the conflicts by attending public gatherings such as Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July where speakers remembered victories over their enemies in the Northwest Indian War and the War of 1812 by the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers and eulogized about those who died in battle during these campaigns. At these gatherings, people witnessed militia parades followed by speakers who honored American and Kentucky heroes and implored listeners to model their behavior on these men. In the process, Kentuckians constructed an identity that celebrated the state's social and racial hierarchy centered on wealthy white men.

CHAPTER 1

KENTUCKIANS LEARN HUNTING AND THE INDIAN WAY OF WAR 1768-1777

Learning the Indian Way of War

The opening of Kentucky to white settlement took place after the signing of the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Prior to the treaty, the British king, George III, forbade white settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The Six Nation Iroquois League and British Indian Superintendent Sir William Johnson negotiated the treaty drawing on the old Covenant Chain alliance between the British and Iroquois that had existed for over a century and a half by the time of the 1768 agreement.⁹ The Iroquois Confederation and Johnson argued that the Iroquois controlled Kentucky by right of conquest, and used a claim considered by the Shawnee as the basis of the treaty.¹⁰ The terms between Johnson and the Iroquois declared the land between the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers open for white settlement. The Cherokee and Shawnee strongly objected to the agreement. Kentucky was their hunting ground, and they did not recognize Iroquois claims to the territory.¹¹ The Cherokee and Shawnee argued that a person, town, or nation could not claim land if they did not use the territory. They used the land for hunting, and argued that the Iroquois did not have a right to sell the territory. The fraudulent nature of the agreement sparked three decades of conflict between whites

⁹ Francis Jennings, "The Constitutional Evolution of the Covenant Chain," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, no. 2 (April 1971): 88-89; Jon William Parmenter, "Pontiac's War: Forging New Links in the Anglo-Iroquois Covenant Chain, 1758-1766," *Ethnohistory*, no. 4 (Autumn 1997).

¹⁰ Armstrong Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare, 1675-1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 114.

¹¹ The Cherokee strongly objected because they signed the Treaty of Hard Labor of 1768 that relinquished claims to their hunting grounds west of the Allegheny Mountains. Because of this treaty, the Cherokee were not willing to relinquish more territory in the treaty of Fort Stanwix., *Ibid*, 118.

and Native Americans in the Ohio Country that ended with an American victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794.

After the 1768 agreement, white settlers began entering Kentucky in larger numbers. They found a landscape full of game but they lacked the hunting skills to effectively support themselves while they cleared land for farming. To survive, white hunters adopted Indian hunting techniques, clothing, and technology.¹² Whites in the West needed to learn these skills before they established farms to grow their own food. In the process, whites began to resemble Native Americans closely in their dress and dependence on hunting wild game rather than farming.

Indians were expert hunters who began learning their techniques from the age of twelve. By the time whites began arriving in the Ohio Country, Indian hunters had spent generations refining their methods, and improved their skills with the addition of European technology. Indian men went on annual long hunts during which they taught the younger generation the skulking skills necessary to track prey and develop the endurance to travel long distances on minimal food. The physical demands of the long hunt has led historian Armstrong Starkey to argue that Native American warriors possessed the skills, endurance, and discipline of modern military commandos.¹³

Native Americans did not draw a sharp distinction between hunting and warfare; they trained to achieve mastery in both. Young Indian men took their training quite seriously because it allowed them to demonstrate their manhood. Hunting also enabled young men show respect to village elders by providing meat to those no longer able to

¹² Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost : The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 5, 8, 23.

¹³ Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 19-22.

hunt for themselves.¹⁴ Native American hunting skills – their ability to move stealthily through the forest, track animals, and shoot accurately – proved useful in times of war. After the introduction of the flintlock musket, Indian hunters learned to aim precisely and maintain their weapons on long hunts. They soon transferred these skills to the realm of warfare. White settlers to the Ohio Country emulated the tactics of what Patrick Malone calls the skulking way of war: quick raids, ambushes, tactical retreats, and the avoidance of open battles.¹⁵ White hunters employed these tactics as they transitioned from hunting to conquering land claimed by Native Americans.

When Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark, and their peers entered Kentucky, they found a landscape they considered pristine for settling and hunting, but ignored the inhabitants' claims to the land.¹⁶ Less experienced in hunting, white settlers emulated Native American tactics to hunt more effectively.¹⁷ The hunters also began wearing Indian clothing and moccasins because they found them superior to European-made clothing for frontier conditions.¹⁸ White hunters especially prized moccasins because they dried more quickly than European-made shoes did.¹⁹

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the Indian hunting culture adopted by white settlers was the choice of leaders by hunting parties. Whites adopted Indian hunting

¹⁴ Aron, *West was Lost*, 8, 21.

¹⁵ Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War : Technology and Tactics among the New England Indians* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1991), 10.

¹⁶ Aron, *West was Lost*, 22-23

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 23

¹⁸ Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 19.

¹⁹ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 23; Stephen Aron, "Rights in the Woods' on the Trans-Appalachian Frontier," in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, ed. Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 103-04; John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer*, (New York: Holt, 1992), 17-23.

techniques and clothing because they could not immediately transform the landscape immediately into one suitable for raising crops and livestock.²⁰ But white settlers selected their leaders based on their hunting skills rather than their social position. Such men led fellow hunters at the pleasure of the company and were replaced if the hunting party believed another man more capable.²¹ Kentuckians abandoned leaders if they did not inspire confidence among the ranks, a practice followed in the warfare of the 1770s and 1780s. George Rogers Clark's Kentucky militia, for example, abandoned him during his 1786 Wabash campaign.²² White settlers also followed young Native Americans in using their exploits in hunting and warfare as an opportunity to demonstrate their manhood to their peers. White hunters, like Native Americans, viewed hunting as an arena in which they could demonstrate their masculinity.²³ However, the similarities between white and Indian hunting techniques, dress, and leadership choices, stark differences remained. White hunters strove to maintain their European identity and constructed a white-dominated culture in the West.²⁴

The Kentucky frontier was an ideal place for eastern yeoman farmers who longed for prosperity.²⁵ Scarcity of land, conflict with religious and civil authorities, and a desire for economic opportunities to improve their economic standing pushed settlers out of

²⁰ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 13-15.

²¹ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 33-34; Brent Altscheler, "The Long Hunters and James Knox Their Leader," *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* no. 5 (October 1931), 169-75; Faragher, *Daniel Boone*, 24; Lyman Copeland Draper, "Life of Boone," *Lyman Copeland Draper Manuscripts*, (University of Wisconsin, Madison Wisconsin), 3B, 64-65.

²² Richard G. Stone, *A Brittle Sword : The Kentucky Militia, 1776-1912* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 15.

²³ Aron, *West was Lost*, 8, 21, 25-26.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 23-24., Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 128.

²⁵ Aron, *West Was Lost*", 150.

Virginia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania to Kentucky.²⁶ Hunting provided whites with their initial food supplies and animal skins that they sold to traders for the tools they needed to build farms in Kentucky. As they established homesteads, white settlers adopted the technology and tactics of Indians that helped them produce items they could trade or sell.

As the whites improved their hunting skills, they became increasingly knowledgeable in frontier warfare. Improved accuracy with muskets and enhanced tracking ability made them proficient at the skulking tactics of Indian warfare. Like their Native American counterparts, white hunters began to participate in long hunts that lasted for months or years at a time. Backcountry men left their wives to tend to the farms and families while they participated in these long hunts. Like Indian hunter-warriors, they chose the Pennsylvania or Kentucky long rifle as their preferred weapon.²⁷ Frontier settlements and long hunts served as the training ground where white frontiersmen refined their skills. Whites and Native Americans became bitter enemies to the dismay of whites on the Atlantic seaboard, but they also strongly resembled one another.²⁸

As the number of whites who hunted and established farms rose in the West, violence between whites and Native Americans increased. The level of brutality grew in part because settlers made no distinctions between combatants and noncombatants. The ruthlessness of white soldiers regularly appalled their Native American allies and enemies, whether during King Philip's War in seventeenth century New England,

²⁶ Nancy O'Malley, "Frontier Defenses and Pioneer Strategies in the Historic Settlement Era," *The Buzzle about Kentuck: Settling the Promised Land*, Craig Friend, ed., (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 59.

²⁷ Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 126-127.

²⁸ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 13.

Pontiac's Rebellion in the mid-eighteenth century, or the Northwest Indian Wars of the late eighteenth century. The willingness of white soldiers to kill non-combatants dismayed Indians who were more likely to take prisoners to replace the people they lost in combat. As white encroachment into Kentucky increased, Indian warriors responded in kind and began killing noncombatants to stop white incursions. Europeans, in turn, justified further attacks on Indian noncombatants by arguing that they fought a savage enemy. The horrific nature of the warfare in Kentucky led frontiersmen to hate Indians, encouraging them to pursue a war of extirpation.²⁹ Stories about the merciless behavior of Native Americans in Kentucky, including attacks on women and children, soon spread throughout the United States, carried by newspapers and travelers.³⁰

Along the eastern seaboard, the Revolutionary War focused on the independence of the United States, but the fighting in Kentucky soon became a racial conflict between whites and Native Americans over control of Kentucky. In the 1760s, the Shawnee allowed white hunters to live in Kentucky, but those days came to an end in the 1770s as whites increased in number and began farming the land.³¹ When white hunters began settling and modifying the landscape, the Shawnee tried to stem the tide of white settlement.³² But the number of whites entering Kentucky during the Revolutionary War proved too great for the Shawnee to remove.

Revolutionary War

²⁹ Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 19.

³⁰ Silver's work details press reports out of western Pennsylvania to track the development of Indian-hating attitudes among whites; Peter Rhoads Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

³¹ Aron, *West was Lost*, 17-19; Aron, "Rights in the Woods," 187-88; Draper, "Life of Boone," *Draper Manuscripts*, 3B47-60.

³² Aron, "Rights in the Woods," 187; Richard White, *The Middle Ground : Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 103-4.

In 1775, the political loyalties of most western settlers were complicated and unclear. Daniel Boone, for example, did not fight for American independence but for the expansion of white settlement against Native Americans who sought to retain their land.³³ However, when the British began to arm and advise Indians in 1778, whites regardless of previous political allegiances, fought together against Indians in an increasingly violent race war.³⁴ When the British decided to arm Native Americans to remove patriot influences in Kentucky, whites reacted by uniting against the British who allied themselves to the Indians. Settlers formed the Kentucky Militia to fight Native Americans and their British allies.³⁵

In 1777, the Kentucky settlements of Boonesborough, Saint Asaph's, and Harrodsburg held their first formal muster of 144 men.³⁶ Militia service enabled hunters to demonstrate their knowledge of the skulking way of war in battle.³⁷ However, many leaders in the Kentucky militia struggled to implement skulking tactics failed to advance their forces with the same caution as Indian warriors. Kentuckians had learned most facets of the skulking way of war, but they lacked the same level of caution as their enemies. Whites who desired to display their masculinity in battle were overly aggressive and walked into numerous ambushes. They struggled with what historian John Faragher calls "fool-brave," with many officers fearing that a comrade would raise questions about their manhood if they failed to attack.³⁸ Their Indian enemies admired bravery, but

³³ Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 127

³⁴ Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires : Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 214.

³⁵ Ibid, 222; Colonel William Fleming's Journal, 1779-1780, Newton D. Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York,: The Macmillan Company, 1916).

³⁶ Laver, *Citizens*, 9; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 8-9.

³⁷ Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 126

³⁸ Faragher, *Daniel Boone*, 214-224; Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 128-29.

deplored rashness. They therefore avoided bloody frontal assaults and sought to envelop an enemy while leaving a retreat route to avoid costly battles.³⁹

The most successful American commander to apply the Indian tactics in battle against the British was George Rogers Clark, who invaded the Illinois Country in 1778. He launched an invasion of Illinois with the stated objective of protecting Kentucky settlements from Indian attack, despite the fact that the greatest threat to the Kentuckians was the Shawnee in the Ohio Country. He also sought a river route to advance on the key British base at Detroit.⁴⁰ He believed that if American forces captured Detroit, they could sever the supply of British weapons going to the Shawnee and their enemy would have a finite supply of ammunition and weaponry.

In July 1778, Clark's force captured Kaskaskia, which offered access to the Wabash River and enabled American forces to advance on Detroit. In response to the capture of Kaskaskia, British Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton seized the post of Vincennes on the Wabash River, which blocked the river route to Detroit. Clark and his men understood frontier warfare and traveled the 250 miles to Vincennes without marching into an ambush. They soon besieged Hamilton at Vincennes, captured the British commander, and sent him back to Virginia as a war criminal. Clark's irregular tactics and his rough treatment of British prisoners, particularly Hamilton, contributed to the image of Kentuckians as savages whose behavior and appearance resembled Indians more than whites.

³⁹ Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 18, 128.

⁴⁰ Alton James, *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771*, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library (hereafter ISHL), (Springfield, Ill, 1912), III, 474-476; Jack M. Sosin, *The Revolutionary Frontier: 1763-1783* (New York: Holt, 1967), 140-41.

In 1780, British commander Captain Henry Bird launched an invasion of Kentucky with 1,200 British regulars and Native warriors, and artillery, rendering settler forts and stations defenseless. The attack came after a particularly hard winter in 1779-80 during which both the Shawnee and the settlers suffered because of the destruction of their crops in the summer and fall campaigns of 1779. Bird's invasion quickly overcame two Kentucky stations and collected plunder and prisoners from each. He was forced to withdraw, however, when his Indian warriors refused to attack additional posts. They believed they had achieved their objectives of retaliating against the Kentuckians who caused suffering the previous winter.⁴¹ Bird's invasion demonstrated that British and Indian forces could attack Kentucky virtually at will as long as the British maintained control of Detroit. But it also demonstrates that Native Americans fought for their own objectives which differed from those of their European allies.

In response to Bird's invasion, Clark led almost 1,000 Kentuckians against Shawnee towns in Ohio. The Shawnee retreated in the face of the overwhelming numbers, enabling Clark and the Kentuckians to burn the village of Chillicothe. According to an American report, the Shawnee suffered seventy three dead. Clark's invasion burned Shawnee homes and crops, leaving the Indians impoverished. But he was unable to conquer the Shawnee and his own force's logistical shortcomings forced Clark to withdraw. The Shawnees' cautious retreat helped them preserve their independence until 1794.⁴²

On August 19, 1782, Kentuckians displayed a fool-brave attitude when they were ambushed by a primarily Indian force. During the summer of 1782, Kentuckians suffered

⁴¹ Sosin, *Revolutionary Frontier*, 129-130; White, *The Middle Ground*, 407.

⁴² James, *Clark Papers*, ISHL, III: 476-84; Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 129-130.

numerous Indian raids. In August, an Indian-British force lay siege to Bryan's Station, and 182 men from neighboring settlements, including forty-five men under Boone's command, rushed to its relief. When the force arrived they discovered that the enemy had retreated. The officers debated whether they should pursue the enemy immediately or wait for the arrival of several hundred reinforcements. Hugh McGary, one of the officers involved in the discussion, suggested they wait. In response, his men insulted and silenced him with scornful references to his timidity. Kentuckians began their pursuit the next day, following a trail that led to Blue Licks where they saw a few Indians walking about casually on top of the hill. McGary and Boone recognized the obvious signs of an ambush. But McGary, still suffering from the previous day's insults to his manhood, remained silent, while Boone's men silenced him quickly with taunts of cowardice when he briefly spoke up. McGary's force, without orders, rushed toward the Native Americans on top of the hill, with Boone's men following closely on their heels. However, a war party hidden in the ravine on the opposite bank ambushed the Kentuckians and forced them to retreat.⁴³ The rashness of the Kentuckians led to their defeat. The leaders of the militia, who led at the pleasure of their company, conceded to the demands of men overly confident in their woodland skills and who sought to kill or remove all natives from Kentucky.⁴⁴ The defeat at Blue Licks demonstrated the inability of the Kentuckians to prevent and retaliate effectively against Indian raids on isolated settlements. To prevent future depredations, Kentuckians changed their tactics by

⁴³ James, *Clark Papers*, ISHL, IV: 89-110; Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 129; White, *The Middle Ground*, 407.

⁴⁴ Starkey *European and Native American Warfare*, 129.

building stations and fortifications to provide a place where settlers could take cover when raiding parties attacked.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ O'Malley, "Frontier Defenses," 68.

CHAPTER 2

ADAPTING THE INDIAN WAY OF WAR: 1778-1786

In the 1780s, Kentuckians adopted new tactics against the Ohio Indians to help them hold conquered territory and expand into new land without suffering large losses in battle. While the Eastern Seaboard lived in relative peace following the American Revolution, Kentuckians and the Ohio Indians continued fighting for another decade as whites continued to move onto land in Kentucky and Ohio later. In response to increasing casualties, Kentuckians employed additional tactics in addition to those they had learned from the Indians. First, they built a series of defensive fortifications called stations and forts that helped them occupy new territory and control to the land. Stations enabled Kentuckians to occupy new land despite their small population, especially before 1783. Second, Kentuckians' widespread use of horses the second half of the 1780s allowed them to attack Ohio Indian villages as far north as the Great Lakes. The second adaptation came after the population of Kentucky expanded and settlers could mount sustained offensives against the Ohio Indians.

