

# *The Role of the Army in Western Settlement Josiah Harmar's Command, 1785-1790*

IN 1787 Marietta, Ohio, was founded, the first real village settled in the western lands ceded by Britain at the close of the Revolutionary War. Galliopolis, Losantiville, and others followed as the frontier was developed. For the historian of the West there is no real lack of source material concerning these settlements. Their story, and the story of the diplomacy and military campaigns that were necessary to secure the West, has been told many times. On the other hand, the role played by the United States Army in preparing the West for settlement and government has received much less attention. To appreciate this aspect it is necessary to picture the little army under the command of Josiah Harmar in the period 1785-1790. In those years Harmar organized and trained the only defense force the young republic had, and with this force he built military posts, aided the survey of the public lands, helped negotiate Indian treaties, and generally aided the growth of settlement in the Ohio country.

Josiah Harmar was born on November 10, 1753, in Philadelphia. As a Quaker he attended Robert Proud's school, where he obtained an excellent education. Both before and after his military service he made his home at Philadelphia in a "handsome brick house, painted yellow, located . . . on the east bank of the Schuylkill river, just below Gray's Ferry bridge." There at "The Retreat," when his military duties allowed, he and his wife Sarah raised their family and busied themselves with the management of numerous properties. In his retirement the old soldier was a well-known figure. Riding on horseback through the neighborhood, he was highly "regarded by all who knew him, for he was of a genial manner." To friends he appeared "tall and well-built, with a manly port, blue eyes, and keen

martial glance. He was very bald, wore a cocked hat, and his powdered hair in a cue."<sup>1</sup>

In the Revolution Harmar compiled an excellent record, rising from Captain in the 1st Pennsylvania Infantry to Lt. Colonel of the 1st Infantry, Continental Line. His service included the ill-fated Canadian campaign in the winter of 1775, the winter at Valley Forge, and, finally, duty in 1782 as adjutant general with Greene in the South.<sup>2</sup>

The friendships he formed in this era were important. George Washington listed him among the "Gentlemen . . . personally known to me as some of the best officers who were in the Army"; he became a lifelong friend of Thomas Mifflin, soldier and subsequent governor of Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup> Many others destined to hold important posts in the government or military establishment of the young republic became his friends through the common bond of service in the Revolutionary army.

In January, 1784, Harmar was the special envoy sent by Congress to request the presence of New Jersey and Connecticut delegates at the ratification of the definitive peace treaty between Britain and the United States. Upon ratification Harmar was given another task, that of carrying the ratified treaty to the American commissioners at Paris. By the end of March he had accomplished this mission and was able to enjoy several months of sight-seeing in France and England. He was introduced to the venerable Franklin and also enjoyed the company of the young Marquis de Lafayette. Indeed, it was through Lafayette that Harmar was granted an audience with Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. In general, he found the scenes and entertainments of Paris and London most enjoyable, but highly expensive. Thus, he wrote Thomas Mifflin that "the expenses which

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Harmar see *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928-1944), VIII, 275-276. For further biographical details see the Harmar Papers, William L. Clements Library. For quotes in the above paragraph see Josiah H. Penniman to Randolph G. Adams, Sept. 21, 1936, *ibid.*; *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), III (1879), 253; William H. Denny, ed., *Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, An Officer in the Revolutionary and Indian Wars* (Philadelphia, 1860), 235.

<sup>2</sup> "Return of the Pennsylvania Troops in the Service of the United States," PMHB, XI (1887), 181-189.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, D. C., 1931-1944), XXVII, 279; for Harmar's relationship with Mifflin see Harmar Papers.

must necessarily be incurred in living in, and in viewing this magnificent city [*Paris*] demand for the benefit of the United States my speedy Embarkation."<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps well that Harmar realized the necessity of economy in the public service; throughout the rest of his military career it was a constant watchword, both in the instructions he received from his superiors and in those he issued to his own command.

While Harmar was returning to the United States, Congress took steps to provide a minimum defense force for the new nation. The soldiers of the Revolution had gone home and the total remaining military strength consisted of an artillery company at West Point and a company of infantry at Fort Pitt.<sup>5</sup> This reduction of the military reflected the basic dislike of many citizens for a standing army, and the inability of Congress to raise funds for a larger establishment.<sup>6</sup> Despite these factors, however, it was obvious that the country had need of more than two companies of soldiers. American territorial holdings had been vastly increased by the addition of the western lands, there were negotiations with the Indians to be conducted, Great Britain still occupied key frontier posts, and, finally, Spanish control and influence along the Mississippi was not to be ignored.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, on June 3, 1784, Congress resolved that 700 men be raised from the militia, and that they be organized into "eight companies of infantry and two of artillery." Since Pennsylvania was to furnish the largest contingent (260) of these troops, that state received the honor of choosing their commander.<sup>8</sup> Upon the recommendation of Thomas Mifflin, Congress appointed Josiah Harmar as Lt. Colonel commandant on August 13, 1784. Although many Americans, then as now, regarded military service as a thankless task, at least one of Harmar's old comrades, Horatio Gates, congratulated him on his appointment and "upon this partial resurrection of the

<sup>4</sup> Dwight L. Smith, "Josiah Harmar, Diplomatic Courier," *PMHB*, LXXXVII (1963), 420-430.

