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(Theme music)

Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs, this is *Pritzker Military Presents*.

Clarke: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* with William Hogeland and a discussion of his book *Autumn of the Black Snake: The Creation of the US Army and the Invasion that Opened the West*. I'm your host Ken Clarke, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago, and it's sponsored by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War in 1783, the newly independent United States of America savored its victory and hoped for a great future, and yet the republic soon found itself losing an escalating military conflict in its Northwest Territory, as the indigenous people of the Ohio Valley laid claim to the land. Skirmishes, raids, and mounting tension culminated in the Battle of the Wabash, leaving almost one thousand of the United States' Major General Arthur Sinclair's army dead after a confrontation with warriors from the Shawnee, Miami, and Delaware tribes of the region. This defeat terrified the young nation and shocked the commander in chief President George Washington. Washington knew that it was time to establish a standing army for the United States, but there was strong opposition to the formation of a standing army from prominent leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. The early republic's losing battle with this coalition of Indians came closer than any adversary before or since to halting the young nation's expansion. The country's first true standing army, the Legion of the United States, a reorganization of the continental or regular army, was formed in response to this devastating loss. Revolutionary War hero General Mad Anthony Wade was selected to lead the Legion into the forests of the old Northwest, where the very Indians he as charged with defeating, bestowed on him with grudging admiration a new name: The Black Snake. A dramatic work of military and political history, *Autumn of the Black Snake* is told in colorful, sometimes startling blow-by-blow narrative, and also gives an original interpretation of how greed, honor, political beliefs, and vivid personalities converged on the killing fields of the Ohio Valley. William Hogeland is the author of three other books on early US History: *The Whiskey Rebellion*, *Declaration*, and *Founding Finance*, as well as a collection of essays, *Inventing American History*. He's also written about history, music, and politics for the Atlantic Monthly, AlterNet, Salon, the New York Times, Boston Review, and the Huffington Post. His essay American Dreamers appears in De Capo's Best Music Writing 2009. Please join me in welcoming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library William Hogeland.

(Applause)

Hogeland: Thank you and good evening. It's so great to be here at the Pritzker, a mecca, a historical mecca for this whole country. And I've never set foot in here before, so it's exciting to be here tonight. I want to tell you I'm here to tell you a story, or I'm here to tell you about a story. I can't tell you the whole story because it's in my book, and if I told you the whole story we'd be here for hours and hours. But I'm gonna tell you about the story of the first war this nation ever fought. And I always take a little pause and a breath there because it's sort of a question mark. What war would we be talking about here? Well, there's the Revolution; we know about that. We know about the War of 1812. Wait, no, it's none of those, and yet it's the first war the United States ever fought as a nation, the very first war. It's not only the very first war that we ever fought as a nation; it's the formation of the US Army. There was no US Army of any legitimate kind before it was