Between 1778 and 1782, Kentuckians built fifty-seven new stations.⁴⁶ Many of the settlers who moved into the Ohio Valley lacked legal title to their land.⁴⁷ The Shawnee still claimed most of Kentucky. Moreover, land speculators began investing heavily in Kentucky, leading settlers to complain that “a set of Nabobs in Virginia

⁴⁶ O'Malley, “Frontier Defenses,” 68.

⁴⁷ Henry Knox to George Washington, 4 January 1790, *ASPIA*, 1: 60.

purchased the best land,” but were unwilling to help pay for necessary defenses.⁴⁸ Settlers squatted on land claimed by the national government or private owners in Virginia. They did not consider their actions illegal, however, because they based their claims on occupancy and improvement, or homesteading.⁴⁹ Because settlers occupied land that both the Virginia gentry and Native Americans claimed they made enemies of both groups.⁵⁰ As the violence increased, Kentuckians turned to speculators, on whose land they squatted, for military assistance, but their pleas for assistance remained unanswered because their occupation of the land remained legally questionable.⁵¹

The yeoman farmers who migrated to Kentucky stood on the lower rungs of eastern society and sought greater prosperity.⁵² In the East, they faced scarcity of land, rigid civil authorities, and limited opportunities to improve their economic standing. These conditions pushed settlers from Virginia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania to Kentucky driving the region’s population boom for the next two decades.⁵³ The settlers who arrived in Kentucky in the 1770s and 1780s began the process of transforming a landscape modified by Indians for hunting into a region suitable for farming. The earliest settlers established homesteads in the Bluegrass region in the 1770s and in the Green River region in the late 1780s. They chose these areas because of the abundance of vegetation, which they believed as an indicated of high soil quality.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ John Harvie to Arthur Campbell, 30 November 1785, Arthur Campbell Papers, Filson Historical Society (hereafter FHS); Petitions of 30 May 1782 and October 1785, in James Rood Robertson, *Petitions of the Early Inhabitants of Kentucky to the General Assembly of Virginia, 1769-1792* (Louisville, Ky.: John P. Morton & Company, 1914), 62-65, 80-82.

⁴⁹ David Andrew Nichols, *Red Gentlemen & White Savages : Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 61, 63.

⁵⁰ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 27.

⁵¹ Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 61-64.

⁵² Aron, *West Was Lost*”, 150.

⁵³ O’Malley, “Frontier Defenses,” 59.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 60-61.

As settlers arrived in Kentucky in greater numbers, two distinctive defensive fortifications appeared: stations and forts. These structures acted as outposts for whites moving into Kentucky and enabled them to occupy more territory claimed by Indians, and thus were used as offensive structures. But they also sparked more violence in the 1780s and 1790s, including the Northwest Indian War of 1790 to 1794. The stations and forts also enabled recently arrived settlers to learn military tactics from whites who had arrived the previous decade.

In the first nine months of 1781, Indians killed or captured 131 people in Kentucky. During the Revolutionary War, the small population of Kentuckians could not guard or retaliate against every Indian raid. Offensives required a significant number of men and often led to high casualties, as during the ambush at Blue Licks. To limit casualties and retain their conquered territory, settlers built fortified structures. The roles of settlers varied depending on their gender and age. During Indian attacks, men first defended against the raiders while their families sought shelter in the station. Sometimes, women helped their husbands fight off their attackers, demonstrating their capability with firearms, but only took part in the fighting when their homes were directly under attack.⁵⁵ Before the American victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, Kentuckians occupied land in Kentucky by clearing it, planting crops, and then building fortifications to defend against Indian attacks.⁵⁶ These structures gave Kentuckians time to increase their numbers and prepare for future larger offensives against Indian villages north of the Ohio River.

⁵⁵ Laver, *Citizens*, 14.

⁵⁶ Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 18

Forts were large, communally occupied structures with a stockade enclosure to provide safety for the inhabitants. Stations were defensible residential sites. Settlers built a cabin or several cabins that provided refuge in the event of an Indian raid. They were not as defensible as forts because a family was typically isolated, but settlers could increase a station's safety by building several cabins together. Despite the ongoing violence, settlers preferred stations to the forts because they lived closer to their land and could continue to improve and clear it. Stations also offered better and less crowded living conditions than forts. Settlers built their stations close to fresh water, both to ensure a ready supply of water, and to help farmers transport their goods to markets. Forts offered a refuge for newly arrived settlers until they claimed their own homesteads in Kentucky.⁵⁷ These structures enabled Kentuckians to develop more land without regular militia raids into the Ohio Country. Still, such raids became more frequent in the late 1780s Kentucky's settler population grew.⁵⁸

While stations and forts offered short-term protection from raids by Indians, settlers remained vulnerable because Native Americans attacked their fields. When warriors successfully destroyed a crop, the inhabitants of forts and stations faced dire conditions. The winter of 1779-80 was particularly difficult on the residents of Fort Boonesborough because Native Americans destroyed their fields. As one settlers noted, Indian raids "reduced many of us so low that we have scarce cattle amongst us to supply our small Family's."⁵⁹ The raids had a dramatic effect on the price of food, with corn

⁵⁷ O'Malley, "Frontier Defenses," 61, 64.

⁵⁸ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 34; O'Malley, "Frontier Defenses," 58; Elizabeth A. Perkins, *Border Life : Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 66.

⁵⁹ Journal of James Nourse Jr quoted in, Aron, *West Was Lost*, 54.

reaching \$100 a bushel, and salt, used to preserve meat, rising to \$500 a bushel.⁶⁰ The destruction of the crops required men to provide for their families with their guns. But a prolonged cold snap between November and February killed game and many of the surviving animals offered little sustenance.

Forts and stations provided settlers with a degree of safety and enabled them to begin improving land and building farms. The fortifications helped the small number of settlers – who numbered approximately 5,000 in 1777 and 8,000 by 1782 – to maintain their hold on the land without retaliating against every Indian raid. As the American Revolution drew to a close, the population of Kentucky grew exponentially. In 1783, the settler population rose to 12,000 inhabitants, nearly tripled to 30,000 in 1784, and by the time of the first federal census in 1790 had reached to 73,677.⁶¹

The system of stations and forts developed in Kentucky during and shortly after the Revolutionary War helped Kentucky's settler population claim new territory and withstand raids by the Ohio Indians.⁶² The structures helped Kentuckians push into new territory beyond the Bluegrass. As settlers moved closer to the Ohio River, the Shawnee modified their tactics and raided more sparsely populated northern settlements. Lexington and the Bluegrass region began to enjoy relative safety and inhabitants enjoyed some luxury items. In areas where the threat of Indian attack fell, outposts transitioned into large estates and new, larger industries moved into Lexington.⁶³

⁶⁰ Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 219.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 224.

⁶² O'Malley, "Frontier Defenses," 71-73.

⁶³ Craig Thompson Friend, *Along the Maysville Road: The Early American Republic in the Trans-Appalachian West* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 124-26.

But expanded white settlement in Kentucky increased tensions in the West.⁶⁴ Though inhabitants in Lexington enjoyed greater safety, frontier settlements faced continued Shawnee raids designed protect their homelands and hunting grounds from white settlers.⁶⁵ In response, the Confederation government began negotiating with western Indian nations in December 1784. But with each passing year, the negotiations grew more contentious. The earliest meeting at Fort McIntosh, Pennsylvania, ended with positive feelings, but the Shawnee did not attend these negotiation.⁶⁶ A year later, George Rogers Clark headed a delegation of Kentuckians who met with Native Americans at Fort Finney to prevent further raiding.⁶⁷ But negotiations proved contentious and one frustrated Shawnee delegate threw down both black and wampum belts – white representing peace and black signifying war – because of the lack of progress.⁶⁸ Despite these difficulties, the Shawnee signed a treaty with the Kentuckians on January 31, 1786 that called an end to attacks. But neither the Kentuckians nor the Shawnee observed the treaty and both sides continued to raid one another.⁶⁹

By 1784, a growing settler population and relative peace in the Bluegrass gave rise to a horse culture that enabled Kentuckians to improve their military tactics. Horses enabled settlers to move more quickly and travel further through the frontier to attack

⁶⁴ White, *The Middle Ground*, 418-19.

⁶⁵ Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 63-64, 74.

⁶⁶ Draper, "Harmar's Diary," 4 December, 1784, *Draper Manuscripts*, 1W: 31-32; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 34

⁶⁷ 12 November 1785, 21 December 1785, Ebenezer Denny and Josiah Harmar, *Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, an Officer in the Revolutionary and Indian Wars* (Philadelphia, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1859), (hereafter HSPA), 266, 268.

⁶⁸ John Anthony Caruso, *The Great Lakes Frontier: An Epic of the Old Northwest* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), 102-103.

⁶⁹ "Treaty of Fort Finney," 31 January 1786, Congress, *ASPIA*, 11.

Indian villages.⁷⁰ Settlers of Kentucky recognized the importance of the horse in the economic development of the region and as in Virginia they began to view horse ownership as a marker of social status.⁷¹ The use of horses enabled Kentuckians to conduct raids from a week to a month long, destroy numerous Indian villages and food supplies, and return to Kentucky quickly so that men could tend to their fields. Using horses in the 1780s, Kentuckians developed a regular pattern of mounted campaigns against the Ohio Country Indians.⁷² Kentuckians came to value their horses so highly that many refused to go to war if they could not go into battle mounted.⁷³ The horse proved essential both to Kentucky's economic development and militia's offensive capability. Horses permitted settlers to expand beyond the Bluegrass region into northern Kentucky and to counter the Indian raids that these frontier settlements suffered.

Two examples demonstrate the growing importance of the horse both to Kentuckians and Native Americans in the Trans-Appalachian West. In 1778, the Shawnee took Simon Kenton prisoner while he conducted a horse stealing expedition. Kenton was a white hunter who in 1774 had served as a scout for the Virginia militia during Lord Dunmore's War. After his release by the Shawnee, he joined George Rogers Clark's 1778 expedition to capture Fort Sackville. While a captive, Kenton endured days of ritual torture, including running a gauntlet six times. Kenton recalled a conversation

⁷⁰ John Harvie to Arthur Campbell, 30 November 1785, Campbell Papers, FHS; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 63-64.

⁷¹ T. H. Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of Virginia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (April 1977): 246-47.

⁷² Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 15.

⁷³ Paul David Nelson, "General Charles Scott, the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers, and the Northwest Indian Wars, 1784-1794," *Journal of the Early Republic*, no. 6 (Autumn 1986): 220-21.

with his captors in which they explained that they planned to put Kenton to death because he attempted to steal their horses:

“[Interrogator] Young man, did you know it was wrong to steal Indians’ horses?” [Kenton] No, I did not, for you come and steal our horses. [Interrogator] Don’t you know the Great Spirit don’t love people that steal? No – did you ever know it? [Kenton] Yes, 20 years ago. . . .He then whipped me pretty smartly, and told me that it was for stealing Indians’ horses.⁷⁴

Kenton was transported to the British at Detroit after days of ritual torture. In Detroit, he plotted his escape and returned to Kentucky to fight alongside Clark.⁷⁵

The interaction between Kenton and his captors reveals the growing importance of horses in the Trans-Appalachian West, both to Native Americans and Kentuckians. It also highlights the increasing violence in the West. The Shawnee captured far more white prisoners, particularly adult males, and tried to integrate them into their own society to replace Indians who died fighting. The Shawnee revealed their willingness to execute Kenton when they gave him the adoptive name Cutta-ho-tha, or Blackened or Condemned Man. The Shawnees’ need for horses changed their tactics and increased the level of violence they employed to resist white expansion onto their homelands.

As the horse grew in importance for Kentuckians, Native Americans began stealing horses from isolated stations and homesteads. The Ohio Indians recognized the threat posed by mounted Kentuckians and when they raided lightly settled northern settlements, they regularly stole horses. A 1786 report to Congress estimated that raiders had stolen seven hundred horses and killed thirty people in Kentucky in the first half of

⁷⁴ Edna Kenton, *Simon Kenton: His Life and Period, 1755-1836* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1930), 108.

⁷⁵ White, *The Middle Ground*, 393-394.

the year.⁷⁶ Judge Harry Innes, who served as an assistant judge of the Supreme Court Judicature of the Kentucky district between 1782 and 1784 and the attorney general between 1784 and 1789, estimated in July 1790 that warriors killed or captured fifteen hundred people and stole twenty thousand horses from Kentuckians between 1783 and 1789.⁷⁷ The large number of horses Shawnee stole from Kentuckians in this seven-year period reveal their fear of mounted settler raids.

The Kentucky militia adopted the horse because it allowed frontiersmen to increase the range of their offensives and attack unsuspecting villages near the Great Lakes. Horses enabled the militiaman to move more quickly and to carry more ammunition and rations than on foot. The 1786 Wabash expedition by Kentuckians demonstrated the need for militia leadership to inspire confidence in their men. It also revealed how the horse made it possible for Kentuckians to raze numerous villages in a short time.⁷⁸ Clark, the leader of the Wabash campaign, planned a two-pronged attack. One, led by Clark, moved toward the Miami towns in the Wabash Country; the other, under the command of Benjamin Logan, marched against the Shawnee towns.⁷⁹ After arriving in Kentucky, Logan learned the skills of hunting, and his exploits helped him achieve the rank of colonel in the Kentucky militia. Clark's force disintegrated, but Logan's troops successfully reached their objective against the Shawnee. His force took twenty-six women and children prisoner, rescued four white captives, and took the scalps

⁷⁶ Robert Patterson to Walter Finney, 12 July 1786, Papers of the Continental Congress (hereafter PCC), 523-24; Nichols, *Red Gentleman*, 55.

⁷⁷ Harry Innes to Knox, 7 July 1790, *ASPIA*, 1:60

⁷⁸ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 71.

⁷⁹ R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier : Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 98-99.

of eleven warriors, ten chiefs, and several women and children.⁸⁰ Logan's men attacked the village of Mequachake despite the American flag that flew above it. The village chief, Molunthy, held up a treaty he had signed with the Confederation government signifying the village was at peace with the United States. Kentuckians ignored his claims and he "was burnt and blown up [by] gunpowder set all around him in small bags."⁸¹

The Logan attack reveals the tactical changes embraced by Kentucky militia in the 1780s. First, Kentuckians used horses to reach the villages along the Great Miami River, demonstrating that such northern outposts were no longer out of their reach. Second, the raid and murder of Chief Molunthy highlighted the heightened level of violence. Kentuckians killed Molunthy because they believed all Indians posed a threat to them and their exploitation of the land. By the 1780, Kentuckians embraced a racial war designed to extirpate the Ohio Indians.

The late 1770s and 80s witnessed an evolution in the military tactics of Kentuckians. They adopted new methods of war and combined them with tactics they had learned in the 1770s. The system of stations and fortifications bought Kentuckians time when they lacked the population to launch offensive operations into the Ohio Country. These structures offered protection to new arrivals while enabling settlers to occupy additional land with less risk. In the 1780s, Kentuckians also explored and refined the use of the horse in wilderness fighting. By 1786, militia raids Kentuckians demonstrated that

⁸⁰ Draper, "The Ohio Frontier," *Draper Manuscripts*, 1W264; William Henry Smith, *The St. Clair Paper : The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair, Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress; and Governor of the Northwestern Territory, with His Correspondence and Other Papers*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: R. Clarke, 1882), 2: 19; William Pitt ed. Palmer, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts* (11 vols, Richmond 1875), 4: 182.

⁸¹ Draper, "Frontier Wars," *Draper Manuscripts*, 23U39.

Indian villages as far north as the Great Miami River were not out of their reach. In the next decade, Kentuckians expanded their ranges and attacked villages even further to the north.⁸²

In 1789, the new national government began to take shape to replace the Confederation government and George Washington became the first president of the U.S. under the new Constitution. The small federal military presence in the Ohio Country of 518 men scattered along several hundred mile stretch of the Ohio River in 1787, did little to deter either the Kentuckians or the Indians from raiding.⁸³ At Washington's behest, the new federal government sent peace envoys, but the repeated raids by Kentuckians and Native Americans tested the powers of the new federal government. By 1790, a full-scale Indian War had started.⁸⁴

⁸² White, *The Middle Ground*, 418-19.

⁸³ Harmar to Armstrong, 28 July 1789, Draper "Josiah Harmar Papers," *Draper Manuscripts*, 2W85.

⁸⁴ White, *The Middle Ground*, 419.

