

Collection #
BV 1804-1807

JAMES O'HARA
MILITARY RECORDS, 1779-1794

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Re-processed by

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September 2017

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 4 bound volumes

COLLECTION
DATES: 1779—1794

PROVENANCE: George S. MacManus Co., Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE
FORMATS:

RELATED
HOLDINGS: Northwest Territory Papers and Documents, 1721—1802. Box
2. Manuscript Collection: M 0367

ACCESSION
NUMBER: 1946.1222

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James O'Hara (circa 1752—1819) was born in County Mayo, Ireland to Major John O'Hara (mother's name unknown). He attended the Jesuit College of St. Sulpice at Paris, and in 1770 briefly served as an officer in the British Coldstream Guards. After resigning his commission, he worked for a ship broker in Liverpool. He emigrated to Philadelphia in 1772, moving to Pittsburgh in 1773. There he began working as an agent for traders Ephraim Douglas and Devereaux Smith. He traveled extensively in western Pennsylvania and Virginia conducting business with the local Indian tribes. In 1774 the government appointed him an official Indian Agent.

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, he enlisted as a private and quickly rose through the ranks. From 1781 until 1783 O'Hara served under General Nathaniel Greene as Assistant Quartermaster. In 1784 he opened a general store, which closed three years later. From 1784 to 1791 he operated as a government contractor. In 1792 President George Washington appointed O'Hara Quartermaster of the United States Army. He was heavily involved in preparations for General Anthony Wayne's expedition against Indians in the West, and traveled extensively throughout the western states and territories purchasing supplies. In 1796 he resigned his quartermaster position but continued on as a government contractor until 1802.

In 1795 O'Hara established the Pittsburgh Glassworks. He operated several other businesses as well, and became one of the most successful businessmen in Pittsburgh. He unsuccessfully ran for Congress in 1802 as a Federalist, and briefly served as a city burgess beginning in 1803. In 1815 he was named president of the Pittsburgh Branch Bank of Pennsylvania.

In 1783 he married Mary Carson, with whom he had six children. He died in 1819 in Pittsburgh.

Sources:

Collection materials.

Ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, *American National Biography*, vol. 16 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 648-649.

Eric Pumroy and Paul Brockman, *A Guide to Manuscript Collections of the Indiana Historical Society and Indiana State Library* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1986) entry A-287.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains four bound volumes, all written by O'Hara: one small book of receipts and expenses, two general orders books, and one volume of copied letters. The general orders books and the letter book provide details on the actions of General Anthony Wayne's army as it prepared for and embarked upon an expedition to fight Native American tribes in the West.

EXPENSE BOOK (BV 1804):

The expense book contains records of personal expenses, mostly for lodging, and of amounts received from others.

ORDERS BOOKS (BV 1805-1806):

O'Hara wrote the general order books between 5 May 1792 and 13 November 1793 at army headquarters in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Legionville, and Hobson's Choice, as well as on the west branch of the Miami River (now known as the Great Miami River). The books concern themselves with the day-to-day operations of Wayne's army as they trained and prepared for the expedition.

One of the most common topics is the purchase and transport of supplies. Drills, inspections, and other training exercises are also frequently mentioned. Perhaps the most prominent subject, though, is discipline, as the books contain court-martial records. Desertion was rampant, and most of the names mentioned in the books are from the lists of those brought to trial.

Notable entries:

BV 1805

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| 17 July 1792 | Smallpox inoculations deemed necessary for the camp. |
| 30 July 1792 | Copies of Gen. Wayne's order of execution and pardon for Henry Hamilton. |
| 9 Aug. 1792 | \$10 reward to soldiers or citizens for finding deserters. |
| 15 Aug. 1792 | Plans for battle with Indians (discussion of plans continues throughout August). |
| 2 Sept. 1792 | List of all officers in Wayne's army divided into four sublegions. |

- 18 Oct. 1792 Court-martial of Capt. Ballard Smith for "keeping a woman, claimed and known to be the wife of Sergeant Sprague of his own company."
BV 1806
- 15 May 1893 First entry from headquarters at Hobson's Choice; certain promotions determined by lottery.
- 16 Oct. 1893 First entry from headquarters at the west branch of the Miami; mention of Brigadier General Thomas Posey.
- 25 Aug. 1893** Plans for troop movements and battle.
** Entries for 25 August and 29 August 1893 are out of order, placed between 16 October and 28 October 1893.
- 1 Nov. 1893 List of officers of "the Mounted Volunteers of the State of Kentucky."
- 6 Nov. 1893 Second mention of Posey.

LIST OF COURT MARTIALED INDIVIDUALS (BV 1805-1806):

BV 1805

- 4 May 1792 Charles Bailey, James Lewis
- 4 July 1792 Capt. Jos. Shaylor
- 24 July 1792 Henry Hamilton, Patrick McCaw, Alexander McIlvannon, David Miller, Corporal Thomas Miller
- 11 Aug. 1792 Timothy Conner, George Dennison, Christian Kahn, Morgan Wood
- 12 Aug. 1792 Hugh McLaughlin
- 31 Aug. 1792 Ruben Allen, William Bailey, Jacob Bankhead, Jeremiah Clarkson, Frederick Faye, Ensign Hunter, Joseph Kincaid, [?] Lindsay, John Longshaith, John McClery, Hugh Morony, Daniel Murphy, John Murray, James Reily, Joshua Reynolds, William Robertson, Hugh Roote, George Shaffer, James Sullivan, James Watts, Nathan Weekly
- 1 Sept. 1892 John Elias/Ebbert, Jacob Hollom, Charles Jordan, Samuel Reives/Reid, George Russell
- 8 Sept. 1892 Lieutenant Nathaniel Huston