formed during this war, and there is one now. If you look around I think you'll see there's a large presence that we've developed over the years since, so that had to start somewhere. And yet it's not really generally part of our sort of public discussion of our roots and of our history, when that actually happened and why and for what purposes. It's not only the first war and the formation of the army that occurs in this story I want to tell you about, it's also the conquest of a gigantic and crucially important part of the country, known today and known for many years as the Midwest. In fact, including Chicago, Illinois, Indiana. I'm talking about the whole thing we now call the Midwest, which was once called the Northwest Territory, the Ohio country, the Illinois country, and known by many other names. That of course is the part of the country, this is the part of the country, that drove the dynamic, sudden, quick growth of the United States starting really in the early 19th century and then blossoming throughout that century to make America the great global, industrial, economic power that it became. So we have the beginnings here of a lot of things that made the United States what it has been, and yet it's--I'm not gonna say it's unknown, this story that I'm telling you, because of course it is known to scholarship, to historians, or I wouldn't know it. It's, you know, it's in the archives, it's in the secondary research. I couldn't have written a book about it if history didn't know about it. But it's never been, I think, or rarely been part of our public understanding of where we come from as a country and the characters involved. Some of them are famous; some of them are not. The ones who are not so famous I have to wonder why they're not since without them I don't think we'd be where we are today, or any of the more famous things that have happened would even have happened. So that's the nature of the story I'm telling. It's not--I guess I'd put it this way. It's not like to me anyway, and I guess you'll be the ones who decide whether this is really in the end true for you. But for me it's not like an interesting sidebar that has been overlooked, and now it's time since we know everything else to just look at this, too. It's more like this is actually the centrally important story as far as I'm concerned, and the fact that we haven't really looked closely at it remains one of the kind of oddball points, kind of, of the story itself. So there's a story, and then there's a story about a story. So I'm introducing you--I guess what I'm saying is I'm introducing you to a world that is not well known. It took place in a world that isn't well known even though it's the beginning of our country as a nation. And so I'm gonna start by doing a little bit of reading-- not a lot. I'm gonna read you an excerpted part of what is already a fairly short first chapter as a way of trying to get you and me together into this journey into a place that we don't really know too much about and see what it looks like, and see what it feels like. And it starts--the chapter, it starts--it's called The Death of General Butler, and General Butler is not necessarily a household name. So there we are. Already we're starting not with the-- not the sort of big name. And so we'll see how important he seems to become, or how important his death seems to become. So I'm gonna read for a couple of minutes just to give you a sense of the flavor of where we're going, and then I'll give you my argument about this. One: The Death of General Butler. "On a November morning in 1791 a man named Richard Butler sat against a mattress propped against the base of an oak dying in pain near a bend of the upper Wabash River. Butler came from Pennsylvania, and to him this cold ground, once called the Illinois country, laid indisputably in the American West, specifically in the Northwest Territory of the United States. Close by and in the distance, others were dying too-- hundreds of them. Some screamed and some groaned and through the smoke of exploded gunpowder came a sharp cacophony of musket and rifle fire, triumphant screams of the enemy, and orders yelled in English and being ignored. Around the wounded Butler, a group of men and officers crouched in a hurried conference. Butler started laughing. Evidently he had registered the shrieks of a cadet nearby and was struck by the sheer intensity of that noise. He was a heavy man, and as

he laughed his sides shook his coat. Some of the men around him were grieved to think he had no chance. Others thought he might make it if they could only remove him from the scene, but it was becoming horribly clear that getting out of here at all, let alone lugging a large man, was more unlikely every second. Most of the officers were dead. The numb-fingered soldiers left alive had been firing as best they could, but as the enemy began to breach the perimeter they gave up, collapsed their formations, and crowded by terrified instinct toward the center of the field of battle. There they were easy to shoot down en masse. Now where Richard Butler sat propped, his youngest brother, Captain Edward Butler, appeared carrying on his back another brother, Colonel Thomas Butler, both legs broken. In pain and with no time to spare, arrows were thrumming into the row of tents, the Butler brothers tried to confer." And I'm gonna leave you in a little suspense about what happens to the Butler brothers. It's in here, but I'm gonna move because I'm just reading excerpts here, to another part of the forest as Shakespeare would say, another scene of battle to introduce some other characters who are also not household names. "Somewhere in the smoke and noise and chill of that November morning were Little Turtle and Blue Jacket. Little Turtle would be leading Miami forces. Blue Jacket the Shawnee, and both were leading the whole thing. The scene so chaotic and horrific for American soldiers was for the Indians becoming a thrilling victory thanks to precise planning, irreproachable execution, and full coordination of forces, led mainly by those two men along with the Delaware war leader Buckongahelas. Little Turtle and Blue Jacket never agreed on much. Those who talked about them at the time and would write about them in the future-- some praising Blue Jacket to the detriment of Little Turtle, others vice versa--never agreed either. But that November morning as a man they'd come to see as their nemesis sat dying under an oak, they were in agreement on at least one thing: this was a war for the survival of their people, and they would work together to win it. The victory they were even now achieving against US forces represented a triumphant step forward in that war for survival." So I'm not gonna give you every detail about what that was, but I'd like to say--I always want to say, "So that's the famous--the famous defeat of Arthur Sinclair at the bend of the Upper Wabash in 1791," except it's not really famous. It's a great thrilling victory for the victors and a horrible defeat for the losers, but it's actually not famous. To give you a few details about what happened in that battle, I'm not gonna read you the whole thing, but Sinclair led about 1,500 officers and men plus of course the dozens of others that used to come along--soldiers' wives, girlfriends, and children, the wagon and packhorse drivers. He failed to fortify his encampment. About 650 American troops died quickly that morning, including nearly all of the officers, fifty civilians, all of the women and children; there was one female survivor. Some said the total of the dead was more like 900, and I've heard even up to 1,200. So that's all of the nation's troops that it had basically wiped out that morning. And then those who did survive ran away, threw down their muskets and ran and lived to tell horrible, horrible stories about the ritual mutilation of the dead--not only of the dead, but also of the dying, which I won't go into here. There's a little more about it in the book. So it's not a famous battle, but here's my argument. I'm gonna read you this one piece about--in magazine writing they called this the nut graph. Here's the thesis. "After this battle a fundamental shift was about to begin in American--North American life. With the losers' outrage and terror deepening in response to Sinclair's awful defeat on the Wabash, and with the winners' excitement over their great victory mounting, a war would begin. The existence, purpose, and future of the United States of America was formed in that war, and yet it would be forgotten. The first war the United States ever fought in which the US Army itself came into being, would never even be given a name." So I conclude the chapter this way because I think the natural question arises. Readers all over the country are like, "Well, okay, you're making this huge claim, and anyway"--