CHAPTER 3

THE KENTUCKIANS IN THE NORTHWEST INDIAN WAR 1790-1794

The Confederation government failed to negotiate an end to the violence between the Kentuckians and Ohio Indians, forcing the newly organized federal government to attempt to negotiate a peace.⁸⁵ Secretary of War Henry Knox supported the efforts of the new government to negotiate peace with the Ohio Indians. He supported peace because the government owed an enormous debt after the American Revolution. However, the federal government found it difficult to bring an end to the violence because Kentuckians repeatedly raided Indian towns in the Ohio Country regardless of their allegiance to the United States. Kentuckians' constant attacks on enemy and friendly villages and their unwillingness to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants revealed that they sought a war of extirpation.⁸⁶ Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the Northwest Territory, described the escalation of the violence and Kentuckians' growing hatred of Native Americans. Kentuckians, he wrote, were "in the habit of retaliation . . . without attending precisely to the nations from which the injuries are received."⁸⁷ In 1789, shortly after George Washington's inauguration, Knox wrote to the president:

In examining the question how the disturbances on the frontiers are to be quieted, two modes present themselves, by which the object might perhaps be effected; the first of which is by raising an army, and extirpating the

⁸⁵ Arthur St. Clair to John Jay, 13 December 1788 Clarence Edwin Carter, *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington,: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1934), 2: 166-70.

⁸⁶ Nichols, *Red Gentlemen*, 65; White, *The Middle Ground*, 419

⁸⁷ St. Clair to Washington, 14 September 1789, Arthur St. Clair, *Arthur St. Clair Papers, 1774-1796*, ed. William Henry Smith, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: Clarke, 1882), 2: 124.

refractory tribes entirely, or secondly by forming treaties of peace with them, in which their rights and limits should be explicitly defined, and the treaties observed on the part of the United States with the most rigid justice, by punishing the whites, who should violate the same.⁸⁸

Knox thought efforts to negotiate peace in the Trans-Appalachian west would be defeated by the continual raids and killings by Kentuckians and Native Americans. Reprisal and revenge had occurred for so long and were so intermingled that the federal government could not assign blame for the hostilities to one side.⁸⁹ In 1789, Knox ordered Brigadier-General Josiah Harmar to organize a campaign against the Shawnee and Miami Nations. Harmar had served under Washington during the Revolutionary War, and had written that Harmar was “personally known to me as some of the best officers who were in the Army.”⁹⁰ After the war, Harmar oversaw the U.S. forces in the Trans-Appalachian West in the forts along the Ohio River. To attack the Shawnee and Miami, the U.S. needed to increase its western force from approximately six hundred to twenty-five hundred soldiers at a cost of \$200,000. This sum was more than the nation could afford as it attempted to pay off its debts from the Revolutionary War.⁹¹

President Washington believed a cash-strapped federal government could succeed if Harmar led a combined regular army and militia force on the Miami and Shawnee towns along the Maumee River. American leaders viewed these Indians as the primary agitators.⁹² Washington’s decision to include the militia in the campaign placed Harmar

⁸⁸ Knox to Washington, 7 July 1789, Congress, *ASPIA*, 1: 13.

⁸⁹ Knox to Washington, 4 January 1790, in *Ibid*, 60.

⁹⁰ John Clement Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington: U.S. Government, 1931), 27: 279.

⁹¹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 28.

⁹² Nelson, “The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers,” 219.

in a difficult position. As Harmar bluntly stated: “No person can hold a more contemptible opinion of the Militia in general than I do.”⁹³ Harmar’s low opinion of the militia was shared by many regular army officers, including St. Clair, and General “Mad” Anthony Wayne, both of whom commanded later campaigns in the Ohio Valley. Wayne, commander of the 1792-1794 offensive against the Ohio Indians, rose to prominence during the American Revolution. He earned his moniker “Mad” in 1779 after a resounding victory over British forces at Stony Point in which American troops used only bayonets. During the Revolution, regular officers frequently saw the militia retreat from battle and cause the death of regular troops. They also witnessed Kentuckians disregard the treaties the U.S. government negotiated with the Indian nations of Ohio.

Moreover, in the 1790s the officers and enlisted men of the militia enjoyed more economic and political success. Nearly 40 percent of militia officers owned slaves, and with an average of more than six slaves per household. In addition, nearly 14 percent of militia officers held political office in the U.S. Congress, Kentucky House of Representatives, Kentucky State Senate, or as governor between 1790 and 1811.⁹⁴

While enlisted men did not possess as much wealth as militia officers, 9 percent of enlisted men owned slaves, with an average of four slaves per household. Sixteen percent of enlisted men owned land, and 30 percent owned at least one horse. Politically, only two won election to the state House of Representatives and none held office at the

⁹³ Harmar to Armstrong, 28 July 1789 Draper, “Josiah Harmer Papers” *Draper Manuscripts* 2W: 85.

⁹⁴ Laver, *Citizens*, 16-17; National Archives, “U.S. Census Indexes 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840,” (accessed on 11 June 2018). ; See Muster Rolls of William Caperton, John Dale, John Fithgarrel, in Muster Rolls, Kentucky Militia File, (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society: Martin F. Schmidt Library, Microfilm Collection); United States Congress, *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971, the Continental Congress, September 5, 1774, to October 21, 1788, and the Congress of the United States, from the First through the Ninety-First Congress, March 4, 1789, to January 3, 1971, Inclusive*, 92d Congress, 1st Session Senate Document No 92-8 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government, 1971), 46-53.

national level. Wealthy enlisted men – those who owned land or slaves – could hire substitutes for the campaigns in which they did not wish to participate, especially if they were drafted into the militia as foot soldiers.⁹⁵

Regardless of their economic wealth or political influence, Kentucky men still served in the militia. They fought in part because local newspapers regularly ran stories that described Indian raids on Kentucky settlements. As a result, they believed their families and towns were not safe from attack. Also, the militia provided a place for men to display courage, bravery, and masculinity on the battlefield. Men who desired higher social and economic standing in the martial society of Kentucky saw an opportunity to advance themselves by fighting in the militia. However, such men embraced mounted service and refused to participate when drafted as foot soldiers. Many waited to serve in campaigns in which they could fight mounted.

Harmar, St. Clair, and Wayne realized that they needed militia to augment their forces because they could not recruit enough regular troops. When federal officers understood that Kentuckians wanted to ride into battle mounted under militia officers they respected, they were able to recruit the best militiamen.⁹⁶ In addition, mounted militia received eighteen dollars a month salary for their service compared to foot soldiers who received three dollars a month. Money served as a practical motivator to fight mounted.⁹⁷ Kentuckians also resented being drafted into the militia because they wished to volunteer for campaigns on their own terms, and as mounted soldiers.

⁹⁵ National Archives, U.S. Census Indexes 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, U.S. Census Indexes 1790, 1800; See Muster Rolls of William Moore, James Sinclair, Thomas Skidmore, Philip Walker, and John Wallace in Muster Rolls, Kentucky Militia File; *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971, the Continental Congress, September 5, 1774, to October 21, 1788, and the Congress of the United States, from the First through the Ninety-First Congress, March 4, 1789, to January 3, 1971, Inclusive.*

⁹⁶ Aron, *West Was Lost*, 32-33.

⁹⁷ Nelson "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 221.

American commanders often drafted foot soldiers because they were less expensive than mounted soldiers. Harmar and St. Clair's both suffered defeats because they decided to draft foot militia who panicked when ambushed by Native Americans.

General Josiah Harmar's Campaign (Fall 1790)

General Josiah Harmar's campaign should have convinced American military and political leaders that they needed to recruit the best equipped troops if they were going to win in the Ohio Country.⁹⁸ Harmar's concern about the cost of the expedition resulted in his men receiving low quality weaponry, improper clothing, and insufficient food. In addition to these mistakes, Harmar called up foot militia instead of mounted militia to save money. Not enough Kentuckians answered Harmar's call, which meant a draft was instituted. To add to Harmar's problems, Colonel John Hardin was the highest ranking militia officer willing to lead the Kentuckians. Kentuckians disliked his rash temperament despite numerous exploits against the Ohio Indians in the prior decade. Kentuckians who wanted to fight on horseback did not report when drafted, but instead paid substitutes. The men who assembled at Ft. Washington, modern-day Cincinnati, were either old men or inexperienced boys.⁹⁹

Harmar faced another problem: minimal and incorrect intelligence about the Indian forces he faced. A raid ordered by Knox in April 1791 demonstrated the ignorance of federal leaders regarding the size and ability of the enemy they faced.¹⁰⁰ To conquer

⁹⁸ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 25-26, 34-35; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 106; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 115; Michael S. Warner, "General Josiah Harmar's Campaign Reconsidered: How the Americans Lost the Battle of Kekionga," *Indiana Magazine of History*, no. 8 (March 1987): 54.

⁹⁹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 93; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 220-22; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 93; Harry M. Ward, *Charles Scott and the "Spirit of '76"* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 102.

the small band of warriors, which he estimated at two hundred, Knox ordered a small raid with a force of 100 regular soldiers and 200 volunteers. However, the Indian warriors numbered closer to two thousand.¹⁰¹ The small expedition succeeded in destroying several villages along the Scioto River and killed four Indians, but it could not stop Indian raids into Kentucky.¹⁰² In the spring of 1790, the small raid demonstrated to Harmar that he needed a larger and faster moving army to conduct an effective offensive against the Ohio Indians. But he could not persuade federal politicians to appropriate the money necessary for enough troops and equipment.¹⁰³

Harmar requested a three thousand man army to attack Miami and Shawnee villages along the Maumee River.¹⁰⁴ Washington and Knox recommended a force of 2,500 regular troops, but Congress approved funds for only 1,200 regulars.¹⁰⁵ As a result, Harmar relied on foot militia to fill the army's ranks.¹⁰⁶ Washington sent letters to county lieutenants across the nation to organize local militias and assist Harmar "to mediate any incursions against the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania."¹⁰⁷ But men did not answer Washington's call for two reasons. First, westerners distrusted the federal government for what appeared to be its minimal effort to protect Kentucky's settlers.¹⁰⁸ Second, Kentuckians despised being drafted to fight as foot militia.

¹⁰¹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 93-94.

¹⁰² Ibid, 94; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 224; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 86-87; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 102-103

¹⁰³ Josiah Harmar Papers, 7 June 1790, cited in Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 99; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 103-104, Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 94-95.

¹⁰⁵ Grenier, *First Way of War*, 195

¹⁰⁶ "Court of Inquiry on General Harmar," 24 September 1791, Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 24.

¹⁰⁷ Congress, *ASPIA*, 1: 97; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 87-88.

¹⁰⁸ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 66-67; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 15, 24.

When too few men answered Harmar's call to arms, he ordered a draft of foot militia. As a result, Harmar's militia force consisted primarily of substitutes hired to stand in for those drafted¹⁰⁹ Harmar's decision to call up foot soldiers demonstrated his failure to understand the importance of horse culture among Kentuckians and their desire for glory by attacking Native Americans from horseback.¹¹⁰ In September, a dismayed Harmer and his officers viewed the militia for the first time. One officer noted, "They [the militia] appear to be raw and unused to the gun or woods."¹¹¹

Harmar's expeditionary force of 2,100 men departed Fort Washington on September 26, 1790. It consisted of four hundred regular troops, well short of the 1,200 authorized by Congress, augmented by 1,700 militia, commanded by Colonel John Hardin.¹¹² Harmar's army moved quickly and the army reached the Miami villages close to the St. Mary, Maumee, and St. Joseph rivers by October 15.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 101; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 24.

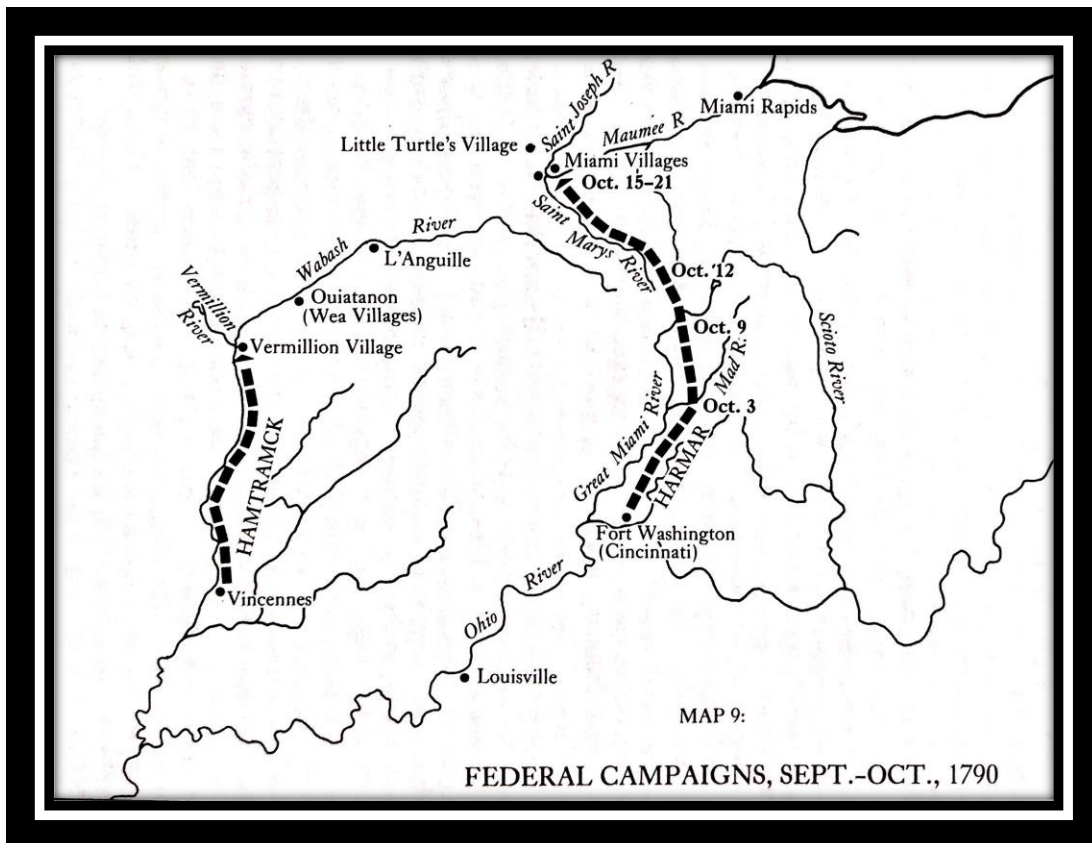
¹¹⁰ Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen," 248; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 220-221

¹¹¹ Denny, "A Military Journal," *Draper Manuscripts* 2W 328, 140; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 92.

¹¹² Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 106; Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 34.

¹¹³ Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 104.

On October 18, after a conference with his officers, Harmar ordered Hardin to lead a mission of 180 men, consisting of 150 militia and 30 regular troops to investigate scout sightings of Indian warriors near Kekionga, one of the Miami villages close to the army. Harmar also directed the mission and to explore the Wea villages to the north as a potential site for launching a more aggressive offensive. Hoping to discover Indian scouts, Hardin marched at a quick pace, but his force soon fell into chaos and nearly a third of the militia deserted and headed back to camp.¹¹⁴ In his haste to locate the enemy, Hardin spread his remaining force out, separating regular troops from the militia. As Hardin approached Kekionga his army spread, over half a mile in a single file line, became an easy target ambush.



Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 90.

¹¹⁴ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 109-10.

Unknown to Hardin, Indians hid along both sides of the path he traveled waiting to ambush his force.¹¹⁵ When Hardin's men came into range, the Indian warriors opened fire from both sides of the road, killing several men and causing the militia to panic and retreat in a disorderly fashion.¹¹⁶ Regular troops tried to form lines for a bayonet charge, but the militia's retreat sabotaged their efforts and resulted in the death of twenty-two regulars.¹¹⁷ Eventually, two companies of regulars moving toward the battle helped Hardin control the militia. They formed a defensive line that waited for stragglers over the next few hours and then retired to camp.¹¹⁸

Harmar recognized that his force was insufficient to subdue the Ohio Indians and wanted to withdraw, but Hardin pleaded for another chance to redeem himself.¹¹⁹ Harmar reluctantly agreed after hearing reports from several scouts that hundreds of Indians had returned to the village of Kekionga.¹²⁰ Harmar approved the mission, but gave the command of the force to a regular army officer, Major John Wyllys, while Harmar took command of the militia.

Wyllys began the march on October 20 at nightfall, hoping to reach Kekionga by daybreak. As the army neared the village, Wyllys divided his force into three groups and planned to ambush Indians retreating from Kekionga. Hardin's militia attacked the

¹¹⁵ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 21, 27; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 110; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 195; Thomas Irvin, "Harmar's Campaign," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* March, no. 19 (March 1910): 395; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers", 226; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 24-25 *Sword, President Washington's Indian War*, 106-7

¹¹⁶ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 110-11; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 24; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 107; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 105; Warner, *Harmar's Campaign Reconsidered*, 48.

