

Collection #
BV 2563
SC 3099

MAJOR GENERAL SAMUEL HOPKINS TRANSCRIPT OF ORDERS, 1812

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

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| VOLUME OF COLLECTION: | 1 bound volume, 1 manuscript folder |
| COLLECTION DATES: | 1812 |
| PROVENANCE: | |
| RESTRICTIONS: | None |
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| RELATED HOLDINGS: | |
| ACCESSION NUMBER: | 1990.0067, 2005.0272 |
| NOTES: | |

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samuel Hopkins (1753-1819) was born in Albemarle County, Virginia, the son of Dr. Samuel Hopkins and Isabella Taylor Hopkins. He fought with George Washington at Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth. At Germantown his battalion of light infantry was nearly annihilated, and he was severely wounded. Later, during the siege of Charleston, S. C., Hopkins was Lieut. Colonel of the 10th Virginia Regiment. He was captured and later exchanged.

In 1796 Hopkins moved to Kentucky. He was an advocate of the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions in 1798-1799. From 1799 to 1801 he was Chief Justice of the First Court of Criminal Law and Chancery. From 1800 to 1806 he served in the Kentucky House of Representatives, and from 1809 to 1813 in the state Senate. He indicated sympathy for Aaron Burr during the latter's conspiracy. Because of his past experience, he was given a military command when war broke out in 1812.

The War of 1812 in Indiana passed from hand to hand. Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison briefly commanded troops in the eastern part of the state and moved to relieve Fort Wayne; he then was given command of the northwestern army, centered in Ohio, and instructed to retake Detroit and invade Canada. He resigned as territorial governor in December 1812; meanwhile the territorial government was in the hands of Acting Governor John Gibson.

In early September 1812 the Indiana Native Americans participated in the Pigeon Creek Massacre, and attacked Captain Zachary Taylor at Fort Harrison on the Wabash sixty-five miles above Vincennes (near present Terre Haute). Col. William Russell arrived at Vincennes on September 10, 1812 with 1,200 regulars, moved to relieve Taylor, found the Indians gone, and went on into Illinois. Later the same month Samuel Hopkins arrived at Vincennes, with the rank of Major General of Kentucky militia. He took charge of 2,000 unorganized Indiana troops which had been arriving during the past ten days.

With his combined Indiana and Kentucky troops, Hopkins moved quickly north to Fort Harrison expecting to "clear out all Indian tribes" on the Wabash and Illinois Rivers. His troops complained of hunger, lack of equipment, lack of Indians to fight, and the inconvenience of putting out prairie fires set by the Indians. On October 15, 1812 he proceeded north from Fort Harrison, but by the fourth day his troops had become "utterly mutinous," and he was forced to return to Vincennes (Fort Knox) without firing a shot or seeing an Indian.

After this disaster, Hopkins appealed for volunteers to complete what he had undertaken. Commanding 1,200 volunteers and a small force of regulars under Captain Zachary Taylor, he marched up the Wabash from Fort Harrison on November 11, 1812. They destroyed Prophet's Town and a large town of the Kickapoos and another of the Winnebagos (all three deserted by their inhabitants). They also fought two small engagements with the

Indians. He gave orders on December 16 for his troops to return to Kentucky. This ended campaigns in Indiana for 1812, and substantially for the rest of the war.

The following year Hopkins was elected to a term in the U. S. House of Representatives, where he held out for a vigorous prosecution of the war and a standing military establishment.

Sources:

Dawson, Joseph and Roger J. Spiller. *Dictionary of American Military Biography*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishers, 1984.

Barnhart, John D., and Dorothy Lois Riker. *Indiana to 1816: The Colonial Period*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1971.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection had the transcript and original of the orderly book of General Hopkins for the period of his command in Indiana, September 29 to December 16, 1812. The first entry in the book is a rather grandiloquent statement by Hopkins of the reasons for his campaign. Next comes organization of the men into companies, and appointment of commanding officers for each. On September 30 Gen. Benjamin Letche is dispatched to Louisville to buy 50-100 barrels of flour, to be sent to Fort Harrison.

Already on October 2, 1812 the general officially deplores the "factious mutinous spirit manifest in Col. Miller's [Kentucky] regiment this morning." Comparatively few details of Hopkins's disastrous first campaign appear in the book. On October 11, orders are given to jerk as much meat and collect as much corn as possible in preparation for the march. On October 17, the general remonstrates against "the unsoldierlike practice of shooting," both in and out of camp, which gives the enemy warning of the army's approach.

As the second force is gathered in November, Hopkins expresses his "confidence in the spirit and patriotism" of his officers, and calls for an obedience to orders "which alone distinguishes [an army] from a military mob." Order is good enough to call for a parade on the 22nd. The campaign completed, preparations are made to move back to Vincennes on December 1, 1812.

On December 6, "the commander-in-chief perceives with surprise and mortification a spirit of impatient and turbulent association, pervading a small part of the army," and orders that no officer or soldier leave Fort Knox for the town without proper permission. On the 14th, "having discussed considered the destitute state" of the troops for clothing, the decision is made to dismiss the Kentucky troops, and the general makes a farewell as orotund as his opening address.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Maj. Gen. Samuel Hopkins Orderly Book

Transcript of Maj. Gen. Samuel Hopkins Orderly
Book

CONTAINER

BV 2563

Folder 1

CATALOGING INFORMATION

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1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
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2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
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