<sup>5</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, D. C., 1904-1937), XXV, 524.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund C. Burnett, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (Washington, D. C., 1921-1936), VIII, 842.

<sup>7</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress*, XXV, 722-729.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII, 538-540.

American Army.”<sup>9</sup> Harmar characteristically acknowledged his new status by promising to give “steady attention to the duties of this appointment [and] to render every possible service to my country. . . .”<sup>10</sup> Soon his command was to be known as the 1st Regiment, United States Infantry, the first regular army troops of the United States.

Encamped near the Schuylkill River, Harmar lost no time in training the Pennsylvania recruits while he awaited the arrival of contingents from New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York. It was no easy task to make soldiers of these men. They were made up of laborers, adventurers, farmers’ sons away from home for the first time, and a sprinkling of hardened professionals. The case of Jackson Johonnet furnished an example of what Harmar had to work with. This young man had left his father’s farm in Connecticut, gone to Boston, and there fallen in with “a dexterous recruiting officer, who seeing him to be a perfect greenhorn, determined to enlist him if he could.” Assured of adventure, wealth, and land in the west, plus the promise of a sergeant’s stripes, Johonnet soon found himself on the road to Pittsburgh. As he and many of his companions were to acknowledge, they were entirely ignorant of the frontier and of Indian warfare.<sup>11</sup>

Harmar was determined to make soldiers of the lot. They were required to present a smart appearance, to keep their equipment in good repair, and to pay particular care to their weapons, for “the Colonel judges of a soldier always by the brightness of his arms [and] any soldier who shall have the least rust upon his firelock on parade shall be punished with severity.” As training progressed, Harmar repeatedly stressed the need for discipline and order. His object was to give his men a “just sense of their profession” and of the “honorable character of a soldier.” By the end of September he was pleased to observe that the emphasis on discipline and drill was having results—“the troops begin to have a just idea of the noble profession of arms.”<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately for Harmar, he was not to be given adequate time for training, nor was he even allowed to await the arrival of troops

<sup>9</sup> See Mifflin’s petition in Harmar’s favor, July 17, 1784, Harmar Papers; Gates to Harmar, Sept. 28, 1784, *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Harmar to John Dickinson, Aug. 16, 1784, in Consul W. Butterfield, ed., *Journal of Captain Jonathan Heart* . . . (Albany, N. Y., 1885), 30–31 (hereinafter *Heart Journal*).

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Cummings, *The Western Pilot* (Cincinnati, 1838), 141.

<sup>12</sup> Order Book, Sept. 10–29, 1784, Harmar Papers.

from other states. Soldiers were needed in Ohio, where Congress' Indian Commissioners were hoping to negotiate a treaty. In September, 1784, Harmar's contingent marched from Philadelphia to Fort Pitt.<sup>13</sup> Upon arrival on the Ohio the troops received more drill and engaged in fatigue details and various garrison tasks. Drill and discipline were in order, for Harmar found that the Fort Pitt garrison had adopted much of their way of life from the residents of that frontier community, many of whom "lived in dirty log cabins and were prone to find joy in liquor and fighting."<sup>14</sup>

The Indian Commissioners had intended to hold their treaty further west, on the Cuyahoga, but because of transport and supply problems, and the approach of winter, they decided to meet with the Indians at Fort McIntosh. This fort, located at Beaver, about thirty miles down the Ohio from Pittsburgh, had been erected in 1778. Originally a well-built stockade of hewn logs with four bastions, it had fallen into disrepair at the end of the Revolution.<sup>15</sup> When Harmar's troops arrived at McIntosh, they found that normal decay had been greatly accelerated by bands of settlers bound for Kentucky who had "destroyed the gates, drawn all the Nails from the roofs, taken off all the boards, and plundered it of every Article." Later, Harmar was able to report that Fort McIntosh "by hard fatigue of the troops, is put in tolerable good order."<sup>16</sup>

Late in 1784, and in the early weeks of the new year, representatives of the western tribes came to the fort for negotiations with the Indian Commissioners. The soldiers were not particularly impressed with the tribesmen. Ebenezer Denny, who became Harmar's adjutant and firm friend, found them an "ugly set of devils." And Erkuries Beatty, the regiment's paymaster, felt that the gold lace hats and jackets given the chiefs became them as much "as a Jewel Does a hog's nose."<sup>17</sup> On January 21, the Commissioners, Arthur Lee, George Rogers Clark, and Richard Butler, obtained the Indians' consent to the Treaty of Fort McIntosh. The Wyandots, Chippewas,

<sup>13</sup> *Heart Journal*, 37-41.