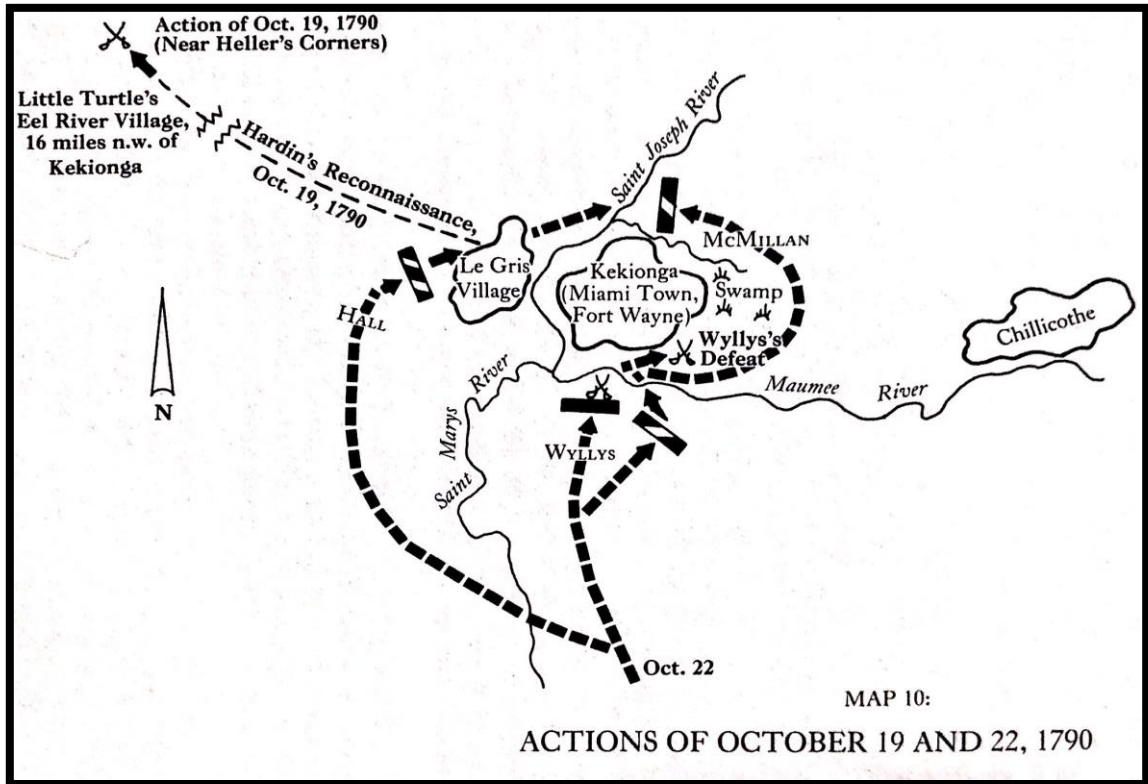
¹¹⁷ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 23.; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 110-111; Irvin, "Harmar's Campaign," 395; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 24-25; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 106-107.

¹¹⁸ Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 109.

¹¹⁹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 111-112; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 109.

¹²⁰ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 112-114; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 10; Warner, *Harmar's Campaign Reconsidered*, 48-49.

eastern flank of the town, seeking to encircle it. Another force of regulars and militia moved around the western flank, with the main body of regular troops, and a company of Kentucky riflemen to drive the village's inhabitants into the waiting American forces.¹²¹



Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 100

Almost immediately, the plan disintegrated. Warriors ambushed Hardin's detachment as they crossed the Maumee River, sending his force pandemonium and preventing the other detachments from returning fire because they risked shooting their own men. Wyllys's cavalry company and a company of riflemen came to the relief of Hardin and succeeded in driving back the initial ambush.¹²² With the support of Wyllys's

¹²¹ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 25-35; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 113; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 111-12.

¹²² *Ibid*, 112.

cavalry and riflemen, Hardin's militia resumed their advance, but another ambush awaited them after fording the river.¹²³ Hardin and Wyllys's troops did not recognize that the retreating warriors were drawing them into a larger ambush.¹²⁴ The second ambush killed many of the advancing militiamen and they panicked again. Wyllys attempted to aid the militiamen again with the cavalry, but their state of disarray prevented his cavalry from assembling. In the chaos, a warrior shot Wyllys off his horse, fatally wounding him. When his men could not remount him, they ordered a retreat of the remaining soldiers and militia.¹²⁵

Harmar's campaign represented a defeat for the United States. He recognized that the army in its current state could not defeat the Ohio Indians. His decision to retreat prevented an unmitigated disaster and saved hundreds of American lives. For all his shortcomings in organizing the expedition, Harmar recognized that the Native American force could easily overwhelm his army. His campaign provided insights to American commanders of later expeditions about how the enemy fought and enabled them to prevent future mistakes and ambushes.

Harmar's army returned to Fort Washington on October 24. His force had lost 129 regular troops, along with fourteen officers and fifty-four militia. Most of the regular troops died when the militia retreated or sought cover after the ambushes.¹²⁶ In the coming months, Harmar and Kentuckians exchanged jabs about who deserved blame for

¹²³ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 20-30; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 115-17; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 195-96; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 112-13, 119.

¹²⁴ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 114-15; Irvin, "Harmar's Campaign," 52-53; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 112-13.

¹²⁵ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1: 25, 28; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 114.

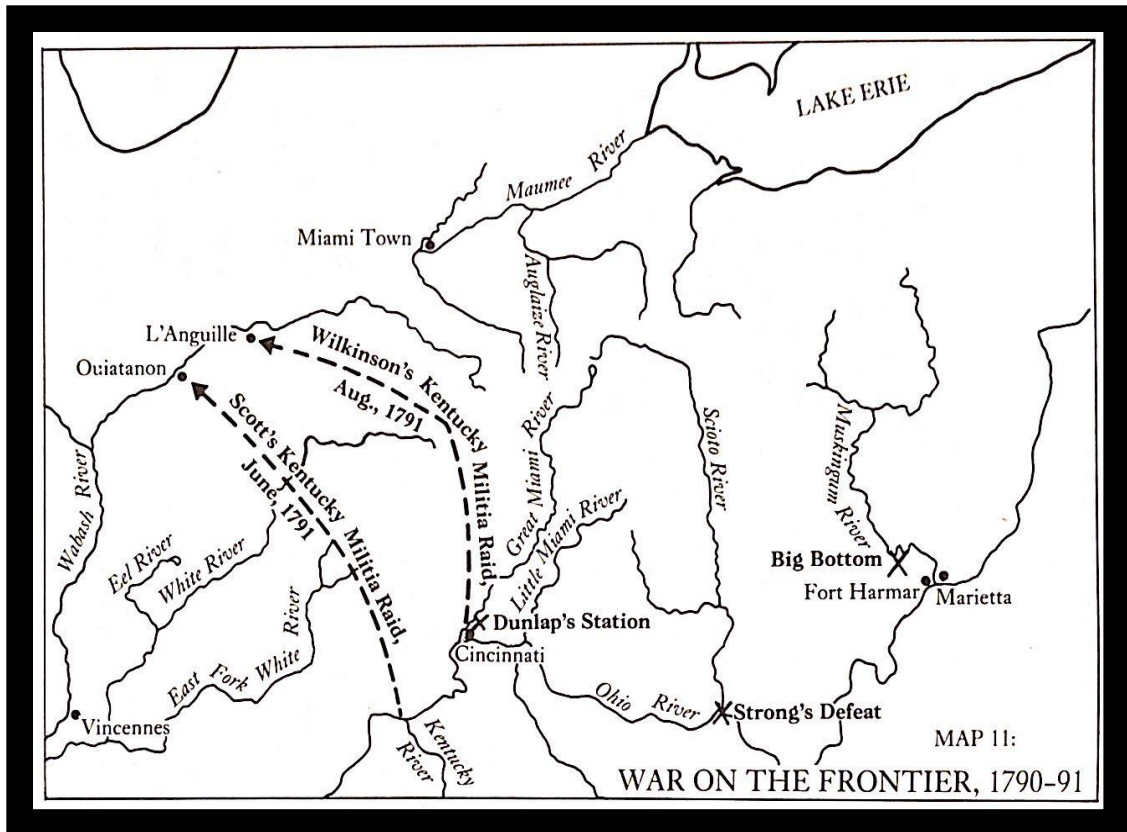
¹²⁶ Harmar to Wilkinson, 24 November 1790, "Harmar Papers," *Draper Manuscripts* 2W 403-404; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 118; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 120.

the campaign's defeat. In response to the failure, Washington and Knox began planning another offensive for the fall of 1791 under the command of Arthur St. Clair.¹²⁷ In preparation for the 1791 campaign, St. Clair ordered the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers under Kentucky officers to raid Indian towns in the Ohio Country. He wanted them to destroy crops, capture prisoners, and intimidate Indian nations pursue peace.

General Charles Scott Ouiatenon Raid and General James Wilkinson's L'Anguille Raid (Summer 1791)

General Charles Scott's raid on Ouiatenon and General James Wilkinson's raid on L'Anguille took place over a sixty day period. The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers captured more than fifty Indians and killed another fifty in the attacks. The organization and planning of these raids enabled Kentuckians to succeed. They were led by an officer they respected and they rode into battle. As a result, they reached villages deep in the Northwest and combined their horse skills with skulking tactics to destroy the Indian villages. These effective raids convinced a few Wea and Wabash bands to pursue peace with the United States. The raids sent a clear message to the Ohio Indians that their most remote villages could be reached by a determined force of mounted Kentuckians.

¹²⁷ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1:112-113, 118. Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 228; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 121, 131.



Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 118.

Knox ordered General Charles Scott, the commanding officer of the Kentucky militia, to conduct the raid on the Wabash village of Ouiatenon. He wanted to deter warriors living in the targeted villages from fighting against the United States during the fall offensives. Knox directed Scott to capture prisoners, gather intelligence, destroy villages, and keep the Indians off balance before the planned American offensive.¹²⁸ He also ordered Scott not to take scalps. On May 15, 1,095 men left Frankfort riding for the collection of villages of Ouiatenon.¹²⁹ Judge Harry Innes wrote enthusiastically as the

¹²⁸ Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 229.

¹²⁹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 142-44; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 197; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 229; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 229; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 108-109.

Kentucky Mounted Volunteers left, “a more choice body of men could not be raised in the United States—young—healthy—well armed—well mounted.”¹³⁰

On May 24, Scott and the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers crossed the Ohio River into the Ohio Country. After eight days of riding through forests in heavy rainfall, Scott’s force was exhausted and had lost most of their provisions.¹³¹ But Scott’s knowledge of Indian tactics and the Northwest Territory paid off. He was able to deceive enemy scouts by first following Harmar’s path before he changed directions and attacked Ouiatenon. His subterfuge ensured most of Indian warriors were not in the towns when the Kentuckians arrived.

Nonetheless, when the Kentuckians approached Ouiatenon on June 1, a lone scout warned the residents of the approaching cavalry force.¹³² Trying to redeem himself after the Harmar campaign, Scott acted quickly and dispatched Hardin and sixty men to capture the fleeing villagers and attack two small hunting villages. Meanwhile, Scott led the main body of his army to Ouiatenon.¹³³

When the Kentuckians arrived at Ouiatenon, they found the village lightly defended. An Indian army comprised of Shawnee, Wea, Kickapoo, and Miami warriors were at Kekionga.¹³⁴ Scott’s men killed two defenders in a long hut but found that the inhabitants had abandoned the town. When the villagers fled, they ran in the opposite direction of Hardin’s detachment. In response Scott ordered Wilkinson to take forty men

¹³⁰ Innes quoted in *Kentucky Gazette* 7 May 1791; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 109.

¹³¹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 144; Nelson, “The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers,” 230; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 110.

¹³² Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 145.

¹³³ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 144-45; Nelson, “The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers,” 230-231; Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 140; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 110-111; J. W. Whickar, “General Charles Scott and His March to Ouiatenon,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, no. 21 (March 1925): 97.

¹³⁴ Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 139.

to attack the fleeing villagers. When the fighting ended, the volunteers had killed thirty people and taken six prisoners. The prisoner count proved disappointing because one of the primary objectives of this mission was to capture prisoners. The Kentuckians had killed many more Native Americans than they captured.¹³⁵

On June 2, Scott ordered Hardin's company to attack two Kickapoo towns west of Kekionga. As Hardin's men entered the first town, a small band of Kickapoo warriors fled. Hardin sent for reinforcements and continued his pursuit of the small band of warriors, killing six Kickapoo warriors after a brief skirmish. When the volunteers arrived at the second village, they found old men, women, and children. At the end of the day, Hardin and his men had killed six warriors and captured fifty-two prisoners, mostly women and children.¹³⁶

On June 2, seeking more prisoners, Scott ordered Wilkinson to attack the Wea village of Kethtipectanunk. Wilkinson departed early in the morning hoping to catch the residents off guard, but he found the town deserted. Wilkinson's men destroyed seventy homes, several acres of corn and other property, and returned to Kekionga.¹³⁷

After completing these raids, Scott ordered his physically battered men to begin the 155-mile journey home. In less than thirty days, Scott's raid killed thirty-two Indians and captured fifty-eight prisoners. The volunteers marched forty-one of the prisoners to Fort Steuben but released sixteen of the feeblest with a message that "the United States

¹³⁵ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 145; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 231; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 140; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 110-111; Whickar, "Scott and His March to Ouiatenon," 97-98.

¹³⁶ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 145-146; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 197; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 231; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 140-141; Whickar, "Scott and His March Ouiatenon," 97.

¹³⁷ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 146-47; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 231-232; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 111.

desired peace, but they were able to destroy the red man if they truly wanted.”¹³⁸ Scott further warned: “The sons of war will be let loose against you, and the hatchet will never be buried until your country is desolated, and your people humbled to the dust.”¹³⁹

Kentucky’s leaders were elated over Scott’s raid. St. Clair and Knox praised Scott and his volunteers and Washington garnered much praise from Kentuckians for ordering the attack.¹⁴⁰ Most important, Scott’s raid sent a strong message to the Ohio Indians that their most remote villages were not out of the reach of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers.¹⁴¹

St. Clair wanted to keep the Indians on the defensive and thus ordered a second raid consisting of five hundred Kentuckians under the command James Wilkinson. The Kentuckians departed on August 1 for the French and Wabash village of L’Anguille. The Kentuckians started in the direction of the Miami towns, but turned toward the Wabash villages to confuse enemy scouts. Wilkinson’s force traveled seventy miles in two and a half days before they temporarily lost their way. The column arrived at L’Anguille on August 7 and hastily crossed the Eel River. Wilkinson’s force captured thirty-four prisoners, mostly women and children, and killed six warriors while losing only two militiamen. The Kentuckians then cut down the standing corn and burned the town before resting for the night.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Congress, *ASPIA*, 1:113; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 147; Nelson, “The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers,” 232; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 25; Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 141; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 112; Whickar, “Scott and His March to Ouiatenon,” 98.

¹³⁹ Quoting Scott’s report to General St. Clair Congress, *ASPIA*, 1:131; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 147.

¹⁴⁰ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 148-149; Nelson, “The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers,” 232; Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 142; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 115.

¹⁴¹ Grenier, *First Way of War*, 197.

¹⁴² Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 155-156.

Wilkinson intended to attack the nearby Kickapoo villages the next morning, but his men were reluctant to advance farther into enemy territory and increase the chance of Indian ambush. The Kentuckians convinced Wilkinson to change his plans and he traveled toward the abandoned villages at Ouiatenon to destroy more corn. Wilkson's force then returned to Kentucky following Scott's original path. In the raid's aftermath, Wilkinson wrote an inflated report in which he claimed that his force had destroyed the primary Wea village. He also praised the conduct of the men under his command. Like Scott's raid, Wilkinson's force sent a reminder message to the Ohio Indians that they were not out of reach of the United States.¹⁴³

Neither Scott nor Wilkinson's raid decided the outcome of the Northwest Indian War, but Americans nonetheless celebrated them as great triumphs following Harmar's disaster. The two raids combined killed approximately fifty Indians and took less than one hundred prisoners, while the Kentuckians suffered ten killed and wounded.¹⁴⁴ Historian Jack Jule Gifford argues these raids convinced individual warriors in the Wabash villages to stay home rather than face the American army in the coming years.¹⁴⁵ Likewise, historians John Grenier, Wiley Sword, and Harry Ward argue that these raids factored into the decision of some Wea, Kickapoo, and other nations in central Indiana and Illinois to seek peace. They feared that the Americans had returned to their old ways of destroying villages and killing noncombatants.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 152-153; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 25; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 155-156.

¹⁴⁴ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 148, 154; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 25; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 140-141, 156; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 114, 116.

¹⁴⁵ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 154-155.