like, where was this is, is kind of the question that comes to mind. So this all took place in present day where? "You can walk a pleasant, quiet main street in what is now western Ohio to a plaque marking the sight of Richard Butler's death, but that's the wrong answer. You can get the address in seconds; it won't help. Butler died in a deep woods, the trees widely spaced and so big around that it would take many men to circle some of them. It was late fall, the branches probably not yet completely bare, so if the smoke hadn't been so thick some sky might have been visible, but you'd have to tilt your head back to see it, and in summer that place was dim, full of birdsong, and the sound of wind in leaves, the branches creaking far overhead. But it's not just the shorn land and artificially exposed sky that make it impossible for us to go where this story took place. It's not even the astonishing rarity of descendants of the people who had lived there for so long. The story of the only indigenous alliance to win battles that might have defeated American expansion into the west and the story of the founding of the US Army with all of its world historical future coded in embryo in the first war that the United States ever fought, the story that is of Americans' real emergence as a national people is set in regions we don't recognize mapped to our world or have any bearings in." So I invite you to sort of enter that unknown world or little-known world where we don't really have our bearings. Even the map seems a little different. And so in order to sort of give you some idea of--I've given you an idea of why I think the story's important. To give you an idea of what the story has to sort of offer by way of incident and character and things to reflect on, things we might discuss after I finish talking, some of which if any of them seem of importance to you, and I'll be interested always to see what kinds of things strike--when you write a book like this you're sort of--you just think it's the greatest thing ever and that everybody should just know about it, and it's like this is the most important story ever told. And it's always really interesting to get an idea of what pieces, what little glimpses people latch onto and get interested in, so that's good for me. So all I can do here instead of like actually telling the whole story, because it's quite complicated and detailed, is give you kind of a run-through, kind of a list--a little bit of a list of what's in here, what happened, why is this so important, and who's in it. Who's in it, and what did they do? It's military history in a way, of course, because it's I think some of the most important military activities that have actually ever taken place in this country, but it's military history as the military piece of the story turning the big wheel of American history, the all--it's military and it's history, you know. And some people say military history is the only history worthy of the name. And at some times and in doing some of the work on this book, I began to think that might be true. There are some famous characters involved here. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton--everybody's new best friend--and Henry Knox and all the day-to-day things that they did in the cabinet, in Washington's cabinet, in order to form the army because again, well, there was a time when there was no US Army because the continental army had been disbanded and there--congress had declined to form a national, nationally organized, federal, federally run uniform force, because as many of you probably know there was an ethos in the country that went back hundreds of years into English thinking as well about the value and the virtue of militia as the legitimate way to defend a free people and to protect a republic. So why would you have what they call a standing army? A standing army sounds like a tool of monarchy, of tyranny. That's what the British army was like. We don't want one of those. We fought a whole war not to have things like that. So there was this love of militia. And Jefferson actually in the cabinet was one of the--was the one sort of odd man out, as he often was in Washington's cabinet--odd man out on this issue. He really like--he really actually was a lover of militia. But in this particular instance he too was very committed to the idea of an American West, of conquering the area making sure that the American future empire that he envisioned--he called it an