<sup>14</sup> James Ripley Jacobs, *The Beginning of the U. S. Army, 1783-1812* (Princeton, N. J., 1947), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Louis E. Graham, "Fort McIntosh," *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine*, XV (1932), 93.

<sup>16</sup> *Heart Journal*, 57-58.

<sup>17</sup> Denny, 259; Harry B. Weiss and Grace M. Ziegler, *Colonel Erkuries Beatty, 1759-1823* (Trenton, N. J., 1958), 37-39.

Delawares, and Ottawas ceded the southeastern three-quarters of present-day Ohio to the United States.<sup>18</sup> The way was now clear for the adoption of the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the beginning of surveys. Clear, that is, if the Indians continued to accept the congressional system of land cessions by treaties.

Colonel Harmar, whose troops had just fulfilled one of the functions expected of them by Congress, had no comment on the nature or conduct of the Indians, but his comment on the probable effectiveness of the ceremony he had just witnessed showed that he had an accurate perception of its real meaning. "Between you and me," he wrote, "vain and ineffectual will all treaties be, until we take possession of the posts. One treaty held at Detroit would give dignity and consequence to the United States, and answer every purpose." Harmar was correct. Until the United States had the force to persuade Britain to leave the West, it was unlikely that the Indians would continue to acquiesce peacefully in the extinction of their land titles.<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime, Congress, responsive to the demands of settlers and speculators to take up the rich Ohio country lands, ordered Harmar to send troops with the Indian Commissioners to the mouth of the Great Miami. There, the Shawnees, not party to previous treaties, were to be called to council. In compliance with this order, Harmar sent Captain Walter Finney's company down the Ohio to the Great Miami, where, in October, 1785, they erected a stockade, block houses, and a council house for the treaty.<sup>20</sup> Fort Finney, as it was named, was the first of several forts that Harmar's troops were to build and garrison in order to facilitate settlement. Later, the Federal Government was to send representatives of civil authority, but for several years the real responsibility for law and order on the frontier was vested in the officers and men of the 1st Infantry Regiment.

By the end of January, 1786, Richard Butler and George Rogers Clark had induced the Shawnees to agree to the Treaty of Fort

<sup>18</sup> *Statutes at Large of the United States of America, 1788-1873* (Boston, 1850-1873), VII, 16-18.

<sup>19</sup> Harmar to Col. Francis Johnston, June 21, 1785, Harmar Papers; Harmar also wrote Henry Knox on July 16, 1785, that "as long as the British keep possession of the posts it is very evident that all treaties held by us with the Indians will have but little weight with them," Papers of the Continental Congress (Microfilm, Roll 164).

<sup>20</sup> Denny, 59-65.

Finney. The Indians were told that the United States had granted them lands where they might live and hunt west of the Great Miami. This treaty has particular significance in the history of United States—Indian relations. It was the last occasion in which the government took the view that the Indians had no alternative to giving up their lands since they, by siding with the British in the Revolution, had lost them when the British accepted the peace terms of 1783.<sup>21</sup> Such a view might have been tenable if the United States had not been so weak, and if the British could have been induced to leave the western posts and their role of “protectors” of the Indians.

But, as they showed on numerous occasions in the months after the Fort Finney treaty, the Indians did not regard themselves as conquered. In the hope of avoiding the expense of an Indian war, and because of a genuine humanitarian concern on the part of Henry Knox and others, the United States began a gradual shift in its Indian policy. A policy to extinguish Indian land titles through purchase and diplomacy replaced the concept of conquest by virtue of the outcome of the Revolution. The new policy was not to meet with success since loss of land for the Indians was still involved.<sup>22</sup> And until the United States had force enough to convince the Indians that they had to cede their property, and until she was able to persuade the British to leave the western posts, there was little likelihood of peace on the Ohio. Meanwhile, the government had every intention of settling the western lands, and, as settlers arrived in increasing numbers, the Indians responded with hostile action. Josiah Harmar thus found both the difficulties and the duties facing his little army increase in direct proportion to the growth of settlements.