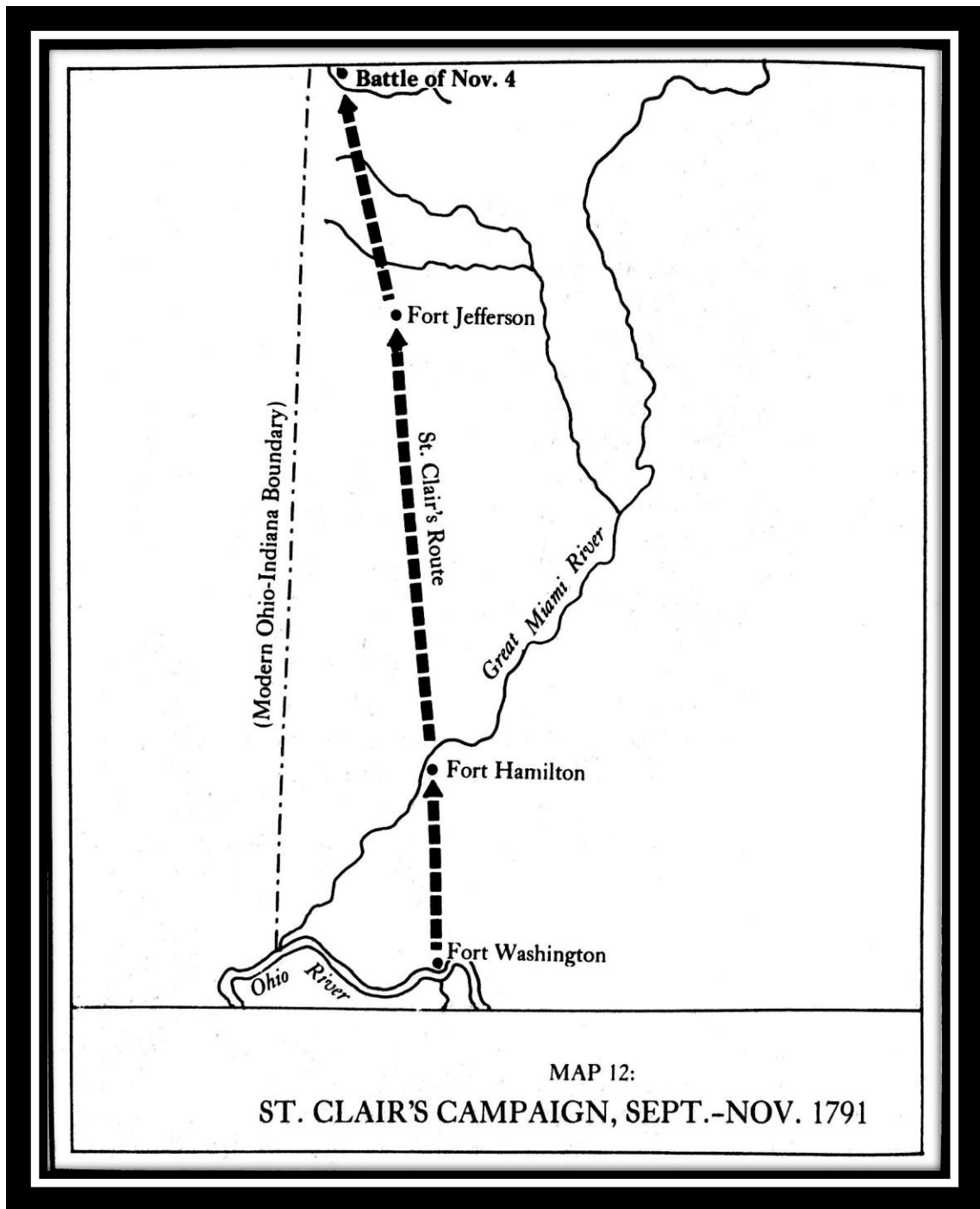
¹⁴⁶ Grenier, *First Way of War*, 197; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 141-43; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 116.

General Arthur St. Clair's Campaign (Fall 1791)

In the fall of 1791, Arthur St. Clair led an expedition to subdue the Ohio Indians. St. Clair faced a shortage of regular troops and to lessen costs decided to recruit foot militia rather than mounted militia.¹⁴⁷ As a result, many respected militia leaders such as Charles Scott refused to participate in the offensive. Command of the militia fell to William Oldham, an uninspiring leader who did not enjoy the fame of other frontiersmen like Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark, and Benjamin Logan.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, St. Clair's army, like Harmar's, consisted of substitute militiamen who were too old or young, or did not understand how to fight the Ohio Indians.

¹⁴⁷ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 182; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 198; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 234; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 25; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 166.

¹⁴⁸ Congress, *ASPIA*, 1: 112; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 157-58; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 200; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 234; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 141, 160; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 117.



Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 154

Not long after St. Clair's army entered the Ohio Country, they faced supply problems. St. Clair's quartermaster requisitioned too few supplies and those he received

were of poor quality. St. Clair's desire to control costs led him to make the same mistakes as Harmar as he prepared for the offensive. For example, the army had trouble keeping axes sharp and in working order as they cleared roads through the forest. As a result, the army was easy to track and the enemy had ample time to plan an attack.¹⁴⁹ The soldiers responsible for clearing roads complained that the axes provided by the quartermaster were of poor quality and bent "like dumplings."¹⁵⁰ St. Clair also had a rocky relationship with his subordinate officers. General Richard Butler, who was a twenty-year friend of St. Clair's, criticized his commanding officer for his ignorance of Native Americans.¹⁵¹ St. Clair's limited knowledge contributed to the disastrous defeat his army suffered on the morning of November 4.

On October 14, St. Clair stopped the advance at Fort Jefferson to remedy the army's supply situation. However, after ten days the army ran out of forage to supply cattle and horses. On October 24, the army began searching for a more desirable location, pushing American forces deeper into enemy territory and stretching their supply lines further. After a slow eleven-day march during which the men spent much time in camp waiting on provisions to arrive, the army arrived at the future site of Fort Recovery along the Wabash River.

Throughout the ten-day march between Forts Jefferson and Recovery the army received minimal intelligence reports because St. Clair employed only twenty Chickasaw Indian scouts, having a low opinion of Native Americans. As a result, St. Clair's army had little information about Indian movement between the villages in the Ohio Country.

¹⁴⁹ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 189-90.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 179-80.

¹⁵¹ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1:38; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 161.

St. Clair believed that a large American army with superior numbers could withstand any attack the Ohio Indians could muster. But his scouts proved unable to supply intelligence about the size of the Indian force gathering against him.¹⁵²

St. Clair's army arrived at Fort Recovery exhausted and many of his men fell ill. Fearing a mutiny among his exhausted men, St. Clair did not order the immediate construction of breastworks or other defensive measures. The only defensive measure St. Clair took was to order a single scouting party to investigate the nearby forests. The scouting party encountered a war party of forty-five Indians, but did not fire on them because they feared the Indians' superior numbers would easily overwhelm them. The party reported the incident to St. Clair's subordinate, Butler, but he did not immediately tell his commanding officer because he did not want to disturb St. Clair at night. Butler's delay ensured that the Ohio Indians had the element of surprise.¹⁵³

St. Clair's location chose also helped the Native Americans surprise the weary Americans. The men established camp on a plain with many fallen trees nearby and tall vegetation growing over the trunks. As a result, Indian warriors had multiple concealed locations to fire on St. Clair's men. They also could maneuver easily around the defenseless American perimeter and get in position for a surprise attack.¹⁵⁴

The Native Americans were in place before daybreak, but they withheld their attack until the American forces finished morning reveille and many men had left camp to retrieve horses and cattle released for the night to forage. The Kentucky militia,

¹⁵² Congress, *ASPIA*, 1:134-135; Colin G. Calloway, *The Victory with No Name : The Native American Defeat of the First American Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 120-23.

¹⁵³ Congress, *ASPMA*, 1:38-39; Gifford, *Northwest Indian War*, 180; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 199; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 163

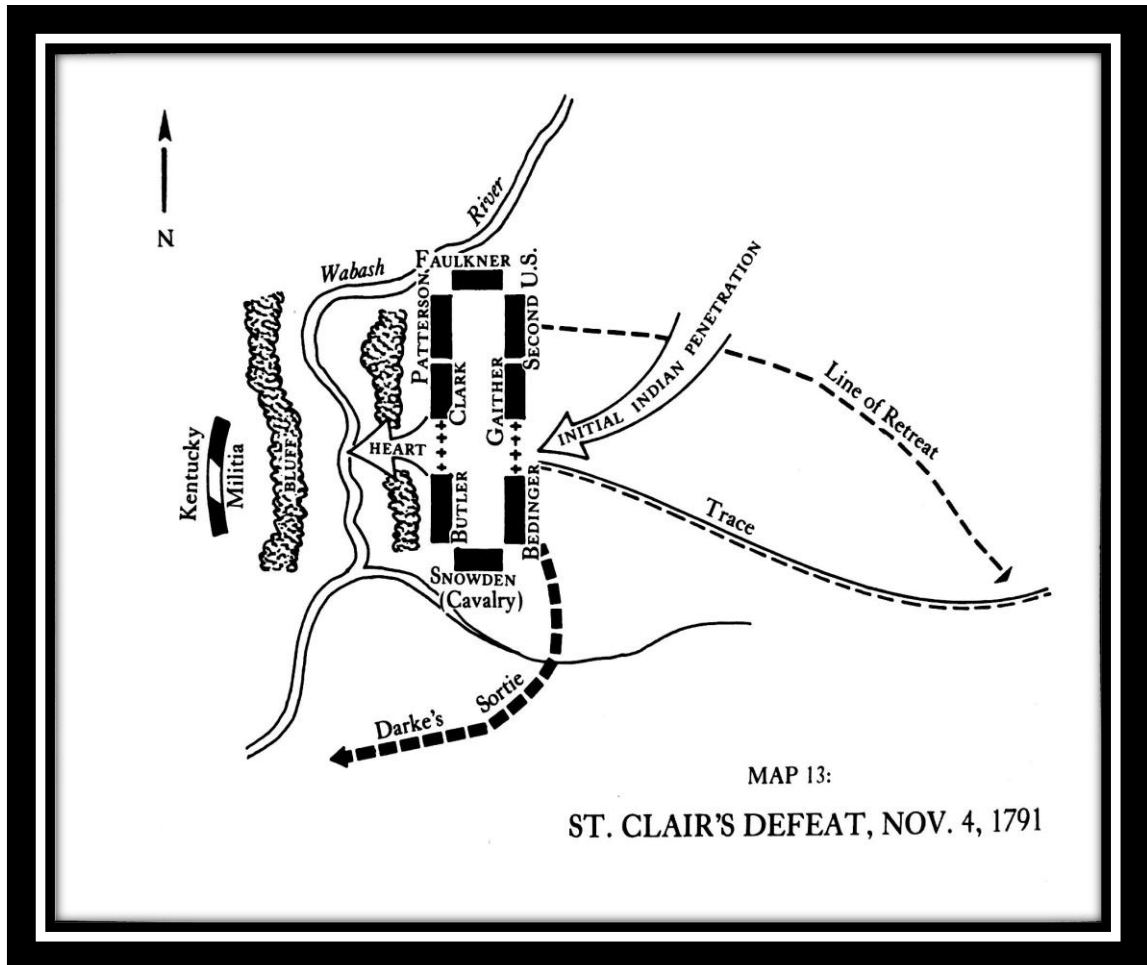
¹⁵⁴ Congress, *ASPIA*, 1:135; Calloway, *The Victory with No Name*, 124-125; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 181-183, Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 238; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 164-166.

encamped separately from the regular army, were attacked first by three hundred warriors. The surprise attack forced the Kentuckians to retreat chaotically toward the regular army camp. But the militia's entry into the army camp prevented the regular soldiers from forming battle lines to counter the attack. The chaos of the Kentuckian retreat drew the attention of the American soldiers far from the main body of Indian warriors who penetrated the American lines from the east. The Native Americans well-planned attack succeeded in surprising the American army, and the lack of defensive fortifications allowed the attackers to overrun the American lines quickly. By the end of fighting, the Indians had succeeded in killing over one third of the American army. Out of the 1,669 American combatants, 593 enlisted men and thirty-seven officers died, and 252 enlisted men and 32 officers were wounded.¹⁵⁵ In addition, an estimated two hundred camp followers died in the fighting. In the wake of the battle, the western settlers found themselves without an effective standing army and nearly defenseless.

After his return to Fort Washington, St. Clair blamed the Kentuckians for the defeat. Their cowardly behavior, he argued in his report to Knox and Washington, prevented regular troops from counterattacking. In response, the Kentuckians argued that St. Clair ignored signs of danger and continued to push his army deeper into enemy territory without the necessary support or provisions, contributing directly to their defeat.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Calloway, *The Victory with No Name*, 127.

¹⁵⁶ Congress, *ASPIA*, 1: 137-38, 57; Alan D. Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness: Anthony Wayne's Legion in the Old Northwest*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 1-5; Gifford; *The Northwest Indian War*, 204-16; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 198-99; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 234-35; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 25-26, *Sword, President Washington's Indian War*, 171-91; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 117.



MAP 13:
ST. CLAIR'S DEFEAT, NOV. 4, 1791

Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 172.

Both St. Clair and the Kentuckians offered accurate critiques. The expedition was supplied with poor quality equipment that delayed their progress into the Ohio Country. St. Clair's desire to keep costs low meant the army did not have the necessary equipment and as it marched deeper into enemy territory it lacked adequate provisions. However, Kentucky militiamen performed poorly in battle. Their disorganized flight prevented regular troops from mounting a defense and contributed to the high numbers of American casualties. St. Clair's decision to use a draft to fill his ranks left him with inexperienced

substitutes instead of experienced woodsmen. In addition, St. Clair confronted elements beyond his control, including a weeks-long steady rain. Still, St. Clair's poor planning placed the army in a position that made it easy for Native American warriors to attack and penetrate American lines.

General Anthony Wayne's Campaign (1792-1794)

The Kentuckians got a chance to redeem themselves under the command of Anthony Wayne, who organized a new offensive in 1792.¹⁵⁷ Wayne did not want to depend on the militia during the campaign and Kentuckians did not welcome serving under a federal officer again. Twice, federal officers had conducted poorly planned campaigns and suffered heavy losses.¹⁵⁸ Wayne's experience with ineffective militia in the American Revolution prompted his distrust and desire to avoid the use of militia forces in the forthcoming offensive. In addition, he had to rebuild the U.S. Army, devastated after St. Clair's campaign.¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, over the next two years Wayne and Kentuckians developed a mutual respect that helped secure victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.¹⁶⁰

Wayne recognized the difference in quality between the foot militia drafted by St. Clair and Harmar and the mounted Kentuckians who served under Scott and Wilkinson, and he specifically asked for the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers to assist the U.S. Army's advance into the Ohio Country. In a flattering letter to Charles Scott that later appeared in *The Kentucky Gazette*, St. Clair wrote:

¹⁵⁷ Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness*, 233; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 316; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 239; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 26.

¹⁵⁸ Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 239; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 26

¹⁵⁹ Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 239-40.

¹⁶⁰ Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness*, 357; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 446; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 250; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 30.

From the Secretary of War . . . with positive orders from the President of the United States, to make those audacious Savages feel our superiority of arms, and to prevent the murder of helpless women and children. He is confident that I shall be well and powerfully supported in this arduous task, by the brave and virtuous mounted Volunteers of Kentucky.¹⁶¹

In 1793, Wayne received 1,500 mounted Kentuckians on six-month enlistments. Recognizing that the legion was not ready for battle, Wayne used Kentuckians as supply packhorses to relieve the supply shortages suffered by soldiers stationed in advanced forts. Kentuckians did not like serving as packhorses for the army, but Wayne's decision ensured the army was well supplied in 1792 and early 1793 as they advanced along the Wabash and Maumee Rivers. Wayne's decision averted the supply shortages that plagued St. Clair, and enabled the United States army to maintain a constant presence in enemy territory.¹⁶² Wayne also ensured the Kentuckians' service by calling them to the field as mounted volunteers. Keeping their terms of service to six months or less also ensured the Kentuckians' loyalty. As a result, Kentuckians did not participate in key battles, but they were instrumental in keeping the army well supplied and prepared for battle. The Kentuckians who served as packhorses also avoided ambushes because they understood the skulking way of war. Finally, Wayne trained the regular army in the skulking tactics of the Kentuckians, ensuring their victory against the Native Americans.

Aware that his regular troops were not ready to face the Ohio Indians, Wayne used Kentucky frontiersmen's tactics to train his new recruits for wilderness combat. He also employed Kentuckians familiar with fighting Native Americans as scouts during the offensive. Wayne organized mock battles to prepare his army for an enemy expert in the use of skulking tactics. In these training exercises, Wayne divided his army into two

¹⁶¹ Quoted by Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness*, 155.

