

## **GARRISON LIFE**

**How did the men of the Fort McIntosh garrison live? What did they wear and eat? How did they fill the long days? The Continental Regiments had been issued new uniforms before leaving the East, but when General Irvine assumed command of the Western Department in 1781 he was shocked by the appearance of the men at Fort Pitt and Fort McIntosh.**

**A soldier of the 1st American Regiment in 1784 was supposed to be issued a regimental coat of blue faced with red and with a white lining, a white wool vest, two pairs of woolen breeches, two pairs of white linen overalls, four shirts, two leather stocks, two pairs of wool socks, four pairs of shoes, one blanket, one stock and two other buckles. His cocked black hat was to be bound in white for the infantry and yellow for the artillery. There is no record that they ever received all of this apparel, however.**

**The responsibility for keeping the overalls and shirts clean fell to hardy washerwomen who followed the armies, and sometimes to the wives who tagged along, often with children and pets. The troops were supposed to keep themselves clean and regulations stated that when the rivers were high and weather favorable the men were to bathe as often as possible. For this reason two pounds of soap were issued for each 100 rations.**

**Rations were a pound of beef or three quarters of a pound of pork, a pound of bread or flour, and a half gill of whiskey. The meat rations were often reduced or fleshed out with venison. In addition for every 100 rations there were two quarts of vinegar, one of salt, and one pound of candles issued. The reluctance of the settlers to sell at army prices made it difficult for the commissaries to provide these rations much of the time.**

**Soldiers on the frontiers became gardeners. As soon as a fort was built men found time to plant and tend their own vegetable gardens. There must have been milk cows, for Col. Harmar in 1785 reported there was plenty of cream for wild strawberries. Harmar lived in comparative luxury, for a kitchen was attached to his quarters and his correspondence notes the arrival of Windsor chairs. Shards of good china and glass found among the artifacts might testify to his lifestyle at Fort McIntosh.**

**The day began at sunrise when the gates were opened. A cannon fired and the men fell out on parade for the first of three roll calls; the others being at noon and retreat at sunset, when the cannon again signalled the end of the working day. At the first parade the adjutant issued the orders of the day and assigned the guard and work details. Punishment was also meted out at this time. Sleeping on duty, theft, and desertion brought 100 or more lashes on the bare back, a duty assumed by the drummers. Close order drill and target practice were held early in the morning and late in the afternoon.**

**Guard duty meant two hours on and two off during a 24 hour period. Depending upon the size of the garrison a soldier would draw this duty about every five days. The new guard, usually about 25 men, were issued cartridges by the officer or non-com in charge, and marched to the various posts - most likely the gates and the four bastions where the earlier sentries would be relieved. Sentries in the bastions probably paced their rounds on firing platforms built about four feet below the top of the wall.**

**Fatigue detail included wood cutting (by the end of the fort's existence all trees for a distance of several hundred yards had been cut and cleared) sweeping down the log chimneys to reduce chances of fire, hauling water from the river (for there was no well), baking, butchering, salting the meat, repairing sagging walls, and repairing equipment. There must have been cleanup details but the number of bones found all over the site indicate the troops were not good housekeepers. Sometimes a soldier went on command, now called detached service, and might be assigned to boat duty which demanded muscle and earned extra rations. There was, of course, the continuing patrolling and occasionally the excitement of pursuing a band of Indian raiders.**

**Celebrations of any sort provided welcome relief from the monotony. On holidays or during a visit of a high ranking officer, the troops were turned out in full dress, and extra rations of whiskey were issued. Recreation was almost non-existent. Books or magazines were not available, even for those who could read. In the winter they were sometimes permitted to hunt and in the summer to garden, but there**

were long hours in the dark barracks when drinking and gambling caused disciplinary problems. Furloughs were hard to get, for with men coming from homes hundreds of miles away there was too much of a chance of too many troops being absent from duty at one time.

For all these chores a private in the 1st American Regiment in 1784 drew \$6.67 per month. A drummer, fifer or a corporal drew \$7.73, a sergeant \$8.00. If these seem low consider that Lt. Col. Josiah Harmar, commanding the entire Army of the United States, was paid \$40.00. Pay for the other officers ranged from \$33.33 for a major to \$10.00 for an ensign. When enlistments went to three years the officers pay was raised; Col. Harmar receiving \$60.00 plus subsistence in lieu of rations of \$20.00. The others ranged from \$45.00 plus \$12.00 for majors, to \$20.00 Plus \$6.00 for ensigns. The NCO's and enlisted men, however, had their pay cut to \$4.00 per month for privates, \$5.00 for fifers, drummers and corporals, and \$6.00 for sergeants. It is no wonder that enlistments were few.

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