empire of liberty. Hamilton sort of thought of it as more a financial empire, that kind of empire, but they both had the idea of a great America and a great American empire, and it involved the West. They couldn't really have imagined an America without succeeding in that area. So we like to think of Jefferson and Hamilton as always at odds, and of course they were always at odds in the cabinet undermining each other, driving Washington crazy. That's all true. It's very interesting to me how in this case even with all of their differences and all of the different visions that they brought to it, they were as one in working toward establishing the army, even with Jefferson's misgivings. That's what Washington wanted. And what does that take to do? I mean, when there's a huge political opposition to actually forming an army. That took day-to-day politics, I mean day-to-day politics. Hard work--hard work to overcome the resistance in Congress. So you'll see Hamilton and Washington and Jefferson kind of getting together and trying to figure out how to kind of bamboozle the opposition and when to release certain documents and when to hold back certain documents. All of that happens here. In fact one--another thing you'll see here, and it's related, is the first congressional investigation of the executive branch ever in American history over that very defeat that I was just reading to you about, the Sinclair defeat. Congress decided to have an investigation of the executive branch and its policies and what they'd been doing. Well, that had never happened before. In fact the concept of executive privilege arises for the very first time there because Henry Knox came to Washington and said--he was the secretary of war at the time--and said, "Well, Congress is asking me for these papers about what we were doing leading up to the Sinclair defeat. What do I do?" And the fascinating thing to me is that, well it wasn't like, oh, yeah, executive privilege. Well you know, they can't have those--there was no reflexive answer. This had never happened before. There had never been a congressional investigation of any issue in the executive branch before. So Knox says to Washington, "What do I do?" And Washington goes, "I'll convene the cabinet. We'll figure out what to do. I don't know what to do." The question was on the one hand, should we give the papers? The other is, do they have the right even to ask for these papers? Is it improper of them to have asked? Is it improper of them to have gone to a secretary instead of to the president? These are all brand new issues, and they come up in the context of this extraordinary military crisis in which the country had experienced this devastating defeat. And by the way, you'll find out if you read the book, but I'll tell you the interesting--to me one of the interesting aspects of that story is Washington did--they did decide, okay you can give the papers over to Congress, yeah. In the future Congress needs to know, no, you cannot go straight to a cabinet officer; you've got to go to the president. And remember they advised Washington--all of them were as one in this. Jefferson, Hamilton, Knox, and Edmund Randolph, the attorney general. They were as one in this. Remind them, this is not a precedent. You are giving them these papers at your discretion because you're willing to do it. The privilege remains with the president. There's no sense that--it's like I'm giving these papers because I want to, not because you told me to, kind of thing. So that's an issue that starts right in the middle of this story coming out of this remarkable military defeat. And I don't believe that issue has been resolved. I would always say to this day, but actually this very day today I think it has come up, and I think it's going to continue to come up. So there's those famous people and what they were doing. And one of the things that comes out is--you know, Hamilton and Jefferson went to work every day and did their jobs. Along with all the things they thought about, they did their jobs. They showed up. They did politics. They worked. And I outline a lot more of that in the book. But the backroom politics and the parliamentary politics are a big part of this story. There's a war going on out in what was then the west, and there's a war going on in Philadelphia, which was the national temporary capital at that time, a political war. So these are the