¹⁶² Grenier, *First Way of War*, 199-200.

groups. One group posed as Indian warriors while the other side defended against their attack. These mock battles prepared soldiers by teaching them to detect signs of an ambush, how to react when ambushed, and how to form lines to hold off an Indian attacks while the cavalry organized a counterattack.¹⁶³ Visitors who witnessed the training and mock battles commented on the “silence, industry, and discipline” of the soldiers.¹⁶⁴

As a result of this training, during the Battle of Fallen Timbers on August 20, 1794 regular soldiers performed well and delivered a decisive victory for the United States. A scouting party, consisting primarily of Kentuckians, discovered where Native Americans planned to ambush the American army. With this knowledge, Wayne formulated a plan and attacked the enemy on his terms. Wayne waited for two days before assaulting the enemy position because his scouts advised him that the warriors prepared for battle by fasting and waiting weakened them.¹⁶⁵ When the Americans attacked, Wayne used a combined assault of dragoons and riflemen to attack the Indian defensive line. The dragoons succeeding in breaking through the defensive line forcing the warriors to begin a retreat. Wayne sent in three hundred mounted Kentuckians to reinforce the dragoons in their pursuit of the retreating Indians toward the British Fort Miami. The decision by the British to keep the doors of the fort closed and not engage the American forces ensured that the Native Americans had no choice but to surrender to the Americans. Wayne’s legion demonstrated a proficiency in wilderness warfare enabling

¹⁶³ Ibid, 63; Herbert Barber Howe, *Major Bezaleel Howe, 1750-1825, an Officer in the Continental and in the Regular Armies; a Biography and Genealogy* (n.p.1950), 2-19.

¹⁶⁴ Quotation from the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness*, 63, 98.

¹⁶⁵ Draper, “Beginnings of the U.S. Army,” *Draper Manuscripts*, 5U 174-176; Paul A. Hutton, "William Wells: Frontier Scout and Indian Agent," *Indiana Magazine of History*, no. 7 (September 1978): 198-99.

them to secure victory. While Wayne did not use the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers in battle, he understood the advantages of their tactics when facing Indians in the Ohio Country.¹⁶⁶

The Northwest Indian Wars demonstrated that Kentucky militiamen, both officers and enlisted men, would not answer the call for militia service if they could not participate on their terms. The two raids in 1791 demonstrated that the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers could strike distant towns and villages quickly, but they avoided major engagements with Indian warriors. Apart from Wayne, regular army officers did not understand the Kentuckians' tactics and desire to fight mounted. This lack of understanding prompted Harmar and St. Clair to draft foot militia, and they were shocked that inferior and inexperienced men answered their calls for service.¹⁶⁷ In both instances the results were catastrophic.¹⁶⁸ Wayne recognized these problems and personally requested that Scott lead the militia into the Ohio Country to aid the regular army. Wayne used the militia to maintain the regular army in the field enabling his force to maintain a regular presence in the Ohio country. He also understood the Kentuckians' skulking tactics and trained his regular force in them to prepare his men for battle in the wilderness.

The Battle of Fallen Timbers led to the Treaty of Greenville, signed between the United States and the Ohio Indians in 1795. Native Americans renounced their claims to Kentucky and stopped raids on settlements in the state.¹⁶⁹ Kentuckians now lived in

¹⁶⁶ "Beginnings of the U.S. Army," *Draper Manuscripts* 5U 174-176;

¹⁶⁷ Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 71

¹⁶⁸ Grenier, *First Way of War*, 195-97; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 23-25.

¹⁶⁹ Congress, *ASPIA*, 1: 495, 578; Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness*, 318-29; Gifford, *The Northwest Indian War*, 423, 428; Grenier, *First Way of War*, 201; Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 248; Sword, *President Washington's Indian War*, 307-08; Ward, *Charles Scott*, 143-33.

relative peace, but whites continued to push into the Ohio Country and occupy Indian territory. American aggression led to new tensions and the rise of the Shawnee war chief Tecumseh who built a large Indian Confederation supported with arms from the British to resist the encroachments of Americans.

CHAPTER 4

KENTUCKIANS IN THE WAR OF 1812

Following the signing of the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, Kentuckians lived in relative peace for nearly two decades. But fighting resumed when war broke out between the United States and Great Britain in the War of 1812. Kentuckians volunteered in large numbers to fight as members of the regular army and militia against the British and their Indian allies. During the conflict, Kentucky had the highest number of volunteers per capita of any state. Kentucky's militia, both foot and mounted, primarily fought the confederation of Northwestern Indians led by Tecumseh that inhabited the modern states of Indiana and Illinois. Kentuckians participated in two offensives against Tecumseh and his British allies. The first ended in defeat at River Raisin in the winter of 1813. Their second, in the summer of 1813, ended in a decisive victory that resulted in Tecumseh's death and ended fighting in the Northwest. After the defeat of British and Indian forces in Upper Canada, a small force of Kentuckians went to New Orleans to assist General Andrew Jackson's defense of the city against British invasion. Jackson enjoyed a great victory, but controversy surrounded the Kentuckians' because they lacked arms and performed poorly in battle. Jackson accused the Kentuckians of cowardice because when the British attacked their position on the western side of the Mississippi River they retreated chaotically and ceded a large amount of territory before they formed a new defensive line. In response to Jackson's accusations, Kentucky leaders and newspapers

defended the militia. They quoted a court of inquiry that exonerated the militia, arguing that Kentucky's troops had been placed in an indefensible position and had insufficient arms.¹⁷⁰

In the nearly two decades between 1795 and the War of 1812, the Kentucky militia suffered from poor organization, training, discipline, and equipment. Following Anthony Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers, the militia deteriorated because Kentuckians no longer believed the Ohio Indians posed a threat to the state. Militia members failed to maintain their arms or hold training drills.¹⁷¹ Lacking an imminent Indian or foreign threat the militia became a paper army. Most militia companies failed to muster and maintain their weapons, while companies that mustered lacked effective training.¹⁷²

Still, some Kentuckians organized volunteer militia companies in the years between 1795 and 1812. Volunteer militia companies developed slowly and became more common than enrolled companies after the War of 1812. Volunteer and enrolled companies shared many similarities, but a law that required all men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to join an enrolled company, set the two types of militias apart. Enrolled companies bore the brunt of training and organizing in the 1780s and early 1790s when Kentuckians routinely attacked the Ohio Indians. Volunteer companies did not reach the pinnacle of their influence until the 1840s, but a 1799 state law exempting men in volunteer companies from their required training in enrolled companies reveals

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, 9 January 1815, John Adair to Andrew Jackson, 20 March 1815, Andrew Jackson to John Adair, 2 April 1815, John Spencer Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 6 vols. (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926), 2: 92-95, 136-38, 200-01; Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 170-71.

¹⁷¹ Laver, *Citizens*, 14.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 18.

the growing importance of volunteer companies.¹⁷³ Nonetheless, in 1812 volunteer company numbers were not numerous enough to offset the decline of enrolled companies.

The officers and enlisted men belonging to militia companies in the War of 1812 had increased their economic standing compared to their predecessors in the 1790s. Officers enlarged their slave ownership significantly. Fifty percent owned slaves, with an average of twelve per household, nearly double that of the officers in the 1790s. Some 10 percent of militia officers held political office after the conflict, a slight decline from the 1790s cohort. The highest office obtained by a Kentucky veteran of the War of 1812 was the vice presidency, to which Richard Mentor Johnson was elected in 1828. The majority of the office-holding veterans held seats in the state House of Representatives.¹⁷⁴

The economic status of enlisted men followed that of the officers. They likewise raised their economic status over the militiamen of the 1790s. Slave ownership among enlisted veterans more than doubled, with 23 percent owning slaves, an average of six per household. Land and horse ownership also increased significantly with close to 35 percent of War of 1812 militia veterans owning land and over 55 percent owning horses. The increase in horse ownership became clear in the summer of 1813 when 3,500 mounted Kentuckians joined William Henry Harrison's army in the invasion of Upper Canada.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ The actual date of passage was December 18, 1799 *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Seventh General Assembly, for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Begun and Held in the Capitol, in the Town of Frankfort, on Monday the Fifth Day of November, in the Year of Our Lord, One Thousand, Seven Hundred, and Ninety-Eight, and of the Commonwealth the Sixth: Published by Authority*, (Frankfort: Hunter & Beaumont, 1799), 9.; Laver, *Citizens*, 15.

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Census Indexes 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840.

¹⁷⁵ Companies of Captains Jeremiah Briscoe, Thomas Kennedy, Robert A. Sturges, and Thomas Wornall provide the sample of economic growth. See Kentucky Adjutant-General's Office, *Kentucky Soldiers of the War of 1812* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publication Co., 1969), 244-48.

Militiamen who fought in the War of 1812 hoped to achieve recognition for their accomplishments in battle. The men who joined the militia in 1812 had listened for years to stories of those who served in the 1790s. Public speakers regularly celebrated the accomplishments of the militia and held roll calls for those who had died in battle. These public rituals convinced men that they could achieve fame through service in the militia and advance themselves economically, socially, and politically.

When the United States entered the war, the deficiencies of the Kentucky militia were obvious to commanding officers. Indeed, U.S. army officers struggled with the poorly supplied militia who arrived at camp. Commanders complained of militiamen missing muskets, powder, shot, food, and other necessities. Kentucky's enrolled militia companies readily answered the call to fight the British, but their lack of training repeatedly hampered the American war effort and quartermasters scrambled to obtain necessary provisions.¹⁷⁶

The war left Americans in the Trans-Appalachian West vulnerable. The British quickly went on the offensive, capturing Detroit on August 16, 1812. From Detroit the British could easily arm Indian nations to attack Americans, posing an immediate threat to Americans in the West. Westerners believed it imperative that the United States remove the British from Detroit to neutralize the threat to their homes. Robert McAfee, a Kentuckian who published the first history of the War of 1812 in the Northwest described the feelings of Kentuckians following the capture of Detroit: "It created an excitement and indignation as great as the catastrophe was unexpected."¹⁷⁷ A reporter for the

¹⁷⁶ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 169-70.

¹⁷⁷ Robert B. McAfee, *History of the Late War in the Western Country* (Ann Arbor: University Michigan Microfilms, 1966), 121.

National Intelligencer believed that the American defeat would result in “Savages, whose roving, active & restless disposition, instigated by the British officers, would soon transport them to our neighborhood and excite them to a barbarous warfare upon the defenceless frontier.”¹⁷⁸ Kentuckians in enrolled militia companies eagerly answered the call to war, but the American response was delayed because quartermasters frantically sought supplies for them.

President James Madison appointed James Winchester of Tennessee commander of the Northwest Army and ordered him to organize an offensive to recapture Detroit and invade Upper Canada. Scott, now Kentucky’s governor, distrusted Winchester, considered him arrogant, believed that he could not gain the respect of Kentuckians on the battlefield, and thought his knowledge of the Northwest limited.¹⁷⁹ In response, Scott awarded the governor of the Indiana territory, William Henry Harrison, the rank of major general in Kentucky’s militia. He tasked him with building a militia army that would invade Upper Canada.¹⁸⁰ In appointing Harrison, Scott hoped to undercut Winchester’s federal commission and ensure that Kentuckians served under Harrison. Kentucky leaders were suspicious of Winchester. Richard Mentor Johnson, a commander of a mounted corps of Kentucky volunteers, wrote that Winchester’s command create “a great deal of uneasiness in the Army.” He added that men have “great Confidence in Harrison but with Winchester they have very little.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ *Scioto Gazette* quoted in *National Intelligencer*, 8 September 1812; David Curtis Skaggs, "The Making of a Major General: The Politics of Command of the North West Army, 1812-13," *The War of 1812 Magazine*, no. 14, (October 2008): http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/Warof1812/2008/Issue10/c_Harrison.html, (accessed on 23 July 2015).

¹⁷⁹ Skaggs, “Making of a Major General”; J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War : Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 214-15.

¹⁸⁰ Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 215-16.

¹⁸¹ Johnson to Madison, 3 September 1812, in Skaggs, “Making of a Major General.”

Kentuckians' distrust of Winchester originated in their respect for Harrison. Harrison had served as an officer in Wayne's Legion and remained in the Northwest following the victory at Fallen Timbers. The year before the declaration of war, Harrison had led an army that included one hundred Kentucky volunteers that defeated Native American warriors at Tecumseh's confederacy headquarters, Prophetstown. His exploits against Native Americans convinced Kentuckians that he was the ideal candidate to fight Tecumseh's Confederacy.

After Scott appointed Harrison, the American force had two commanding officers both building their own armies. To end this confusion, Kentuckian Henry Clay wrote feverishly to leaders in Washington in support of Harrison's appointment as commander. He wrote to Secretary of State James Monroe "that throughout all parts of the W. Country there has been the strongest demonstrations of confidence in him given."¹⁸² To the relief of Kentuckians, on September 25, Secretary of War William Eustis named Harrison the supreme commander of the Northwestern Army.

Harrison's force marched north on October 7 to Fort Wayne to organize an offensive. He divided the army into three brigades, with plans for them to unite at Fort Meigs on the Miami River. Harrison hoped that each brigade would destroy Native American villages and resistance as they progressed to Detroit. The plan proved too complex and the brigades bogged down in the cold and swampy regions of Ohio and Michigan, failing to reassemble at the Miami River rapids.¹⁸³ The winter campaign was turning into an abysmal failure. Harrison ordered Winchester to depart Fort Defiance in

¹⁸² Henry Clay to James Monroe, 25 August 1812, James F. ed. Hopkins, *The Papers of Henry Clay*, 11 vols. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), 3: 719.

¹⁸³ Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 220.

late December and meet him at the rapids of the Miami River. Together, the two armies would advance on Fort Malden.¹⁸⁴

As Winchester advanced, he learned that a British and Indian army threatened settlements near River Raisin, but hesitated to detour from his rendezvous with Harrison. When his Kentucky officers questioned his masculinity, Winchester decided to advance to the River Raisin on January 16. Harrison advised against the attack, but Winchester found himself in a difficult position. His malnourished troops needed supplies and he thought he could retain the loyalty of his Kentucky troops only by going on the offensive.¹⁸⁵ The army entered Frenchtown on January 18 and briefly engaged British forces before forcing them to retreat.¹⁸⁶

On the morning of January 22, Colonel Henry Proctor, commander of a 1,200 British-Indian force, launched a surprise attack on Winchester's army. Kentucky riflemen inflicted heavy casualties on the British regulars, but warriors overwhelmed the American right flank, prompting the militiamen to panic and flee. Seeing his line collapse, Winchester decided to surrender his the entire army to avert a slaughter. Following the surrender, Proctor marched the able-bodied prisoners to Amherstburg. He left the wounded in nearby cabins under British guard, but a group of Wyandot warriors killed about sixty of the wounded men the following morning.¹⁸⁷ In Kentucky, the incident

¹⁸⁴ Alec R. Gilpin, *The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958), 160-64.

¹⁸⁵ G. Glenn Clift, *Remember the Raisin! Kentucky and Kentuckians in the Battles and Massacre at Frenchtown, Michigan Territory, in the War of 1812* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1961), 41; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 225.

¹⁸⁶ Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 224-25; Starkey, *European and Native Warfare*, 161; Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 44-45.

¹⁸⁷ Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 225; Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 210-11.

caused outrage with cries of “Remember the Raisin” raised at community gatherings. The massacre encouraged Kentuckians to pursue another invasion in the summer of 1813.¹⁸⁸

The defeat at River Raisin sparked panic throughout the Northwest. Citizens worried about possible Indian raids. Harrison’s defeat frustrated the Madison administration, but the lobbying of Clay and other Kentucky leaders convinced the president to leave him in command.¹⁸⁹ Harrison had overextended his forces and supply lines when he divided his army. He demanded too much of his army and the weather conditions of the late fall and early winter slowed the progress of the American forces. But Harrison learned from his mistakes and modified his plans for the invasion of Upper Canada. First, he waited for the United States to gain control of Lake Erie. American control of the lake ensured that British forces were cut off from supplies and reinforcements. While waiting for American naval victory, Harrison stocked supplies and mounted militia raids of Indian villages. He called up the mounted volunteers when was ready to take the offensive in 1813.¹⁹⁰

Summer 1813

The defeat and massacre at River Raisin caused Kentucky volunteer rates to drop in early 1813. Only Johnson’s cavalry regiment, organized in February 1813, defied this trend.¹⁹¹ In a March 28 letter to Secretary of War John Armstrong, Harrison asked for mounted volunteers from Kentucky:

Experience has convinced me, that militia are more efficient in the early than in the latter part of their service. . . . Let the moment for the commencement of the march from the Rapids be fixed, and the Militia might be taken to that point proceed and accomplish the object and return

¹⁸⁸ Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 43.

¹⁸⁹ Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War*, 320-323.

¹⁹⁰ Harrison to Shelby, 20 July 1813, *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 388.

¹⁹¹ Stone, *Brittle Sword*, 44-45.

home in two months. . . . I have no doubt however but a sufficient number of good men can be procured and should they be allowed to serve on Horse Back Kentucky would furnish some regiments that would be not inferior to those that fought at the River Raisin and they were in my opinion superior to any militia that ever took the field in modern times.¹⁹²

Harrison used Johnson's regiment to raid nearby Native American towns. He also used them to relieve the besieged Fort Meigs and to clear a path for his army to advance north. The mounted Kentuckians were defeated when they attempted to rescue Fort Meigs, but the losses the British suffered made British leaders rethink their siege. They pulled their forces back to Michigan.

