



## *Unlikely General: “Mad” Anthony Wayne and the Battle for America*

by Mary Stockwell.

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Historian Mary Stockwell (Lourdes Univ.), a scholar of nineteenth-century US relations with Native Americans,<sup>1</sup> has written a much-needed biography of Anthony Wayne. Instead of a simple linear narrative, she begins with Wayne’s experience in the Northwest Indian War of the 1790s, then goes back to his service during the American Revolution, and then describes how that earlier background affected his command in the Northwest.<sup>2</sup>

In response to Gen. Arthur St. Clair’s catastrophic defeat by Blue Jacket and Little Turtle, President George Washington’s administration pursued two paths simultaneously: it dispatched peace commissioners to the tribes of the Northwest to secure US land claims, while raising a new force to combat any tribes who continued to oppose US settlement. The inexperienced St. Clair had suffered from a lack of support back in the capital, rampant desertion, ill-trained troops, and officers ignorant of the Northwest frontier. Anthony Wayne<sup>3</sup> would encounter and surmount these same challenges after Washington selected him for his coolness under fire, aggressive style of command, and scrupulous concern for the welfare of his men.

Wayne’s family, early education, and experience as a surveyor all pointed to a vocation as a gentlemen farmer, but instead he followed a career of military and national service from the outbreak of the American Revolution to the end of his life. This commitment came at the expense of his relations with family members, including his children, whose education he outsourced to his friend Sharp Delaney. Likewise, his infidelities damaged his marriage to Mary Penrose.

From his first service in the Pennsylvania Line and in the invasion of Canada, Wayne stressed the careful training and disciplining of his forces. This bore fruit during his time in the Ohio country. To overcome his troops’ fear of Native Americans, Wayne regularly staged mock battles with some of his forces playing the part of Indians. He dealt firmly with desertion by executing men who attempted it. Wayne’s (too) hard-hitting approach to combat led to his first significant failure at the Battle of Paoli (20 Sept. 1777). While in command of the Legion,<sup>4</sup> he had to appeal

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1. Her previous work includes *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2016), *Interrupted Odyssey: Ulysses S. Grant and the American Indians* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U Pr, 2018), and *Woodrow Wilson: The Last Romantic* (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Pub., 2008). She has also written history texts for young adult readers: *The Ohio Adventure* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2003) and *Massachusetts Our Home* (id., 2004).

2. For a more straightforward approach to Wayne’s role in the Northwest Indian War, see William Hoggeland, *Autumn of the Black Snake: The Creation of the U.S. Army and the Invasion That Opened the West* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017).

3. He gained the sobriquet “Mad” owing to his short temper, bouts of depression, and touchiness in matters of personal honor.

4. The name for the US Army after it was no longer the “Continental Army” and before it was the “Army of the United States.”

for provisions to Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox, who regularly criticized his selection of the camp at Legionville.

The lessons Wayne learned from the Revolution differed from those learned by other veterans in the Washington administration. Stockwell explores Wayne's history of depression during his service in the Northwest, which paralleled his disappointments during the Revolution when Congress failed to promote him to Major General after Monmouth Courthouse or the mutinies he faced in the Pennsylvania Line.

Stockwell persuasively demonstrates that Wayne perceived the struggle in the Northwest as a continuation of the American Revolutionary conflict against the British. This put him at odds with Washington and much of his cabinet, who saw the French Revolution as a greater danger than British machinations. The author then recounts Wayne's service under Maj. Gen. Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette in Virginia in 1781, stressing the importance of the French alliance for victory at Yorktown.

In the Northwest, Wayne assumed the peace commission would fail and his actions, particularly the widening of roads in the Ohio country, endangered those negotiations. His belief that the British meant to destroy US sovereignty in the West put him in an impossible position:

On the one hand he must prepare his soldiers for battle. The only reward for his diligence was the condemnation he received among politicians for increasing the national debt. On the other hand, he must not be so vigilant that the Indians took offense and stormed away from treaty negotiations. With the administration coddling the warriors, he must sit motionless at Hobson's Choice even as reports came into him about the latest Indian attacks on settlers. Under such constraints, Wayne found himself doomed to fail at every turn. If the negotiations collapsed, it was his fault. If war started, it was his fault. If his soldiers, unprepared and lacking supplies at the head of the line, were defeated, it was doubly his fault. (165)

Wayne's second-in-command, Gen. James Wilkinson, constantly undercut him in letters to Knox, members of Congress, and the press. This at a time when Wayne needed to move north, build forts, and create a convoy system to ensure adequate provisions. As these operations went forward, he curtailed liberal leave policies for his officers, as had Washington during the Revolution. After Yorktown, Wayne served under Gen. Nathaniel Greene in the south. In Georgia, he adopted a merciful policy designed to bring former loyalists back into the fold despite the efforts of Whigs who passed bills of attainder confiscating their property. Greene gave Wayne greater leeway for both aggressive actions around Savannah and more lenient treatment of peaceful loyalists. In the Ohio Country, Wayne struggled as he had after the Revolution with his family life in Pennsylvania, his failing rice plantation in Georgia, and his moribund political career. Hence, his appointment to command of the Legion came at the perfect time.

In 1794, Wayne finally recognized that Wilkinson was a source of discord in his force, while the British construction of Fort Miamis on US soil confirmed his suspicions as to their Northwest Policy and contempt for the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Wayne marched into the Grande Glaize, the Native Americans' breadbasket in the Ohio country, and built Fort Deposit. The Legion's presence in the region triggered an Indian response, and Wayne's force defeated the Indian confederacy at Presque Isle (aka Fallen Timbers).

While the British at Fort Miamis allowed their officers and traders to enter, they neither protected the native population nor admitted any involvement or conflict with the United States. After constructing Fort Wayne on the headwaters of the Maumee, Wayne headed back to Greenville. His victory at Fallen Timbers had changed everything both for him and for the United States in the Ohio country and at the capital. It paved the way for the Treaty of Greenville, where-

by Blue Jacket and other leaders ceded Southeastern Ohio and land around American forts in return for promises that they could retain the remainder of the land and would receive cash annuities.

Secretary Knox sent two of Wilkinson's letters to Wayne, who then confined him to a command at Fort Washington. The House (but not the Senate) voted to reduce the Legion. Washington rewarded Wayne with a new assignment to oversee the British turnover of their forts to American hands in the aftermath of Jay's Treaty (1795) and secretly charged him to find evidence of Wilkinson's connection to the Spanish. Wayne died before he could carry out these missions.

The book's engaging novelistic narrative sometimes verges into the melodramatic:

he loved his country the way a man loves a woman. In the sea of women he had known since he was a boy, she was his greatest love. Even when she treated him falsely, never paying him for his many years of service, loaning him not one penny to rebuild his fortune after the war, and finally throwing him out of Congress, he could not abandon her now but must rescue her one more time.

(27)

This is a forgivable blemish in a work so soundly based on relevant archival sources and secondary literature, no small achievement, given the focus on both Wayne's revolutionary career and his actions in the Old Northwest. *Unlikely General* will absorb and instruct both general readers and serious historians of the Revolution and America in the early republic.