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# *THE MIAMI INDIAN CAMPAIGN*

In the mid-1780s, the primary duty of the Army was to protect the commissioners of Indian affairs. The United States, committed to providing land for soldiers and settlers, first had to establish property lines with the Indian Nations. This assignment initiated close involvement between the commissioners and the military commanders. Settlers west of the Ohio River threatened to disrupt the government's land plan. These illegal settlers, known as "Squatters," provoked the Indians and hampered the treaty making, and claimed the land that the government intended to sell. To dispel the squatters and prevent further settlement, Congress prohibited living west of the Ohio River. In July of 1785, Captain Doughty and his artillery company, composed of one captain; one lieutenant; four sergeants; three corporals; three bombardiers; three gunners; one drummer; one fifer; and thirty-five matrosses, left West Point. The unit proceeded to Fort McIntosh, which was located in Pennsylvania, on the Ohio River below the growing city of Pittsburgh.

By October, the Army's patience with the squatters was wearing thin and Doughty was ordered to burn any remaining cabins. Doughty enforced the law of the land. His destination was the mouth of the Muskingum River where he would build a fort from which the army would operate to remove intruders on public lands. Moving down the Ohio River, he destroyed forty houses on federal territory and warned the squatters not to return. If they were found there in the spring when the soldiers swept the area again they would be seized and severely punished.

The soldiers of our unit called themselves "dime-a-day-men", referring to the wage of three dollars per month. There was no toleration of complaining, even less for insubordination, and the penalty for desertion was enough to make a brave man tremble. Flogging was a standard punishment for the minor offenses and a man deemed deserving of it by his superior officer might receive up to two hundred lashes. The penalty for desertion was immediate execution without the benefit of a court-martial.

By the end of November, Doughty and his men completed building Fort Harmar at the mouth of the Muskingum River and conducted operations to prevent illegal settlement of the Ohio. The Pentagon shaped fort enclosed a well and three-quarters of an acre, which provided ample space to parade and muster the troops. Its main walls were made of timber and were 14 feet high by 120 feet long. Barracks for the privates paralleled the walls and a guardhouse was mounted on the barracks to watch

the river. The only cannon within the fort was a three-pounder, mounted on its carriage and facing the river. While the fort required over a year to complete, by 1786 it was functional enough to repel any future attack from the surrounding forests or the river.

In March 1791, Congress authorized the formation of an additional regiment of infantry and permitted the President to call out 2,000 militia. After receiving a combined force of militia and regulars, Major General Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the Northwest Territory, moved to establish a presence in the Ohio to "revive the government's prestige and to stop the Indian raids." Our unit, now called 1st Company, Battalion of Artillery and commanded by Captain James Bradford, moved to Fort Washington, located at what later became the city of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Instead of the three thousand soldiers, which St. Clair had planned to command, he departed Fort Washington with a force of 1,400 men, half of who were militia. Accompanying the militia soldiers were over 400 camp followers: wives, children, and unattached women (cooks, laundresses, and prostitutes). This group strained the already over-extended supply system of the army. While most of his force was infantry, our unit was one of three artillery batteries in St. Clair's army, giving him the firepower of three 3-pounders, three 6-pounders, and three 5.5" howitzers.

St. Clair's army marched 23 miles north of Fort Washington and built a fortification. The men of our unit were obviously proud that this fort was named Fort Hamilton. Later, the city of Hamilton, Ohio was constructed at this location. Leaving 20 men to garrison Fort Hamilton, St. Clair resumed the march. On October 21, 1791, St. Clair ordered the construction of another fort 44 miles north of Fort Hamilton. This fort, five miles south of the present location of Greenville Ohio, was named Fort Jefferson. The night before St. Clair planned to march, 300 of the militia soldiers deserted, taking approximately 200 of the family members with them. St. Clair sent one of his regiments in pursuit of this group.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, St. Clair's remaining forces departed Fort Jefferson. Food was closely rationed and a killing frost had tainted the grazing for their transport animals. During the next 11 days, this force-marched to a point on the headwaters of the Wabash River, which later became the site of Fort Recovery, near the border between the states of Ohio and Indiana. Establishing routine defenses on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, St. Clair's force of approximately 1,000 men and 200 women and children encamped for the night with little thought for security. Since leaving Fort Jefferson the army had been aware that Indians were following them along the flanks. Soldiers who wandered off into the woods were killed, scalped, mutilated, and their bodies were moved to places where they would be found by the advancing column.

As the men prepared to break camp on the morning of the 4th, they were attacked by an Indian force estimated at between 1000-2000 warriors. This force of Indians included the famous warriors Little Turtle, Blue Jacket, and Tecumseh. The first

blow struck a detachment of militia who were encamped a short distance from the main body. Stunned, the militia fled to the main body and right into the artillery's field of fire. By the time the artillerymen had a clear field of fire, enemy musket fire was coming from every direction. The Indians poured fire into the confusion that their surprise attack had created. Those within range concentrated their fire on the exposed artillerymen manning their guns. The artillerymen attempted to sweep the bushes with grapeshot, but the terrible fire from the enemy destroyed them. Captain James Bradford fell as the Indians picked off the officers and the gun sergeants. One by one the guns fell silent. In one of our darkest hours, all our officers and over 2/3 of the men were killed.

St. Clair's total losses in what became known as the Battle of the Wabash were enormous. Among his officers, 68 were killed immediately and another 29 wounded. Of the 920 privates in action, 500 were left dead on the field, and only 24 men returned uninjured. More than 200 camp followers were killed or taken into captivity by the Indians. The ground was covered with bodies and the ravine leading to the Wabash River ran red with blood. The Indians lost only 66 warriors. The surviving soldiers were pursued back to Fort Jefferson, 29 miles from the scene of the action. The remnants of the expedition, including the handful of artillerymen from our unit, retreated to Fort Washington and went into winter quarters on the 8th of November. A lieutenant named Staats Morris assumed temporary command of our unit.

In the spring of 1792, the remnants of our unit were consolidated with another battery, which had also been mauled at the Battle of the Wabash. The commander of this battery, Captain Mahlon Ford, had been seriously wounded but was one of the three artillery officers who survived the battle. This consolidated unit was redesignated as Ford's Company of Artillery of the 1<sup>st</sup> Sub legion, Legion of the United States. Ford's Company spent the next two years training under Major General Anthony Wayne.

Supported by militia and four companies of artillery, Wayne marched out in 1793 to punish the Indians who had been raiding along the Ohio River. Wayne built forts at twenty-five mile intervals and armed them with field pieces and used these strongholds to defend his forces during the winter of 1793 -1794. Late in the summer of 1794, Wayne marched toward Fort Miami, which was occupied by the British who were helping the Indians. Before reaching the fort, his advance party was attacked by about 500 Indians and forced to retreat to the main body. The main body took a position near some fallen trees and decimated the Indians with a tremendous volley of musket fire and shot from our 3-inch howitzer. The Indians were muted by a bayonet charge and pursued back to Fort Miami. The British refused to let the Indians back in the fort and Wayne's forces were able to finish off the Miamis and avenge our fallen comrades in what became known as both the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the Battle of Miami Rapids. The campaign in which we earned the streamer-embroidered MIAMI could very well have destroyed our unit.

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