Meanwhile, Harrison spent the summer gathering supplies and finalizing his plans. He requested Isaac Shelby to call up the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers and despite Shelby's advanced age of sixty-two, asked that he personally lead the Kentuckians north. Harrison wrote:

I have this moment received a letter from the Secretary of war in which he authorizes me to call from the neighboring states such numbers of militia as I may deem requisite for the ensuring operation against upper canada. . . . To make this last effort why not, my dear sir, come in person, you would not object to a command that would be nominal only—I have such confidence in your wisdom that you in fact should be “be the guiding Head and I the hand.”¹⁹³

Harrison's request reveals that he understood Kentuckians' desire to have a leader they trusted. Shelby sent out a call for a “general rendezvous of the Kentucky Volunteers” on July 31, and added, “I will meet you there in person.” He warned of a draft if 2,000 volunteers did not assemble.¹⁹⁴ The response exceeded expectations and 3,500 Kentuckians arrived in Newport to participate in the offensive.

¹⁹² Harrison to Armstrong, 28 March 1813, in *Messages and Letters*, 387-89

¹⁹³ Harrison to Shelby, 20, July 1813, in *Ibid*, 492-93.

¹⁹⁴ Shelby to Militia, 31 July 1813, in *Ibid*, 504.

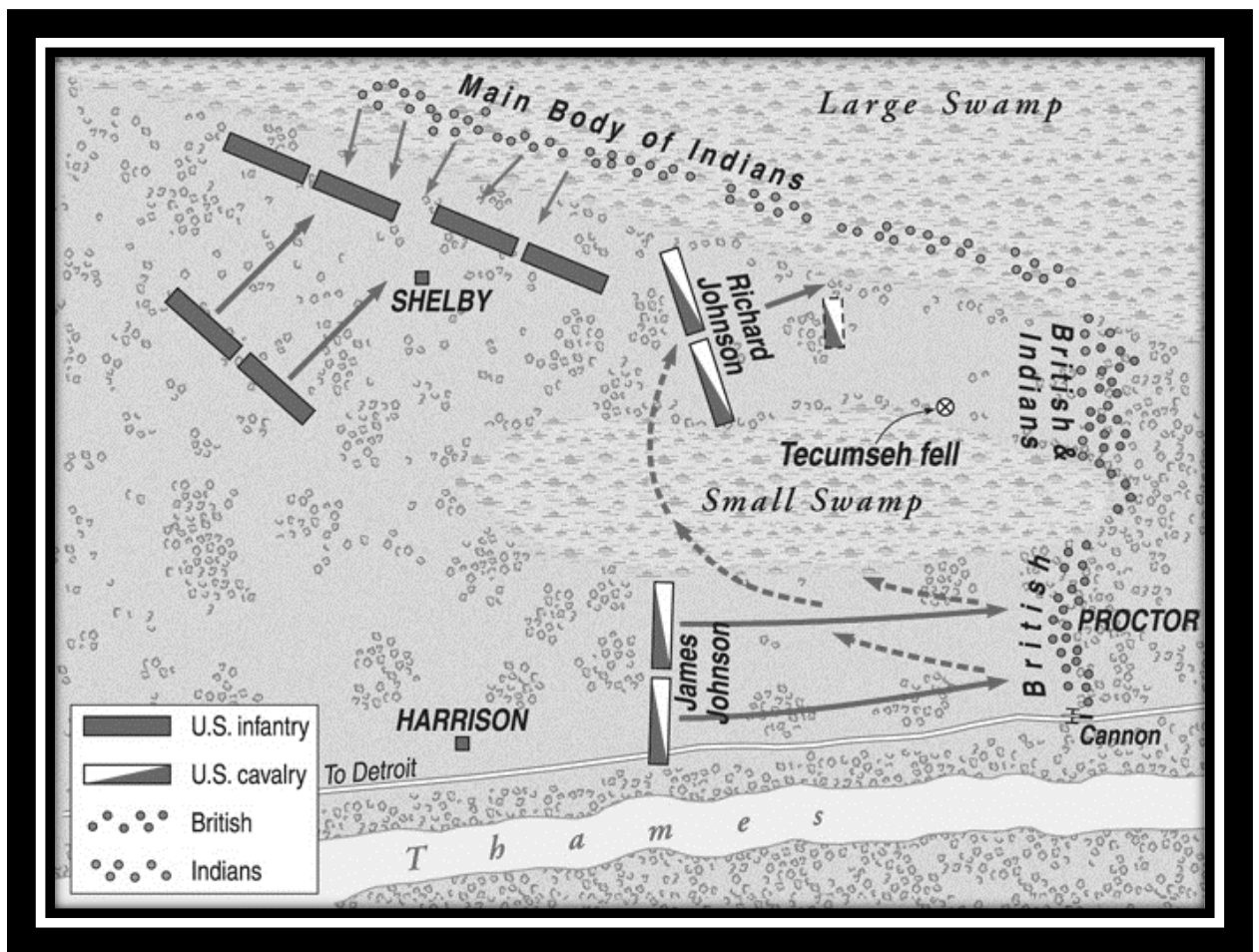
The Kentuckians rendezvoused with Harrison at the Maumee Rapids just prior to Commodore Olive Hazard Perry's defeat of the British navy on Lake Erie. Perry's victory cut Proctor's supply lines and enabled Harrison's force to advance.¹⁹⁵ Mounted Kentuckians landed in Upper Canada on October 3 and pursued Proctor's retreating army from Amherstburg before regular army troops crossed the river. Although reluctant to proceed, Harrison ordered Johnson's mounted regiment to advance and harass Proctor's vanguard, comprised primarily of Native Americans led by Tecumseh. Tecumseh attempted a defensive stand at McGregor's Creek, but constant harassment from Johnson prevented it.

While Johnson's regiment harassed and skirmished with Proctor's rearguard, the rest of Harrison's army began its pursuit of the British. Proctor's army, suffering from fatigue, desertion, and poor morale, made final preparations for their final stand near Moraviantown. After Harrison's force united with Johnson's regiment, he prepared for an assault on Proctor and Tecumseh's position. Johnson's regiment divided into two battalions of five hundred men each. He placed his younger brother, James Johnson, in command of a battalion with orders to attack Proctor's left. The foot militia led by Harrison and Shelby attacked the center and right flank defended by British regulars.

On October 5, the Kentuckians began their assault on the Anglo-Indian defensive line. Prior to the assault, an American scout discovered a ford in a swamp that allowed the mounted Kentuckians to penetrate the enemy's defensive line at a gap between the British and Indians. Johnson redeployed his men quickly. He led his battalion across the ford and attacked from the rear while his brother's battalion attacked the Indians from the

¹⁹⁵ Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 328-29; Sugden, *Tecumseh's Last Stand*, 37-38.

front. Johnson's regiment quickly penetrated British and Native American lines, dismounted, and fired on the enemy from the rear. Attacked from multiple directions, many Indian and British soldiers panicked and abandoned their positions.¹⁹⁶ In the chaos of the battle, a Kentuckian shot Tecumseh. Johnson's contemporaries credited him with killing Tecumseh, but historians question the assertion. Still, they agree that a Kentuckian likely killed Tecumseh because they focused the attack in the area where Tecumseh died in battle.¹⁹⁷



"Battle of the Thames," Sovereign Media, <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/battle-of-the-thames/>, (accessed 12 September 2018).

¹⁹⁶ Sugden, *Tecumseh's Last Stand*, 135.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 148; Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 92-93.

The Kentuckians suffered sixteen deaths in the battle, while a comparable number were injured. The Indians had an equivalent number of dead, but six of those killed in action were chiefs, including Tecumseh. While the losses to the Native Americans were not significant in number, those killed were vitally important leaders. None of the chiefs who remained alive possessed Tecumseh's influence nor could they maintain the Pan-Indian confederation.¹⁹⁸

Following their victory at the Battle of the Thames, Harrison and the Kentuckians withdrew to Detroit to muster out the militia a mere ninety days after their assembly at Newport. The Kentucky militia returned to their homes to tend their crops, leaving a small force of regulars to defend the entire Northwest. After the Kentuckians left, Harrison reported to Armstrong:

The 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. I was persuaded, too, that the enemy would be unprepared for the shock, and they could not resist it.¹⁹⁹

Kentuckians believed that the American victory in the Northwest was not possible without a commander like Harrison. He recognized his mistakes in previous operations, modified his plans, and pushed to use mounted Kentuckians in future expeditions. Harrison used tactics employed by proven leaders such as Wayne and Scott to invade Upper Canada. Moreover, he coordinated his offensive against a British army that lacked support after U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry gained control of Lake Erie.²⁰⁰

Winter 1814-1815

¹⁹⁸ Sugden, *Tecumseh's Last Stand*, 133; Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 92-93.

¹⁹⁹ William Henry Harrison to Secretary of War John Armstrong, 9 October 1814, quoted by Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare*, 163.

²⁰⁰ Skaggs, "Making of a Major General."

Kentuckians' joy soon faded after 2,300 Kentuckians marched south to assist in the defense of New Orleans. In New Orleans the Kentuckians were poorly clothed and suffered from exposure. More important, less than one third of the Kentuckians were armed and smaller number of men lacked proper weapons. The poor condition of the Kentuckians prompted General Andrew Jackson to wonder whether he could make use of them, but he did what he could and armed four hundred Kentuckians with weapons taken from Louisiana militiamen.²⁰¹

To defend New Orleans, Jackson placed men on both sides of the Mississippi River. The defenders on the west bank, under the command of Major General David Morgan, had orders to use artillery to protect Jackson's flank. Jackson ordered four hundred Kentuckians to the west bank to assist Morgan in its defense. However, only 260 Kentuckians crossed the river. The rest returned to camp because they were unarmed. When the British mounted an assault on the Kentucky militia, which held a position in advance of the main American defenses, the Kentuckians fired two rounds and fled. Morgan, described the Kentuckians' dismal performance: "It was a complete flight in place of a retreat, they were in the utmost disorder, one running after another, or in other words every man for himself."²⁰²

The Kentuckians regrouped behind the American lines tasked with defending the American right flank. Soon after taking their new position, the British attacked and flanked the Kentuckians, causing them to take flight again. A ripple effect soon followed and officers were unable to halt the withdrawal which soon turned into a general rout.

²⁰¹ Skeen, *Citizens Soldier*, " 169-170.

²⁰² Louisiana Historical Society and Henry Plauché Dart, "General David B Morgan's Defense of He Conduct of the Louisiana Militia in the Battle of the Left Side of the River, January 8, 1815," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* January (1926).

The artillery at the back of the American line could not fire on the British forces because they feared hitting the disorganized militia. He ordered the destruction of the cannon and dumped them into the river. He eventually reorganized some of the militia and they formed a new line a half mile up the river, but he had too few troops to hold the new line.²⁰³

The conduct of the Kentuckians in the defense of the west bank left a smear on their war record. It also sparked years of heated debates between Jackson and Kentucky leaders. Jackson wrote in the immediate aftermath of the battle that

no words can express the mortification I felt at witnessing the scene Exhibited on the opposite bank. . . . 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.²⁰⁴

In Jackson's report to Madison he directly blamed the Kentuckians for the disintegration of American forces on the west bank. "The Kentucky reinforcements, ingloriously fled," Jackson wrote, "drawing after them, by their example, the remainder of the forces; and thus yielding to the enemy that most fortunate position."²⁰⁵

A court of inquiry largely exonerated the Kentucky militia, noting that the men lacked arms and were placed poorly to defend the line. General John Adair, commander of the Kentuckians on the west bank, tried to make Jackson to retract his harsh criticism of the militia. When Jackson refused, he and the Kentucky press exchanged heated responses that lasted years through his presidential campaigns of 1824, 1828, and 1832.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 170-171.

²⁰⁴ Bassett, *Jackson Correspondence*, 1: 135-36; Skeen, *Citizens Soldier*, 171.

²⁰⁵ Bassett, *Jackson Correspondence*, 2: 136-138.

²⁰⁶ Adair to Jackson, 20 March 1815, Jackson to Adair, 2 April 1815 in *Ibid*, 2: 192-95, 200-201.

The controversy surrounding the Kentuckians' performances in the Battle of New Orleans followed the pattern of the militia's previous performances in battle. The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers proved capable fighters when they had the element of surprise. They moved quickly and were able to flank enemies as they demonstrated in Scott's campaign and the invasion of Upper Canada. However, when the Kentuckians had to hold a defensive line in any major battle they lacked the discipline to stand their ground and often broke, with disastrous consequences.

The American victory over the British and their Indian allies at Moraviantown crushed the remaining Indian resistance to American expansion in the Northwest. Tecumseh's death destroyed the Indian Confederation and forced Britain to remove their troops from forts on American territory. While the Treaty of Ghent had little effect on people in the eastern seaboard, the American conquest in the West opened the region to white expansion at the expense of Native Americans. The War of 1812 produced no clear victor between the United States and Britain, but Britain's Indian allies exited the conflict as distinct losers. Within twenty years of the conflict's end, Americans possessed all the Native land east of the Mississippi River, pushing Native Americans west and south on to small reservations.

The performance of the Kentucky Militia in the War of 1812 mirrored their mixed results in the Northwest Indian Wars of the 1790s. Kentuckians' desire to advance forward in the winter of 1813 enabled the enemy to ambush and defeat them. The murder of Kentucky prisoners following their defeat at River Raisin gave Kentuckians a battle cry and many answered the call for militia service. During the summer campaign of 1813, more than 3,500 Kentuckians, most of them mounted, participated in the invasion of

Upper Canada. The ability of Johnson's men to maneuver quickly and keep the retreating British and Indian forces off balance helped American forces during their invasion of Upper Canada in the summer of 1813.

The controversy surrounding the performance of the Kentucky militia during the Battle of New Orleans helped to mobilize Kentucky's newspapers and leaders to publicize the wartime accomplishments of Kentuckians. Their defense of the Kentucky militia at New Orleans convinced state residents of the accomplishments of the militia in combat. Kentucky writers emphasized the state's contributions to the development of the United States. Over the next two decades, Kentuckians forgot their numerous military defeats and instead forged communal memories that focused on their victories and the heroes who helped secure the safety of Kentucky's citizens from Indian and British attack.

CHAPTER 5
COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS AND TOAST-MAKING REMEMBER THE
KENTUCKY MOUNTED VOLUNTEERS

Kentuckians' victory over Tecumseh and the British in the War of 1812 ensured the security of Kentucky for whites, and the function of the state militia changed to slave patrols, prevention of civil unrest, and participated in parades at community celebrations. The Kentucky militia encouraged the creation of a national, state, and western identity and helped forge a collective memory that celebrated the accomplishments of the militia. In the process, the militia reinforced the state's social and racial hierarchy that placed white men at the pinnacle. In the early nineteenth century, when Kentuckians gathered to celebrate holidays and anniversaries such as Independence Day, Washington's Birthday, and the Battle of Fallen Timbers, speakers enthralled listeners with stories about the battle exploits of Kentucky's sons under the command of leaders such as President George Washington. Toasters connected famous Kentuckians such as General Charles Scott to Washington to bring attention to the contributions of Kentuckians in the creation of the United States. Orators rarely mentioned Kentuckians' defeats, except during routine roll calls when speakers heaped praise on the men who sacrificed their lives for the betterment of Kentucky and the United States. When remembering deceased men, speakers praised their virtue and self-sacrifice rather than focus on their actions in battle that led directly to American defeats. Kentuckians who attended these gatherings soon

believed that the Kentucky militia were the preferred and most capable Indian fighters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.²⁰⁷

Toast making was a standard practice at nearly every public celebration in the early nineteenth century United States. The rituals at these gatherings created and reinforced communal values and attitudes, and promoted nationalism and a collective history. Newspapers like the *Kentucky Gazette* described the festivities throughout the state, and these reports offer insight into the images and ideas Kentuckians used to construct a national identity and collective memory. The gatherings celebrated the civic virtue and self-sacrifice of early national and state heroes and enveloped them in an aura of myth.²⁰⁸

Journalists laid the foundation for a narrative that described Kentuckians as the best Indian fighters. Contemporary newspapers described the scene as Kentuckians crossed the Ohio River to begin Scott's raid on May 24, 1791. A report described the force as consisting of "first class citizens, a member of Congress, members of the [Virginia] Senate and Assembly, marshals, Colonels, Mayors, Captains, Lawyers, and others serving as privates in the field."²⁰⁹ Early Newspaper reports provided inspiration for the toasters of later decades who recited stories about the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers.

The earliest recorded militia parades and toasts that honored national holidays, prominent figures, or military anniversaries appear in Lexington in 1788. They continued

²⁰⁷ Laver's work explores the role of the militia as the peace officers of the nineteenth century and their use in policing or chasing escaped slaves; Laver, *Citizens*, 5.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 27-28.