Among the least pleasant of these duties in the years before the establishment of western government was that of removing intruders from lands not yet ceded by Indian treaty or surveyed by the authorities. Hundreds of settlers, impatient to farm these fertile areas, had built cabins and were engaged in clearing the land. Their removal was judged necessary by Congress, and this operation was

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of United States Indian policy see Reginald Horsman, “American Indian Policy in the Old Northwest, 1783–1812,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, XVIII (1961), 35–53.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–44. For details on Knox’s proposals for dealing with the Indians see his report to the President, June 15, 1789, *American State Papers, Indian Affairs* (Washington, D. C., 1832), I, 12–14.

performed with efficiency by Harmar's troops. Some leniency was exercised, and on at least one occasion Harmar allowed settlers to harvest their crops before eviction. The work of removing intruders began in March, 1785, when Ensign John Armstrong and a small unit moved into the area below Fort McIntosh. Another group of soldiers, under the command of Captain John Francis Hamtramck, was employed to remove squatters from Mingo Bottom, the site of modern Steubenville, Ohio. Harmar reported that a few settlers had resisted, and he urged that Congress hasten to adopt a plan of settlement before the whole area was inhabited by "lawless bands whose actions are a disgrace to human nature."<sup>23</sup>

A step toward answering Harmar's plea was taken in May, 1785, when Congress passed its important Land Ordinance. Although this ordinance did not deal with the question of civil government for the West, it did set forth the basis for the famed rectangular survey system. In order to implement the surveys, Congress appointed Thomas Hutchins as Geographer of the United States, and charged him with the survey of the "Seven Ranges" of townships. The beginning point of the survey was near Fort McIntosh, and it was expected that the garrison would furnish troops to protect the surveyors.

As good weather approached, Harmar was hard pressed by the problem of finding men for this purpose. With the end of their enlistments nearing, few of his troops were inclined to continue in service, and a "want of confidence in the public treasury respecting pay" inhibited those who were willing to consider re-enlisting. Fortunately, a newly recruited company from New York arrived in September,<sup>24</sup> when the surveys were originally intended to start. Thus, Harmar was able to greet Hutchins with assurance that he could "very safely repair with the Surveyors to the intersection of the West line of Pennsylvania with the Ohio."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Harmar to Ensign John Armstrong, Mar. 29, 1785; Denny to Harmar, Aug. 23, 1785; Harmar to Knox, July 13, 1786; Capt. Mercer to Hamtramck, Aug. 6, 1786; Harmar to "Persons settled on the lands of the United States," Apr. 21, 1785, Harmar Papers.

<sup>24</sup> Harmar to John Dickinson, Sept. 1, 1785, *Heart Journal*, 85; Harmar to Knox, Oct. 22, 1785, *ibid.*, 92-93.

<sup>25</sup> William D. Pattison, *Beginnings of the American Rectangular Land Survey System, 1784-1800* (Chicago, 1957), 110-142.



Only a few soldiers could be spared to help Hutchins the first season, however, for Harmar's command was depleted by the detachment of Captain Walter Finney and his company to build the fort at the mouth of the Great Miami. In 1786, the surveyors received more protection from the army, which had been increased in size during the winter. Even with three companies of infantry to accompany his men Hutchins did not receive all the help he needed. The reasons for this provide insight into problems which plagued the army on the frontier. Unfortunately, the soldiers often lacked provisions and equipment. On one occasion only thirty men out of the three companies had enough supplies to permit their accompanying the surveyors. Captain Hamtramck, in command of these troops, reported that he was carrying on despite hardships by trusting to "Providence which by the way, can be depended on more than the Contractor."<sup>26</sup> In November, Harmar wrote that freezing weather, and the fact that many of the troops with the surveyors were "bare-foot and miserably off for clothing," had ended the season for surveying, but that four ranges were completed.<sup>27</sup>

Hutchins began his 1787 surveys without troops, but his men in the field, fearful of Indians, again called on Harmar for help. Despite the fact that the building of Forts Franklin, Steuben, and Harmar had further dispersed his small force, Harmar was able to provide sixty men. Thus, with the help of the army, the survey of the Seven Ranges was completed in June, 1787, appropriately enough within seven miles of Fort Harmar, latest in the chain of posts.<sup>28</sup>

The building of Fort Harmar was necessary as an aid to the completion of the surveys and to discourage intruders. This post also represented the advance of the frontier down the Ohio to the Muskingum. In October, 1785, Harmar had sent Captain John Doughty with a small detachment to build the fort they subsequently named for their commander. The site, on the west bank of the Muskingum, was well chosen, and the fort proved of great service to immigrants. It was used as the headquarters of the army in the

<sup>26</sup> Hamtramck to Harmar, Sept. 17, 1786, Harmar Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Harmar to Knox, Nov. 15, 1786, in William H. Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers* (Cincinnati, 1882), II, 19-20.