- 9 Sept. 1892 John Alexander Campbell, Skiverton Culbert, James Davis, William Donnelly, Thomas Hughes, William Johnson, Michael Powers, James Robinson/John Young, James See
- 10 Sept. 1792 Joseph Spence, Matthew Stopper
- 28 Sept. 1892 Alexander Ferril, John Hanson, Alexander McIntyre, William Roads
- 29 Sept. 1792 William Armstrong, Patrick McDonald, James McMullen, James Nugent, Sergeant John Sage
- 1 Oct. 1792 Captain Ballard Smith
- 3 Nov. 1792 Mr. [Garaway?]

BV 1806

- 11 Nov. 1792 Charles Bailey, William Bailey, William Birk, Henry de Sheldon, Joshua Eggins, James Flood/John McMahan, William Griffith, Sergeant Hopkins, Thomas Jones/Mac[Knelias?], Christopher Lollar, Edward Morris/Morrison, Lewis Piffer, John Small, Anthony Smith/Peter Wykoff/John Conrad Muninghausen, John Smith, Sergeant John Stokes/Jacob Hicks, Sergeant John Trotter, [Jepne?] Williams
- 13 Nov. 1792 George Donaldson, William McHenry
- 17 Nov. 1792 Ensign William T. Payne
- 17 July 1793 William Anderson/John Frost, Martin Barris, Patrick Crayton, Ensign Samuel Drake, Joseph R. Kelly

LETTER BOOK (BV 1807):

The letter book contains copies of military letters O'Hara received between 17 April 1792 and 19 July 1794. No personal letters are included. Most are addressed directly to O'Hara, but several are copies of letters between other parties. The letters concern themselves with the purchase and transport of supplies for the expedition, as well as the hiring of guides and other contractors. Much is made of the difficulty of transporting materials by boat on the west branch of the Miami. In its focus on such matters, the book vividly exemplifies the banality and detachment of war bureaucracy. Correspondents also on occasion directly discuss military conflicts and diplomatic relations with Indians in the Northwest Territory. Letters appear to be arranged in order of receipt, so are not always in exact chronological order in terms of when they were written. The beginning of the book includes a partial index of names.

Frequent correspondents: John Belli, Isaac Craig, Jonathan Haskell, Samuel Hodgdon, Henry Knox, George McCully, Anthony Wayne

Other correspondents: Robert Benham, Jos. W. Bennett, Joseph E. Collins, H. De Butts, John Finley, William Gray, Green (signed under Green & Meigs), Alexander Hamilton (18 Dec. 1792 and 25 June 1793), Zenas Kimberley, Ebenezer lane, Alexander McDowell, William McKinley, Meigs (signed under Green & Meigs), John Mills, Presley Neville, Joseph Simon, John Stagg, William Sutherland, Caleb Swan, James Wilkinson, Oliver Wolcott

Letters of note:

- 5 Mar. 1793 Secretary of War Henry Knox to General Anthony Wayne (copy enclosed in letter of 15 March 1793 from Wayne to O'Hara). Conveys the president's wishes that officers be strict in their training of soldiers, particularly regarding marksmanship.
- 13 Apr. 1793 Knox to Wayne (copy enclosed in letter of 22 April 1793 from Wayne to O'Hara). Discusses upcoming treaty negotiations at Sandusky and warns Wayne not to make incursions into Indian Territory until their conclusion. Also requests that Wayne prepare to respond "with the highest vigor" if the treaty results are unfavorable.
- 22 July 1793 James Wilkinson to O'Hara. Discusses the importance and necessary qualifications for woodsmen and guides.
- 25 June 1793 Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton to Knox. Outlines Hamilton's plan for supplying western troops with spirits.
- 10 Aug. 1793 Samuel Hodgdon to O'Hara. "...preparations in case the Treaty should not procure peace, I conclude you are making."
- 30 Sept. 1793 Isaac Craig to O'Hara. Contagious fever in Philadelphia; Knox's orders to have packages of military clothing opened and aired in case it might be infected.
- 22 Oct. 1793 Craig to O'Hara. War Office command staff have fled Philadelphia due to the contagion, as have many civilians.
- 14 Nov. 1793 Hodgdon to O'Hara. "I hope that the slaughter of November 1791, will be retaliated in November 1793."
- 22 Nov. 1793 Hodgdon to O'Hara. Large convoy of 70 men and 22 wagons lost.
- 24 Nov. 1793 Craig to O'Hara. "The world is all anxiety for the fate of your campaign."

- 16 Jan. 1794 John Belli to O'Hara. Delaware and Shawnee hoping for a treaty regarding hunting rights that winter.
- 29 June 1794 Wayne to O'Hara. Wayne believes Indians will attack soon.
- 4 July 1794 Wayne to O'Hara. Account of Indian attack near Fort Recovery, including discussion of casualties and supplies lost.
- 14 July 1794 [dated 14 July 1793 but this is likely a mistake due to the letter's placement within the chronology of the book] Belli to O'Hara. Complains about running out of specie to pay for supplies, and about the uselessness of bank notes.

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