²⁰⁹ Nelson quoted from the *Kentucky Gazette*. Kentucky was not a state in 1791, which explains the Virginia state senators and assemblymen. Nelson, "The Kentucky Mounted Volunteers," 230.

throughout the state for the next sixty years.²¹⁰ The public gatherings encouraged Kentuckians to develop a national, regional, and state identity that emphasized a shared embrace of republicanism and the Constitution, and the self-sacrifice, civic virtue, bravery, valor, and honor of the soldiers who fought in the Ohio Valley. These celebrations also enshrined the economic and social hierarchy controlled by white men. Speakers extolled listeners, particularly white men, to emulate the admirable qualities of the first generation of Kentuckians and provided examples for how they should conduct their lives. Speakers reminded Kentuckians of national heroes like Washington and Benjamin Franklin, praising their civic service. Over time, they included more members of the founding generation. For example, speakers recast Madison's image over time. Toasters remembered him as a man "firm in Republican virtue" in 1812, but by 1838 speakers described him as the "artificer of the Constitution."²¹¹

Toasters praised early Kentuckians and described them as ideal citizens. They told listeners how Kentucky's heroes contributed to the growth and security of the United States by fighting the nation's Indian foes. As late as 1841, a toaster reminded listeners of "the heroes of the West—The monuments of their fame are to be found in every battle field on which their heroism has been displayed. Posterity will admire, and, when necessary, emulate their gallantry."²¹² By this time, three generations of Kentuckians had listened to speakers praise the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers, encouraging a collective memory and common identity that placed white men at the top of the social hierarchy.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 27-28.

²¹¹ *Kentucky Gazette* 21 July 1812, and 12 July 1838.

²¹² *Lexington Gazette*, 10 April 1841.

Over time, speakers began to add new figures whose actions on the battlefield or in leadership positions represented republican virtue. The celebrations of 1798 and 1816 reveal how these celebrations evolved to incorporate a new generation of heroes. In July 1798, three volunteer militia companies held a joint Independence Day celebration in Lexington. Following the tradition of offering toasts after the meal, Lexington's most powerful and respected men praised the United States, the Constitution, Benjamin Franklin, Washington, and the militia, calling them "the bulwark of the country in the hour of danger."²¹³

In 1816, the people of Lexington assembled to celebrate Independence Day in near identical fashion. In the morning, citizens watched a militia parade, enjoyed an early afternoon meal, and listened to speakers describe the heroes of the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Toast makers echoed the past when they saluted Washington, Franklin, the United States, the Constitution, and the militia, but they also remembered James Madison for his leadership as president during the recent war. The only mention of women came at the end of the toasts as they briefly mentioned the women of Kentucky who contributed to the state's development by in teaching young men about American values.²¹⁴ Besides this brief mention of women, white men were at the center of each of these events that celebrated and cemented the influential white men of the community, state, and nation.

²¹³ Ibid, 27; Wesley Potter Kremer, *100 Great Battles of the Rebellion: a Detailed Account of Regiments and Batteries Engaged—Casualties, Killed, Wounded, and Missing, and the Number of Men in Action in Each Regiment; Also the Battles of the Revolution, War of 1812-5, Mexican War, Indian Battles, American-Spanish War, and Naval Battles. State Rosters from the Several Northern States, Giving the Enrollment, Number Killed, Wounded, Died and Deserted from Each Organization During the War* (Hoboken, NJ, 1906).

²¹⁴ Laver, *Citizens*, 41-42.

Governor Isaac Shelby, Vice President Richard Mentor Johnson, and Governor Charles Scott were among the heroes orators celebrated at holiday gatherings. Shelby first achieved fame during the American Revolution as a hero at the Battle of King's Mountain, but speakers also focused on his tenure as the first governor of Kentucky. By 1816, following his leadership in the War of 1812, speakers revisited his tenure in the Revolutionary War when they reminisced that "The heroes of our second struggle for independence" believed "Gov. [Isaac] Shelby . . . immortalized by his valor in two desperate struggles against tyranny."²¹⁵ Shelby came out of retirement at the age of sixty-three and led 3,500 Kentuckians on the offensive that defeated the British and Tecumseh. After this victory, toasters revisited Shelby's Revolutionary War accomplishments and described him as "a genuine Kentuckian in principle and practice; immortalized by his valor in two desperate struggles against tyranny." He "merits," they concluded, "the confidence of his countrymen."²¹⁶

Scott received praise for his military service among speakers who emphasized the importance of Kentuckians to the nation and their contributions to the security of the United States. Scott fought in the American Revolution alongside Washington, serving at Valley Forge, Trenton, Monmouth, and Charleston. He achieved a heroic status when he arrived in Kentucky following the Revolution. He commanded Kentucky's militia forces during the Northwest Indian Wars of the 1790s and participated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers, bringing an end to Native American raids into Kentucky. Speakers initially celebrated Scott as "a soldier of '76, a terror to our enemies, and a friend to his

²¹⁵ Ibid, 8 July 1816.

²¹⁶ *Kentucky Gazette*, 8 July 1816.

country.”²¹⁷ After his death, he was remembered as a man whose “valor, patriotism and integrity are indelibly impressed on the hearts of his countrymen.”²¹⁸ Scott rivaled Washington in popularity in Kentucky and orators described him as an ideal specimen of chivalry and virtue that others should emulate.

Johnson, became a household name in Kentucky after he was credited with killing Tecumseh at the Battle of Thames in 1813. Johnson’s fame after the battle enabled him to become vice president under President Martin Van Buren. Kentuckians still discussed Johnson’s military record when he finished his term in 1841. But even a term as vice president did not supersede his military reputation in the state. Upon his return to Kentucky, a speaker told an audience: “The nation has appreciated his merits as a statesman and soldier, let us not forget him.”²¹⁹

At these public celebrations Kentuckians who died in battle rivaled the popularity and mythological status of the nation’s founders. Toasters routinely honored the men who had fallen in the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Fallen Timbers, and at River Raisin. At anniversary gatherings, speakers eulogized the local heroes of earlier wars, emphasized the sacrifice of Kentuckians lost in battle, celebrated victories in decisive battles, and recited a roll call of the dead. In 1798, a speaker in Woodford County reminded the

²¹⁷ Ibid, 12 July 1806.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 12 July 1818. For toasts to Scott before his term as governor, see *Kentucky Gazette*, 5 July 1803 12 July 1802; 10 July 1804, 9 July 1805, 5 July 1806 and 12 July 1806, 12 July 1808 and 19 July 1808. For toasts while he was governor see 11 July 1809, 10 July 1810, 26 February and 11 July 16 1811, 25 February and 21 July 1812. For toasts after his death, see 28 February and 11 July 1814; 4 March 1816, 13 July 1820, 27 February 1823, 24 February 1826, and 12 July 1838; Laver, *Citizen*, 31-34; Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword : The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 111-12, 54-57.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 10 April 1841.

people of the “Patriots of ‘76” who had “died for the liberties of their country,” and praised them as “monuments of American valor and patriotism.”²²⁰

No men killed in battle received more recognition than those who died at the Battle of River Raisin in the winter of 1813. Over three hundred Kentuckians died in the battle, an unusually high figure in this era, but speakers also focused on the killing of thirty prisoners the following morning by Native Americans allied to the British. Their deaths galvanized Kentuckians when they gathered for Fourth of July celebrations. In 1813, a speaker memorialized the dead, calling them the “brave, but unfortunate Kentuckians, massacred at River Raisin—Their lamentable fate is a proof to the world, that *British honour is as treacherous* as savage barbarism is shocking to humanity!”²²¹ The battle cry “Remember the Raisin” raised at such eulogies convinced Kentuckians to answer the call of duty and participate in the American offensive in the fall of 1813. Public speakers presented the British guards as dishonorable men because they did not protect the wounded Kentuckians who surrendered. Speeches such as these encouraged men to participate in the war effort, and 3,500 volunteers joined Shelby in the invasion of Upper Canada. Kentuckians were defeated at River Raisin, but the battle cry “Remember the Raisin” echoed at militia gatherings for years after the conclusion of the War of 1812.²²²

While this battle cry and toasters encouraged Kentuckians to think of the savagery of their enemy, Kentuckians failed to mention their repeated attacks on Native American towns and villages whose primary inhabitants were old men, women, and children.

²²⁰ Ibid, 11 July 1798.

²²¹ Ibid, 3 August 1813.

²²² Ibid, 13 July 1813, 28 February and 11 July 1814, 5 July 1817, 24 February and 21 July 1826, 12 July 1838.

Scott's raid in 1791 was hailed a successful raid because of the destruction of several towns, their crops, and the capture of dozens of prisoners. The American Indian women and children proved easy targets for Kentucky raiders who routinely killed and captured them to use as bargaining chips to pressure warriors for peace or surrender. The silence in regards to these raids by Kentuckians is telling because much of the propaganda generated during the War of 1812 actually presented Indian warriors and their allies as savages that preyed on innocent and helpless victims.

Public speakers also praised military heroes from other states and territories, particularly William Henry Harrison. Harrison served in the U.S. army during Wayne's campaign against the Ohio Indians. After the conflict, he served one term in Congress, representing the people of the Northwest Territory before he became the governor of Indiana Territory. His victory over Native American forces at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 garnered him national attention, but made him beloved among Kentuckians who witnessed his defeat of his Indian foes. The people of Kentucky appreciated his fighting abilities, which prevented Indian attacks on Kentucky. When the War of 1812 began, prominent Kentuckians such as Henry Clay asked Secretary of State James Monroe to appoint Harrison commander of the Army of the Northwest.²²³ Clay also wrote to Secretary of War William Eustis, noting that he hoped the president would "see fit to approve substantially what was done . . . with the respect to the appointment of Govr. Harrison."²²⁴ Once Harrison was made the commander of the Northwest Army, he asked Governor Shelby to lead the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers on the offensive that killed Tecumseh and conquered Upper Canada. In the years following the War of 1812,

²²³ Henry Clay to James Monroe, 25 August 1812, *Papers of Henry Clay*, 1:719.

²²⁴ Henry Clay to William Eustis August 26, 1812, in *Ibid*, 1: 722.

Harrison was regularly toasted at public gatherings and became known as “the military favorite of his western brethren.”²²⁵

Kentuckians’ public celebrations helped create an emerging state and regional identity. At a 1788 Fourth of July celebration, a toaster declared “May the Atlantic States be just, the Western States be Free and both be happy,” revealing an emerging western identity. Over the next twenty years, Kentuckians sought to demonstrate their patriotism and importance to the United States while retaining a unique western identity. In 1804, a Scott County speaker stated, “The three western states, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio . . . are unanimous in their patriotism, harmonious in their endeavors to accelerate the growing importance of the western states.”²²⁶ Speakers were aware that newspapers across the nation reprinted their speeches, and used these opportunities to discuss the victories won by Kentuckians and demonstrate that they were as patriotic as citizens in other parts of the nation.²²⁷

Toasters repeatedly boasted about the importance of the Constitution and the freedoms it preserved for white Americans, but they remained silent about Indian removal. Despite contentious Congressional debates, a Supreme Court decision in favor of the Cherokee, and President Jackson’s refusal to accept that decision, speakers failed to mention removal. The speakers’ silence was telling. They celebrated the rights of white citizens and assumed that such rights were not meant for Native Americans.

As Kentucky’s militia companies transitioned away from military action to patrolling for runaway slaves, members of the militia companies celebrated their rights as

²²⁵ Ibid, 7 July 1812; 13 July and 3 August 1813, 28 February 1814; 5 July 1817.

²²⁶ Ibid, 5 July 1788 and 22 May 1804.

²²⁷ Laver, *Citizens*, 36.

free men, but worked to deny freedom to slaves. Not only did these men work to prevent slaves from running away, but many owned slaves themselves. The numbers of slaves per household increased between the Northwest Indian Wars of the 1790s and the War of 1812. These celebrations thus reinforced Kentucky's white hierarchy and reinforced the notion that white rights did not extend to the other races within the borders of the United States.

Swiss political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau once observed that community celebrations reminded citizens "of their forefathers' deeds and hardships and virtues and triumphs, stirred their hearts, set them on fire with the spirit of emulation, and tied them tightly to the fatherland."²²⁸ Public gatherings for national holidays and anniversaries brought Kentuckians from all social classes together to listen to speakers who honored heroic individuals and the nation. These community gatherings helped white citizens forge a common memory about the conflicts in which Kentuckians participated. Orators did not discuss Kentuckians who fled in battle or displayed other cowardly behavior, nor did they discuss the disastrous defeats of the Harmar and St. Clair campaigns or at the Battle of River Raisin. Instead, speakers honored the men who died in these battles for the sacrifice they made to Kentucky and United States. In the case of Battle of River Raisin, speakers nearly ignored the three hundred who died in battle and focused on the thirty killed the next morning by Indians allied to the British. These gatherings helped create a selective collective memory that extolled the exploits of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers. Later generations learned of the militia's accomplishments and forgot about their shortcomings on the battlefield.

²²⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Considerations on the Government of Poland* (Minneapolis,: Minnesota Book Store, 1782, 1947), 8.

CONCLUSION

In April 1810, William Henry Harrison recalled his service as a young officer under Anthony Wayne. Tensions between whites and Native Americans in the Old Northwest were increasing because of white incursions into Indian Territory. Within a year, Harrison would again face warriors at the Battle of Tippecanoe. He wrote to Scott, now governor of Kentucky, praising Wayne:

If General Wayne had marched his army in close columns instead of those long flexible files which enabled him to penetrate the woods with facility and to present a very long extended front to the enemy on every point of attack, if he had neglected to reconnoiter the country in every direction as he advanced to prevent an attack from the enemy before he completed his disposition to receive them, or if, instead of putting them up with the bayonet and keeping up the charge until they were entirely broken and dispersed, he had permitted them to exercise their skill in distant shooting from behind trees, – the 20th of August, 1794, would now have produced as melancholy recollections as the 4th of November, 1791.²²⁹

Harrison's letter reveals that he still pondered the training and tactics the army refined under Wayne's leadership. Harrison retained many lessons from Wayne, but he differed in his greater appreciation of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers. Harrison's decision to request their participation in the invasion of Upper Canada gave the militia an opportunity to redeem itself after the defeat in early 1813. The successful invasion of fall 1813 erased the humiliation Kentuckians suffered after the defeat at River Raisin, and Kentuckians celebrated the victory at the Battle of the Thames for decades.

²²⁹ Harrison to Scott, April 17, 1810, *Harrison Letters*, 1: 414.

The few victories of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers, particularly their raids under Scott and Wilkinson in 1791 demonstrated that they could adopt and refine tactics learned from Indians. But the wins pale in comparison to the militia's defeats and the number of soldiers they lost in battle. The militia's adoption of Native tactics helped make them proficient in the skulking way of war and Kentuckians improved these tactics with the widespread use of the horse, but their record in battle reveals that Native Americans were better individual soldiers and succeeded in killing more Americans than they lost in battle. Still, their smaller population could not sustain the losses of warriors and important leaders. The few battles in which they lost significant leaders forced them to sign treaties that surrendered more land to the expanding United States.

In May 1816, John Quincy Adams wrote to his father, former President John Adams: "my countrymen . . . look too intently to their Triumphs & turn their eyes too lightly away from their disasters." He believed that Americans were "rather more proud than they have reason [to be] of the War."²³⁰ Adams's statement accurately described Kentuckians' collective memory of the Indian wars and the War of 1812. In the months after the War of 1812, Kentuckians extolled the efforts of their militia at community gatherings and in public writing, largely in response to Andrew Jackson's statement that Kentuckians displayed cowardice at the Battle of New Orleans. They pointed to the successful invasion of Upper Canada and defeat of Tecumseh's Pan-Indian Confederation. Ignoring their numerous defeats, they wrote a glamorous history of the Kentucky militia. Kentuckians built up the militia's mythological status in the following decades by recalling the exploits of mounted Kentuckians at holiday and anniversary

²³⁰ John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 29 May 1816, quoted in Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 439.

celebrations. Speakers at these celebrations praised the militia's victories and honored the dead of their numerous defeats. Speakers only rarely spoke of Kentuckians lost to Indian warriors at River Raisin, and under Harmar and St. Clair. And they never mentioned western citizens' fears when these defeats left the state open to attack. Kentucky won the final battles in these wars and speakers focused on the militia's successes rather than their defeats.

This inaccurate narrative passed down through generations to modern historians such as John Grenier who argues that Kentuckians were the best and most sought after Indian fighters by the 1810s. But their record in battle offers little evidence to support the claim that they were the best troops for defeating Indians in the Trans-Appalachian West. Nonetheless, contemporary newspapers and speakers supported the militiamen, praising them when successful while offering excuses to outsiders when they suffered defeat. Beyond Kentucky, only Harrison sought the support of the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers in battle. Wayne thanked Scott for Kentuckians' contributions to his campaign, but he used them as pack horses to alleviate supply shortages and to reinforce regular dragoons. He did not think highly of the Kentucky militia and employed them in ways that he thought least risky to his offensive. Despite the preponderance of evidence, early national Kentuckians forged a narrative that presented the state's militia as the best Indian fighters, a memory that remains largely intact in the twenty-first century.

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