<sup>28</sup> Pattison, 142.

West until Harmar moved down the Ohio late in 1789 and occupied newly built Fort Washington, at present-day Cincinnati.<sup>29</sup>

Indicative of the increased responsibilities expected of his force were the instructions sent Harmar in April and May, 1787, which directed him to proceed to Vincennes, on the Wabash, and there establish American control and authority. Affairs at Vincennes furnish a good example of the weakness of the Confederation and of the many problems facing America in the West. There, in that old French settlement, deteriorating Indian relations, the threat of British and Spanish interference, and the lack of effective local government all combined to bring the "community to a sad plight."<sup>30</sup>

Harmar sent word ahead to inform the residents that the troops he was bringing were "not a set of Villains, but regulars sent by the Grand Council of the Empire, in order to preserve good faith with them and to protect the legal inhabitants."<sup>31</sup> Such assurance was judged necessary because the previous experience of the community with Americans had been limited to periodic forays against Indians by Kentucky militia, who were not regarded as "real Americans."<sup>32</sup> By mid-June, Harmar and a sizable force were at the falls of the Ohio, and on July 17 they reached Vincennes, where they were welcomed by the "principal French inhabitants."

Harmar displayed considerable energy during the next few weeks as he conferred with leading residents, sought to enforce Congress' orders respecting intruders on public lands, and greeted Indians of the Wabash region. With the latter he was firm, being "determined to impress upon them as much as possible the majesty of the United States," as well as the government's desire to "live in peace and friendship with them."

From Vincennes Harmar went to the Illinois country, where the settlements had not seen any representatives of American authority since the end of the Revolution. At Kaskaskia and Cahokia, where

<sup>29</sup> Harmar to Knox, Oct. 22, 1785, *Heart Journal*, 92-94; for details on Fort Harmar see Beverley W. Bond, Jr., *The Foundations of Ohio [The History of the State of Ohio]* (Columbus, 1941-1944), I, 242-243.

<sup>30</sup> Knox to Harmar, Apr. 26 and May 7, 1787, Harmar Papers; Gayle Thornborough, *Outpost on the Wabash 1787-91* (Indianapolis, 1957), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Harmar to Col. LeGras and Major Bosseron, June 19, 1787, Letterbook B, Harmar Papers.

<sup>32</sup> Denny, 306.

he held conferences similar to those at Vincennes, he was well received, reporting from Cahokia that the inhabitants showed a "decent submission & respect." These Illinois country inhabitants were advised to obey their courts and local officials until "Congress should be pleased to order a government for them."

As a further means of showing that the United States had not forgotten its western lands, Harmar was pleased to accept an invitation to visit Francisco Cruzat, the Spanish commandant at St. Louis. There, he was "very politely entertained" and interested to observe that the Spanish garrison consisted of only twenty regular troops.<sup>33</sup>

Before returning to the Muskingum for winter quarters, Harmar decided that the wish of Congress to assert authority over the Wabash region required a permanent detachment of troops. Accordingly, he left Hamtramck, now a major, and ninety-five men with orders to build a fort and to regulate the local militia. During the next four years Hamtramck and his garrison were the main representatives of United States sovereignty on the Wabash, for it was not until June, 1790, that the Territorial Secretary arrived at Vincennes to establish government under the Northwest Ordinance. Thus, Harmar's little army continued to function as representatives of law and order. In a short time Major Hamtramck found his counsel so frequently sought that he issued regulations for the local courts. He had doubts as to his authority to do this, and he also had no illusions concerning his legal abilities when he sought Harmar's reaction: "My code of laws will no doubt make you laugh but I hope you will consider that I am nither [*sic*] a lawyer or a legislator."<sup>34</sup>

Back at Fort Harmar the soldiers had seen the number of barges and flatboats bound down the Ohio for Kentucky increase daily, and in April, 1788, Harmar and his men greeted Rufus Putnam and an advance party of the Ohio Company. These New Englanders, eager to take up lands in "Putnam's Paradise," soon established the little village of Marietta. The settlement developed rapidly, due in no small part to the protection offered by the garrison, but, in addition

<sup>33</sup> Harmar to Knox, Aug. 7 and Nov. 24, 1787, Harmar Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Hamtramck to Harmar, Nov. 3, 1787, and Apr. 13, 1788, *ibid.* For a well-edited edition of the Harmar-Hamtramck correspondence during these years see Thornborough.

