



A Diary of the War of 1812

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cial for a number of years; they give a brief description of Gottfried Duden's farm which is located near the present town of Dutzow in Missouri, the farm around which Duden's parasitical account centers; they furnish a detailed description of the hardships and reverses which many of the "Latin farmers" of these early days endured.

Among these documents is also one by Eduard Zimmermann, giving a most unique account of an excursion into the Missouri Valley in October, 1833; it also gives a most fascinating account of life in St. Louis under the just named date.

O. G. LIBBY

A DIARY OF THE WAR OF 1812

The document which follows is a fragment of a diary kept by one of the scouts who participated in the campaign for the relief of Detroit and Fort Wayne in August and September, 1812. It was procured by the writer of these lines from Mrs. Thomas McCluer, of O'Fallon, Missouri, in September, 1912. Mrs. McCluer is a granddaughter of Major Nathan Heald, who commanded at Fort Wayne, Fort Dearborn, and other northwestern posts in the period prior to the War of 1812. There is no clue to the author of the diary aside from its contents. Evidently the diarist was a Kentuckian serving as a scout in the Seventeenth United States Infantry, commanded by Colonel Samuel Wells. Evidently, too, he was a man possessed of native intelligence and some education. Aside from its detailed information concerning the campaign in question, the diary is of interest as affording a typical illustration of the way border warfare was conducted at its best by the American militia forces of a century ago.

MILO M. QUAIFFE

THE DIARY, August 15 — September 30, 1812

Governor's hou[se], in testimon[y] of the commander's respect[er] for that venerable old ma[n].³²

³² The earlier pages of the diary have disappeared. The frequent omissions in the entries of the first few days are due to the dilapidated condition of the first two pages that remain. The diary opens at Georgetown, Kentucky, August 14, 1812, where the Kentucky forces intended for the relief of General Hull rendezvoused. For a fuller account of the circumstances attending the opening entries, see the *Ken-*

[August] 15th [1812]

Joined by three Militia Regiment under the comma[nd] of Col^{ns} Scott, Lewis and Allen³³ — These Reg^{ts} wer[e] composed of Volunteers & have been since called by Gen^l Harrison the *cream of Ky*³⁴ — 16th A General review of all the troops by Gov. Scott and Gen^{ls} Winchester and Payne³⁵ — We this day listened to an eloquent and patriotic oration delivered by that great & worthy statesman Henry Clay.³⁶

17th

Two Companies of Regul[ar] troops f [MS. torn] the com [MS. torn] Hightow[n MS. torn] on this day [MS. torn] the Regulars [le]ft G. Town for New-Port marched 5 miles and encamped for the night.

18th

Resumed the march at an early hour and continued our march till night No. of miles not recollected.

19th 20, 21, 22

Still on our march to New-Port, on the 23rd arrived at the Place, where we drew Guns, tents and the necessary camp equipment — Our march from G. Town to N-Port was very disagreeable owing to continued rian falling on us every day.

24th & 25th

Lieing in the [barrac]ks at New Port. Nothing [MS. torn] drawing guns [MS. torn] pany camp

[2]6th

Crossed the [Ohio River] [t]rave[l]ed 5 miles where we [l]ay on the 27 & 28 While we lay here we recei[ved] the intelligence of the fa[il]l of Fort-Dearborn and the massacre of the company [of] inhabitants — We also heard of Fort-Wayne being beseiged by the Indians³⁷ — Here *tucky Gazette*, August 18, 1812, copied in *National Intelligencer* of September 15, 1812.

³³ Colonels John M. Scott, William Lewis, and John Allen.

³⁴ “The troops which I have with me, and those which are coming on from Kentucky, are, perhaps, the best materials for forming an army that the world has produced. But no equal number of men were ever collected who knew so little of military discipline. . . .” Harrison to the secretary of war, August 28, 1812, printed in M. Dawson, *Historical Narrative of the Civil and Military Services of Major-General Harrison (Cincinnati, 1824)*, 283.

³⁵ Brigadier-general John Payne. He assumed command of the entire brigade, comprising the militia regiments of Scott, Lewis, and Allen, and Colonel Wells’ regiment of regulars.

³⁶ Clay’s address is briefly summarized in the article in the *National Intelligencer* cited *supra*, n. 32.

³⁷ Fort Dearborn was evacuated and the garrison overwhelmed August 15. The siege of Fort Wayne was begun some days later. The news of these events seems to

I must indulge myself with a few thoughts — I suppose it was on account of our Genl^s disputing for rank that we were detained so many days in the neighbourhood, when one of our out Posts was harrassed by the Savages — Gen^l Winchester in the first place took the command from Gen^l Pay[ne] which he did not retain lon[g] Gov. Harrison came up [to?] us here with a Breve[t] commission from [*MS. torn*] a[s] Major Gen^l [of Ky. and] took the comma[nd from Gen^l] Winchester³⁸ — On th[e] 29th under orders from Gen^l Harrison we set out for Piqua — On 30th passed through Lebanon and on the 31st arrived at Dayton.

September 1st, 1812

On the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, we marched from Dayton to Piqua — Nothing occurred on the march on these t[h]ree days of note.

