



Marietta Chapter, Ohio Society

Sons of the American Revolution

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Fort Harmar Flag Dedication Speech by Scott A. Britton, Castle Director & Marietta SAR Chapter Historian (February 8, 2024)

Good Morning. It's exciting to be here today to see this new flag commemorating one of the important early American forts here on these hallowed grounds that also plays a key part of the story of Marietta's founding. Ft. Harmar was built as an outpost and home of the First American Regiment. A large percentage of the entire U.S. army was stationed here after the Revolutionary War. The whole post-Revolution army at that time consisted of a paltry 700 officers and men under the fort's namesake, Gen. Josiah Harmar, whose job it was to protect our nation and its people. This new flag we are unveiling today also gives us the opportunity to discuss the importance of the structure that was built here starting in the fall of 1785 and being completed sometime in the spring of 1786. This pentagon structure with 12- or 14-foot-high horizontally-laid timbered walls and 120 feet in length enclosed about 3/4 of an acre. The fort had gardens & peach orchards outside of its walls, along with its own water well inside in case of a siege. For me, the greatest impact of Fort Harmar was its links the ideals that were written into the extraordinary document called the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. That document not only set up Marietta's settlement, became a template for many of our freedoms in the Constitution's Bill of Rights, outlawed slavery in the entire Northwest Territory and promoted education among its citizens, but it contained groundbreaking ideals of how the Native American population in this country should be treated...it stated, "The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and, in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity, shall from time to time be made for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them." Tragically, we know those ideals and treaties were not fulfilled, but the importance of those efforts to live up to those words...right here on these grounds...should be remembered.

Fort Harmar was also the home of soldiers like Englehard Hopper who was buried on the Barber House property next door, as well as an unknown soldier discovered during the excavation process for the school building in the early 1950s. Several Revolutionary War heroes like Major John

Palsgrave Wyllys, Captain Jonathan Heart, and Lieutenant Ebenezer Denny who helped to capture Redoubt #10 that forced the British surrender at Yorktown, ending the war, also were stationed here. These men and their fellow soldiers came here to remove “squatters” from this region that were illegally settling north of the Ohio River. Fort Harmar was the site of The Treaty of Fort Harmar in 1789 that was ratified by Congress and still recognized today by several tribes (Wyandot, Delaware, Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomi, & Sac [Sauk] nations) and another treaty signed by the Six Nations [Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, & Tuscarora...but it was not accepted by the 6th one-the Mohawk] was not formally ratified by Congress. These treaties that were negotiated on this site were an attempt to fulfill that amazing Northwest Ordinance document. After the army removed to Fort Washington in the Cincinnati area around 1790, the fort was abandoned. However, it became the temporary home of some of the Marietta settlers as well as the French immigrants who had been swindled by land speculators...and were housed here while Gen. Rufus Putnam and other Marietta leaders found other arrangements for them. With the 250th Anniversary of America’s founding coming in 2026, it is vital that we continue to work to preserve and document the important history that was made on this site and in this town in general.

Capt. Heart’s sketch of Fort Harmar, which you can see on the Marietta SAR webpage, shows the massive American flag with the diagonal star field that flew over the ramparts here on the banks of the Muskingum, estimated to be between 16-20 feet long by 12-14 feet wide. This new commemorative flag you see today was designed using symbolism to help tell the short, but incredibly important role that Fort Harmar played in American history. The red, white, blue, & gold represent the colors used on the regimental flag of the unit posted here. It incorporates the pentagon shape of the original structure on this site, the American eagle & shield representing the US Army and Native American peace pipe showing the diplomatic efforts to improve relations with the regional tribes, and finally the arrows and laurels that exemplify the motto on the ribbon held by the eagle – “Protection, Peace, & Prosperity.” This new Ft. Harmar flag is another resource to help us tell this story of what happened here along the banks of the Ohio & Muskingum Rivers. As our pioneer monument in Oak Grove Cemetery smartly states, “Names Pass Away, But Deeds Live On!” The names of those American soldiers, Native Americans, French refugees, and Marietta settlers who used that fort in hopes of improving their lives and those of their families and communities many not be remembered by all, but may we never forget what they sacrificed and did here. Thank you.