to the "primary function of defense," the presence of the soldiers and their families "gave the little settlement the nucleus of a social and commercial life which otherwise would have been impossible in those early days." The first large-scale social event for the colony saw the garrison join with the settlers in celebrating the Fourth of July. The guns of the fort boomed out to announce the day, and then the officers, men, and their families joined the settlers in a sumptuous banquet held under the trees along the shore of the Muskingum. After feasting on a great variety of game and fish, Harmar and the assembled company drank thirteen toasts—to the United States, the new Constitution, patriots, "the amiable partners of our delicate pleasures," and, finally, to "all mankind."<sup>35</sup>

Although Mrs. Harmar and his young son Charles joined him at Fort Harmar in a "commodious fine house . . . an elegant building for this wooden part of the world," Harmar was not able to spend much time with domestic concerns.<sup>36</sup> The tasks of the army continued to multiply as settlement proceeded and Indian troubles became more frequent. While it was true that the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 promised government for the vast region of the West, Congress was unable to do much more than appoint a governor and judges for the area. The authority of the United States still lay in the hands of Harmar's small force of soldiers. In short, Harmar's role was far greater than that of "chief military servant of the United States on the Ohio."<sup>37</sup> It requires little imagination to share the frustration that both Henry Knox, at the War Department, and Harmar, commander in the field, must have felt as they attempted to carry out the wishes of Congress. Knox certainly could have derived no pleasure in writing Harmar that army accounts, including soldiers' pay, had not been acted on because for long periods fewer than the requisite nine states had been represented in Congress.<sup>38</sup> Harmar's devotion to duty was sorely tried when he received such information, and one can sympathize with him as he saw his re-

<sup>35</sup> Bond, 283–284; Dwight L. Smith, ed., *The Western Journals of John May, Ohio Company Agent and Business Adventurer* (Cincinnati, 1961), 48–60.

<sup>36</sup> Harmar to Sarah Harmar, Aug. 2, 1786, Harmar Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Knox to Harmar, Mar. 12, 1786, *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> On the matter of supplies, pay, etc. for the army, see the Knox-Harmar correspondence, Harmar Papers; see also Harry M. Ward, *The Department of War, 1781–1795* (Pittsburgh, 1962), Chapter VII.

sponsibilities multiply while his force remained small and his supplies often inadequate.

His personal status was slightly altered in July, 1787, when Congress increased his rank to brevet Brigadier General, "with the emoluments but not the pay." This increase in rank was judged necessary in order to avoid disputes over rank on the occasions when the regulars were used in conjunction with the militia.<sup>39</sup>

In 1788 he and Secretary Knox were more optimistic as to the army's future when they noted that various states were beginning to ratify the new Federal Constitution. Knox wished for a government to promote "the happiness and prosperity of the country," but Harmar was more direct with his hope that "Anarchy and Confusion will now leave and that a vigorous government will soon take place."<sup>40</sup>

Affairs on the Ohio were building up to a major test. Settlers arrived in ever-increasing numbers—from December, 1787, to June 14, 1788, Harmar reported that more than 6,000 persons had passed Fort Harmar: "The Emigration is almost incredible."<sup>41</sup> In response to this tide of pioneers the number of hostile Indian actions and retaliatory forays by whites rose sharply. That there were aggressions on the part of both Indians and whites was acknowledged. Indeed, Knox commented that "it would be a point of critical investigation to know on which side they have been the greatest."<sup>42</sup> George Washington was more to the point when he noted that it would probably be vain to "ascertain the original aggressors . . . the innocent of both sides suffer far more frequently than the guilty."<sup>43</sup> With his small force spread thinly along the frontier, Harmar was not able to halt the drift toward open Indian warfare. In short, the situation lent urgency to the government's efforts to draw the Indians into a treaty that might forestall a general conflict.

Such a treaty had been an object of government policy since 1787, but it was not until late in the following year that the Governor of

<sup>39</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress*, XXXIII, 440; Knox to Harmar, Aug. 2, 1787, Harmar Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Knox to Harmar, July 21, 1788; Harmar to Captain Jonathan Heart, July 28, 1788, Harmar Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Harmar to Knox, June 14, 1788, Letterbook C, Harmar Papers.

<sup>42</sup> Knox to Washington, June 15, 1789, *American State Papers, Indian Affairs I*, 12-14.