4th and 5th

We lay at Piqua these two days, on the latter the whole of the troops were drawn up to hear the Gen^l speak to [th]em on the propriety of [di]sipline.³⁹ The cause of this [speec]h was the want of Sub [*MS. torn*] in the Militia [regimen]ts.

6th of Septbr,

The whole of the troops marched for St. Mary's today, the 17 R. still in the front —

7th & 8th

On the first marching on to the St. Mary's — and on the latter arrived at the said place — Here the troops for the first time were consolidated⁴⁰ — Provisions being scarce the Gen^l spoke to the army to know whether they were willing to go on to relieve Fort-Wayne, on half rations — The whole army were willing to go on these terms.

9th

We marched a mile and a half and encamped.

10th

Early this morning we took up the line of march and reached the 2nd have been brought to Picqua by Stephen Ruddell, whence his message was conveyed to Harrison at Cincinnati. See Harrison's letter of August 28, in Dawson, *Harrison*, 284, and Ruddell's report in the *Kentucky Gazette*, September 1, 1812.

³⁸ The author's surmise as to the cause of the delay at Cincinnati is probably unfounded. The dispute between Winchester and Harrison developed later.

³⁹ For an account of this event see R. B. McAfee, *History of the Late War in the Western Country* (Lexington, 1816), 121, 122.

⁴⁰ The force with Harrison was joined by Colonel Allen's regiment and a corps of mounted volunteers under Colonel R. M. Johnson. McAfee, *War in the Western Country*, 122.

crossing of the St. Mary's a little after dusk. 17 miles to day — At this place we overtook 600 of the Ohio Militia, who had set out for the relief of Fort-Wayne — They had reached this place several days before this, but were affraid to go on and do what they had set out to do — The beleif was that the *Devil* in the shape of Indians would be seen before they could reach the place of destination — These six hundred men being well mounted, a fine opportunity presented itself to surprise the enemy and take their women and children — But this opportunity was lost for the want of resolution in the men [who] composed this six hundred — These troops were under the command of Col^l Adams, a man who had seen service in fighting Indians.

11th & 12th

On the first of these days we marched without any thing of note happening, except a small party of our spies of whom I was one, had a long pursuit after some Indians — One of the Indians were killed but not found at that time — He was afterwards found by some of our horsemen as they passed along⁴¹ — This small party of mounted men under the command of James Suckett⁴² — a man of undoubted courage, with six spies were order[ed] by the Gen^l to go to F. W. and return to him the same night, if the thing could be done in safety — After the pursuit of the Indians was over, we thought it the most prudent to return — When we got to camp the army was busily engaged in throwing up a breast work for the first time — This encampment is the most noted of any camp since we have been in the feild — It has since been called *fort fight-on* — The centinels fired the greater part of the night, and at some times a whole platoon of them would fire at a time — It is my opinion that there was a great [d]eal more fear in camp this nigh[t] than there was any need for The watch word was very much abused — it was on account of the watchword, that the camp took its name.⁴³

On the latter, we se[t] out at an early hour, and continued our march till we reached Fort-Wayne — This day we expected to fight at the five mile swamp where we expected the enemy would endeavour to surprise us — The line of Battle was formed at the five mile swamp on account of an alarm — On our arrival at the Fort we found that the enemy had left it and fled to their swamps and thickets for safety. They had

⁴¹ For a fuller contemporary account of this incident see narrative of John D. White, in W. A. Brice, *History of Fort Wayne* (Fort Wayne, 1868), 221.

⁴² Variously spelled Sugget, Suggette, and Suchett. He was a member of Colonel Johnson's battalion, from Scott County, Kentucky.

⁴³ For a fuller account of the way the army passed this night see White's narrative in Brice, *History of Fort Wayne*, 222.

destroyed all the stock and a great deal of the corn of the Inhabitants about the Fort — The late Cap^t Wells,⁴⁴ who fell at Chicago, was previous to his going to Chicago an inhabitant at this place — His stock was destroyed and his houses burnt to ashes — all the houses in the vicinity of the garrison were either burnt by the enemy or by the Commanding officer — The place looked desolate.

13th

On this day we lay here making preparations to send out two detachments.

14th

This day a detachment of about one thousand men under the command of Col^l Wells set out for the Puttawattamy villiage on the Elkheart River 55 miles North West from Fort Wayne — marched 10 miles and encamped without water.

15th

We took up the march at or a little after day light and passed the head waters of the wabash, through an oak, pararie country — This day we passed six very pretty little Lakes, which the officers named — Lakes, Harrison, Payne, Wells and Scott were four of the names — This day we marched between 25 and 30 miles and encamped on a beautiful peace of ground, with a small little rivulett near us.

16th

By the break of day we were on the line of march, travelled three miles and struck the twelve mile swamp, where we supposed we should have to fight the enemy if they were apprised of our coming — We passed the swamp and crossed the Elkheart River without finding an enemy — After we had crossed the River we had three miles to go before we reached the town, through an entirely open country, (that is,) clear of all undergroath — The town was situated at the South end of an extensive pararie — On the right of the town was a pararie five or six miles accross, and on the left an oak peace of ground, which bordered on the River. The mode of approaching the town — The greater part of the horsemen were ordered to pass around the town to the left, the balance on the right — The Infantry approached the town in two columns, between the two flanking parties — We approached in silence, in as much as we expected to find Indians in the villiage — But we were disappointed, they had left the place about ten days before our visit.