two sort of, the stories that come together here. And let me tell you about the territory that was being fought over, just to jump to another topic that's totally related but sort of on the list of things that comes up here. Where are we talking about? Of course I say there's no way to go where this took place because it not only looks so different, it's that it's been edited out of our consciousness, in a way our public consciousness. That territory is what is now, as I've said, what is now known as the Midwest. And so it wasn't called that then. It was thought of as the West essentially to the east coast types who wanted to get a hold of it. George Washington had been trying to get a hold of it, one could say, since he was sixteen or seventeen. He came up, made himself, became who he was as a man in Virginia society, from disadvantage, great disadvantage. He had to kind of--he had been sort of effectively disinherited in favor of his elder half brothers. He didn't have much property of his own, and in Virginia society, the society he lived in, that was--you didn't have anything if you didn't have a nice plantation and more plantations. He had to work. He went to work at a young age, like Hamilton actually, and brought himself up partly by investing in land. And the new land, the exciting land, the great, fertile, vast countryside that he could see was going to be the sight of immense development, and really he envisioned that one way or another this western country was going to be the driver of some sort of great American success. He saw it. He saw it early, and he started investing early. And he wanted from an early age to get a hold of that land and at the age--in his early twenties he actually sort of accidentally started the Seven Years War trying to get the French out of the headwaters of the Ohio Valley, and he was always looking further out, always looking for angles, getting a hold of that land for himself even when it was violating British law because the king of England of course in 1763 had drawn a line along the crest of the Appalachians and said, "No further white settlement west of here. This is going to be reserved for the Indians because we need to preserve the fur trade. And these Americans keep speculating in this land and talking about settling it. We can't do that." So a great deal of what went on for Washington and also for Jefferson and for many other famous patriots--Patrick Henry is another one--what went on for them that made them patriots at all was this feeling that they were being hogtied and strangled by these British restrictions, when what they needed to do was-- actually it's a sovereign right according to Jefferson, to be able to move into new lands and take them over and make them your own. That's what the ancestors had done when coming to America. The only issue here being, and one of the issues here being, of course as always there were already nations in possession of that land who felt themselves to be in possession of that land, the indigenous nations. So this raises--this raised for the founding generation on all sides of this a huge conflict, a huge set of conflicts. Again I'm not sure we've ever successfully sort of told ourselves a story that resolves all that and makes it all okay. So seething issues in a very early chaotic and violent republic fighting another group of people who were equally committed to pushing white settlement back, that forms the basis of this terrible defeat of Sinclair and then the war that ensues, which, you know, there's not a lot of suspense. I wish there was some suspense. I think you know how in the end it really comes out because, you know, here we are. But it was suspenseful for the people at the time. All of them. There's a sense of inevitability sometimes in history where you look back and it sort of had to go the way it went. I can't say that if this confederation of native nations had actually found its way to really, really harrow the US one more time that there would have been some line at the Ohio River, which was the new border they were fighting over. I can't say that, but certainly Washington had to wonder what was gonna happen if he did not in the end overcome that defeat, build an army absolutely from scratch, and actually succeed where Sinclair had failed. He had to wonder, you know, what's gonna happen. I mean, everything that everyone had invested in, everything that had been defined as kind of

American greatness for the future lay in what was called the West. So there was a lot of suspense for the people involved. There was a lot of suspense for Washington. There was a lot of suspense for the officers and soldiers of the new army that began to be created, for the politicians in Philadelphia, and there was a lot of suspense for Little Turtle and Blue Jacket and other leaders of this large indigenous confederation of nations who were desperate to preserve their land, which they already felt by the way they had made great concessions in giving up parts of when they moved the disputed border from the crest of the Appalachians where the king had drawn it all the out to the headwaters of the Ohio River, and they were now just fighting to keep white settlement back behind the Ohio. So they were in great suspense about what was gonna happen to them and happen to their people and happen to--what was gonna happen to their children, as anybody would be. So the war that we don't talk about, the war that has no name, the war that cannot be named, or the Black Snake War, we might want to start calling it--someone said, "You should name this war because, you know, you wrote about it." Yeah, it's kind of more interesting in a weird way to me that it doesn't have a name. I don't think I can fix that. I think it's actually really wild that it doesn't have one given all the things I'm saying about it. And how it--prosecuting this war was a moment of immense national crisis in Washington's administration. And so the fact that it's unnamed I think tells us maybe more than if I tried to force a name on people and say we're gonna call it this from now on. First of all, I don't think I would succeed, and secondly maybe we should just leave it alone as something that we clearly have not wanted to know too much about. So we have Washington, and we have Jefferson, and we have Hamilton, and we have the territory that they're fighting about. Let me also tell you about some other people, the people I've already mentioned a couple of times by name and I've read to you about, Little Turtle and Blue Jacket, who are not famous as I've mentioned already, but again the question comes up for me, why not? When I was doing research for this book I kept telling people about what I was--people would say politely, "What are you writing about?" "Oh, I'm writing about the first war the nation ever fought, and blah, blah, blah." And, like--"Well, what is that?" "Well, it's an Indian war, you know, Great Lakes, Ohio Valley, out to the Mississippi." "Oh, oh, Tecumseh." That's the immediate connection that you would make, Tecumseh, because people have heard of Tecumseh. So, like, I found myself frequently just, "No, not Tecumseh. Not Tecumseh." There's something there. When I have to keep saying, "Not Tecumseh," I wonder what's the--what is this blind spot about, so, of Little Turtle and Blue Jacket? So I'm sort of like, "No. Little Turtle and Blue Jacket. Blue Jacket and Little Turtle. Don't forget these names." But this is a strange--this is a strange attitude to take. Why am I doing that? Why don't we already know their names? In the Sinclair defeat, or the victory over Sinclair as they would look at it, that is the greatest defeat of US troops by indigenous forces in American history, and it's even more than that. In absolute numbers I'm talking about like the 900 to 1000 maybe who died that day, well, if you think about all the succeeding Indian wars of the 19th century which are so much better known--you think about the Battle of the Little Big Horn, you think about household names like Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and Geronimo, total, all the US deaths in that almost hundred-year span, total about 900. The day I'm telling you about when Sinclair's forces went down, 900 died, say, around that morning in about an hour and a half or so. So it's not just sort of like it was pretty big, it was like it dwarfs anything that happened later just in terms of US casualties. And yet Blue Jacket and Little Turtle are not widely known. So I want to tell you about them because I think they deserve it, and they had the biggest victory over US troops that has ever been had by indigenous forces, and they were also just really interesting people, as many military and political leaders tend to be. They were very different from one another, and yet getting a handle on their differences takes a little bit