<sup>43</sup> Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington, D. C., 1934-1962), II, 227-228.

the Northwest Territory, Arthur St. Clair, and Harmar were able to assemble enough Indian leaders to begin negotiations. Finally, in January, 1789, two treaties were signed at Fort Harmar: one with the Wyandot, Chippewa, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Delaware, and Sauk tribes; the other with representatives of the Six Nations. The United States officials refused the Indian demand for a general boundary along the Ohio, but they did confirm the prior treaties of Fort Stanwix and Fort McIntosh and paid the Indians for the land ceded.<sup>44</sup> The treaties at Fort Harmar were an attempt to use the newly developing concept of diplomacy combined with purchase, but it was apparent that the Indians were not reconciled to giving up their lands, regardless of persuasion and pay. Further, none of the Wabash area tribes were parties to the Fort Harmar treaties. The significance of this was not lost on Harmar, who, with St. Clair, seemed to feel that the most positive result was the introduction of some division into Indian ranks.<sup>45</sup> While the natives continued to lose their lands, and while the British continued to encourage them in resistance, the issue of peace remained more than doubtful. Harmar's adjutant, Lt. Denny, was close to the truth when he reported the signing of the treaties as "the last act of the farce."<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the rest of 1789 relations between the settlers and the Indians worsened. By August, Washington felt that the situation on the frontier necessitated the "immediate intervention of the General Government."<sup>47</sup> But a nominal peace was maintained until the spring of 1790. At that time Governor St. Clair, who had no real hope of success, sent Antoine Gamelin on a peace mission to the Wabash tribesmen. When the mission failed, St. Clair reported that there "was not the slightest probability of an accommodation with the Indians."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> For these treaties see *American State Papers, Indian Affairs* I, 5-8; Horsman, 42, 47-49.

<sup>45</sup> *St. Clair Papers*, II, 109-113. Harmar wrote Hamtramck Feb. 15, 1789, "You will observe that none of the western Indians attended it. My opinion is . . . that it will have this good tendency at least, to divide the savages in their councils, and to prevent the General Confederacy taking place. . . ." *Harmar Papers*.

<sup>46</sup> Denny, 334.

<sup>47</sup> Washington to the Senate, Aug. 7, 1789, *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 12.

<sup>48</sup> St. Clair to Knox, Aug. 23, 1790, *ibid.*, I, 92-93; Gamelin Journal in *ibid.*, 93-94; Carter, *Territorial Papers*, II, 359-366. St. Clair's letter to Knox and Gamelin's account are also in *St. Clair Papers*, II, 155-162.

By June the government had resolved to use force, and St. Clair and Harmar were authorized to prepare an expedition to "exhibit to the Wabash Indians our power to punish them for their positive depredations, for their conniving at the depredations of others, and for their refusing to treat with the United States when invited thereto. This power will be demonstrated by a sudden stroke, by which their towns and crops may be destroyed." For this purpose the use of militia with federal troops was authorized.<sup>49</sup>

In St. Clair's absence, preparations were left to Harmar, who, more realistic than Secretary Knox, resolved to use the maximum number of militia allowed by Congress. Thus, instead of the 300 Kentucky militia envisaged by Knox, Harmar called also for 1,000 men from Virginia and for 500 from Pennsylvania. Harmar's previous experience with militia in the type of campaign now ordered gave him cause for doubt, and in retrospect there was much point to his earlier comment that "it is a lamentable circumstance that instead of calling for Militia the Government is so feeble as not to afford three or four Regiments of national troops properly organized, who would soon settle the Business with these perfidious Villains upon the Wabash."<sup>50</sup> However, five years of experience without adequate troops or supplies had taught Harmar to work under less than optimum conditions.

September 15 had been set as the rendezvous date for his expedition, but it was not until three days later that the militia from Kentucky began to arrive at Fort Washington (present-day Cincinnati). Their appearance shocked veteran officers. These were not expert riflemen or seasoned frontiersmen, they were "raw and unused to the gun or the woods; indeed many are without guns . . . one-half certainly serve no other purpose than to swell their numbers."<sup>51</sup> Working rapidly in order to start before the onset of cold weather, Harmar organized his troops. There were inevitable delays concerning supplies, and the usual disputes among the militia officers over command. At length, Harmar entrusted the militia to Colonel John

<sup>49</sup> Knox to Harmar, June 7, 1790, Harmar Papers; Knox to St. Clair, Sept. 14, 1790, *St. Clair Papers*, II, 181-183.

<sup>50</sup> Harmar to Knox, Sept. 14, 1788, Letterbook D, Harmar Papers.

<sup>51</sup> Denny, *Military Journal*, 344. Denny also noted, "If the leading *patriots* of Kentucky don't turn out rascals, then some men that I know are greatly mistaken."

Hardin of Kentucky. This force, numbering 1,133 men, marched from Fort Washington on September 26. By October 3, Harmar and his 320 regulars overtook them, and without incident the expedition went on to its objective, the Indian villages at the head of the Maumee river, present-day Fort Wayne.