The houses, corn and other vegetables were immediately destroyed

⁴⁴ Captain William Wells was a brother of Colonel Samuel Wells, commander of the Seventeenth United States Infantry in this campaign.

It is supposed that we destroyed 60 acres of green corn — In the evening we returned 3 miles and encamped on the bank of the River.

17th and 18th

These tow days we marched back to Fort-Wayne ⁴⁵ — Colⁿ Wells was ordered by Gen^l Harrison to destroy the Little Turtles town as he went or returned, he chose to burn the latter place as he returned — When it was known by the Ohio Militia, and Ky troops, that the Colⁿ intended to go by another town, and as provissions were scarce, many of them were unwilling to go — This unwillingness was communicated to the Colⁿ by the respective officers of the different corps — Some of the Ohio troops refused to go to the town — and on the 18th one company marched without orders, but was stopped by the Colⁿ — As provisions had grown scarce, and no road leading directly to the town, and as the Militia were unwilling to go the Colⁿ thought it most prudent to return — On the 18 I went after my arrival at Fort-Wayne to show or rather assist in leading Colⁿ Simerals Regt of Ky. Horse to destroy the Turtles town — Here we destroyed a great quantity of corn and other vegetables and returned to F W. on the 19th.

19th 20th, and 21st,

On these three days we lay at Fort-Wayne — And on the 20th Gen^l Harrison surrendered up the command of the troops to Brg. Gen^l Winchester ⁴⁶ — Nothing happened on the 21st.

22nd

Three Regt^s of Ky. U [?] Militia and four companies of Regulars of the 17 U. S. Infy, and Capt Garrard's troop of horse formed the whole force of our army, that set out to day on their march down the Miami Rivier of the Lake ⁴⁷ — marched 3 miles and encamped.

23rd

To day the army marched about 8 miles and encamped Nothing of importance happened to day.

24th and 25th

On the first of these days Mr Audrain and myself were orde[re]d by

⁴⁵ For additional details concerning Wells' foray see McAfee, *War in the Western Country*, 128-131.

⁴⁶ Apparently the diarist has made a mistake of one day; see Dawson, *Harrison*, 295 for Harrison's letter of September 19, relinquishing the command to Winchester.

⁴⁷ On relinquishing the command Harrison withdrew to the St. Mary's and then to Picqua, to prepare a mounted force for an expedition from Fort Wayne by an unusual route against Detroit. Winchester advanced with the army down the Maumee to meet the British-Indian force under Major Muir which had set out from De-

the Gen^l to go to Colⁿ Jennings ⁴⁸ with dispatches — We travelled all day, through a swampy, brushy country, passed tow very large trails of Indians about ten days old — this night we lay in the woods — On the 25th we travelled all day and arrived in the evening at St Mary's, where we were informed that Colⁿ Jennings had left there on his march for Defiance — We took his trail and pursued till night and before we reached his camp my comrade, being at a little distance from me was attacked by a small party of Indians, knocked down and beat considerably before he could extricate himself — But on all of them except one, leaving him to take me, he turned upon his enemy and got away from him.

On the 24th, the army ⁴⁹ marched without any occurrence.

On the 25th Ensign James Leggette, an officer of the 17 R, who was acting as an officer in a spy company, was with 4 men killed and scalped ⁵⁰ — Ensign Leggette was a young man of much merit, and bid fair to be a great machine in the fighting department.

26th 27th 28th 29th

On the first of these days Capt Ballard, who commanded a Spy company had a small engagement with the Indians, but lost no men.

At another time the Capt had another small engagement with the [m] had one man wounded but got him off to camp — Not being with the army at this time can not enter into particulars ⁵¹ — On the 29th Mr Audrain and myself got to camp after having been absent 5 days, — We were the first men that viewed the point.

30th

This day we marched within one mile and a half of old Fort Defiance. ⁵²

troit to assist in the capture of Fort Wayne. For an account of the movements at this stage of the campaign see McAfee, *War in the Western Country*, 132, *et seq.*

⁴⁸ At St. Mary's. On Jennings' movements see Dawson, *Harrison*, 296-298.

⁴⁹ That is, Winchester's army. The diarist was absent from the army from September 24 to 29.

⁵⁰ On the killing of Liggett and his party see McAfee, *War in the Western Country*, 134, 135.

⁵¹ An account of these various conflicts is given in *ibid.*, 135.

⁵² With this entry the diary abruptly closes. Winchester fortified himself at this place, awaiting reënforcements and supplies before continuing the advance on Detroit. Meanwhile, by an order of September 17, Harrison was given command of the army in the Northwest, and the forces under Winchester were turned over to him October 3. The further fortunes of the campaign do not concern us here, although it may be noted in closing that almost a year elapsed before Detroit was retaken by the Americans.