The details of what happened between October 14, when Harmar's troops first encountered the Indians at Kekionga, their principal village, and October 23, when the army began its return march have been recorded elsewhere.<sup>52</sup> For present purposes, it is sufficient to note that Harmar's soldiers destroyed five largely deserted Indian towns and a supply of corn estimated at 20,000 bushels. Unfortunately, on two occasions, detachments of troops sent out by Harmar were surprised by smaller Indian forces and suffered extensive losses: 75 regulars killed and 3 wounded; militia losses of 108 killed and 28 wounded. While there seems little doubt that the lack of training and discipline on the part of the militia contributed greatly to these setbacks, it can also be argued that Harmar used poor judgment in seeking to engage the Indians with less than his full strength. One thing is certain: the Indians did not receive the severe check the government had intended. Instead, they were elated with their success, and emboldened in their actions. Within a short time their depredations increased to the point where they were boasting that "there should not remain a Smoak on the Ohio by the time the leaves put out."<sup>53</sup>

Harmar and St. Clair, while not minimizing the heavy losses, seemed to feel that the basic purpose of the expedition had been achieved.<sup>54</sup> This was not the reaction of Secretary Knox or President Washington, both of whom were critical and disappointed. Knox suggested that Harmar request a court of inquiry from the President. At first inclined to resign, Harmar agreed and was granted a

<sup>52</sup> For fuller accounts of Harmar's expedition see Harmar Journal, Harmar Papers; Jacobs, 50-65; John B. Dillon, *A History of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1859), 245-254; Howard H. Peckham, "Josiah Harmar and his Indian Expedition," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*, LV (1946), 227-241.

<sup>53</sup> Rowena Buell, ed., *The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam* (New York, 1903), 112-113.

<sup>54</sup> For Harmar's own account, see Harmar to Knox, Nov. 4, and Nov. 23, 1790, Letterbook A, Harmar Papers. St. Clair wrote "of the entire success of General Harmar at the Indian towns on the Miami and St. Joseph rivers . . .," St. Clair to Knox, Oct. 29, 1790, *St. Clair Papers* II, 188.



hearing. The court met at Fort Washington on September 15, 1791, while St. Clair was assembling troops for another expedition against the Indians.

At the hearing, Harmar's testimony as well as statements by his officers convinced the members of the court that his leadership of the expedition had been along the lines of accepted military procedures. The court of inquiry concluded that "the conduct of the said Brigadier General Josiah Harmar merits high approbation."<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately for Harmar's reputation, most modern judgments have not agreed with this contemporary statement, but, instead, appear to be influenced by knowledge of what Anthony Wayne accomplished four years later. One modern authority, however, does place the incidents of Harmar's campaign in their proper perspective and arrives at a relatively favorable judgment. James Ripley Jacobs has noted that Harmar marched 340 miles, met the enemy two times, kept a hastily assembled expedition supplied and together, traversed virtually unknown country, and brought the force "back to its base as a tactical unit."<sup>56</sup>

After the court of inquiry had reached its decision, Harmar resigned from the army and returned to Philadelphia. He was not long out of public service, however, for in April, 1793, he was appointed adjutant general of the Pennsylvania militia.<sup>57</sup> In 1799, Harmar resigned this position and lived in retirement until his death in 1813. He had served the nation well, but later generations have either overlooked his services or have remembered only the unfortunate Indian campaign of 1790.

Josiah Harmar and his small force, the first regular troops of the United States, performed substantial services for the nation, aiding

<sup>55</sup> For correspondence related to the court of inquiry, see Harmar to Washington, Mar. 28, 1791; Harmar to Knox, May 1, 1791; Knox to Harmar, June 23, 1791, Harmar Papers. The report of the court of inquiry is in *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, I, 20-30.

<sup>56</sup> Jacobs, 60-62. In this connection it is also worth noting that in 1791 Arthur St. Clair, who had experience as a general officer at Trenton, Princeton, Yorktown, and other Revolutionary campaigns, took a larger force than Harmar's into the Indian country and suffered 918 casualties, including 622 dead. *Ibid.*, 85-123.

<sup>57</sup> For Harmar's appointment, Apr. 11, 1793, as adjutant general by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, see Harmar Papers. Other correspondence concerning his service with the Pennsylvania militia, including the period of the Whisky Rebellion, may be found in these papers.

settlement and helping to establish the authority of the United States on its western frontier. By his personal attentions to the settlers, by his disposition of his men to protect them, and by his effective enforcement of law and order, Harmar hastened the settlement of the Ohio country. Personally honest, he refused the many opportunities to further his own fortunes that his position gave him, and he also refused to use that position in the interest of friends who were not as scrupulous.<sup>58</sup> In short, had someone less honest and less effective held his command the establishment of American authority in the West could have been measurably retarded.

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<sup>58</sup> For suggestions that he use his influence to obtain lands for friends, see William Irvine to Harmar, May 31, 1785, and Thomas Mifflin to Harmar, May 7, 1785, *ibid.*