of a different approach from the way we try to get a handle on, say, the differences between a Hamilton and a Jefferson, which are very well documented in written record. It's different when you look at native leaders. A lot of our records come from English speakers doing translation. They come from meetings where the people writing things down were the United States translators and interpreters and so forth. So we have this kind of--there's always a veil between us and the history we're trying to get to and the people we're trying to get to, but there's sort of a thicker curtain between us and people like Little Turtle and Blue Jacket. It gets easier I've heard in the 19th century, where the record gets less sparse. But it's--they remain sort of enigmatic characters, Little Turtle and Blue Jacket. The differences between them are given to us by the people who fought them frequently or had diplomatic relationships with them and so forth. And so everything we know about them is sort of compromised. And yet you're, you know, you have to--telling a story, you're writing a book. You need to--you can't be saying, "Well, we don't really know." You've got to take a stab. So I take some stabs and some chances in telling about them in the book, and I put in my notes kind of how the record works. Those who are interested in those, the kinds of things--how records work and how we do and don't know things--will find interesting things about them in my notes. But from the point of view of story, I go with, well, what were the stories that were told about them at the time? What did people say? And people seem to think that Blue Jacket was flamboyant and tough and a hard drinker and a big dresser. He liked--he did not wear blue jackets, which is an interesting feature of his personality. Makes him more enigmatic. He wore scarlet jackets with epaulets and really put on a show. His point of view--he was Shawnee, and to say someone is Shawnee is just a very, very, very broad definition. There are many, many branches and kinds of Shawnee, but I'm just gonna keep it--I'm not an expert actually on those differences. He was a Shawnee who had a certain sense of a return to an ancestral homeland. He felt as if--he and others felt that the Shawnee had been pushed out long ago, way back in time, by the six--five nations and then the six nations of the Iroquois living to the east who dominated the Western Indians in many ways. And so he believed in a sort of like, a reunion of Shawnee people in this territory north of the Ohio River, and that's what he was fighting for: a kind of--drive them out. Keep the white people out. We need to purify, and we need to keep this ours. So on the one hand he fits into a kind of Tecumseh-like vision, something that's more familiar to people via Tecumseh and Pontiac--a kind of Indian-ness, a kind of nativism, a kind of fundamentalism. Purifying, keeping it all Indian. All Indians should join together. We're no longer just--we're no longer gonna be Shawnee and Miami and so forth; we're gonna be Indians. So that's one feature of his personality, and he was very intense about that. Strangely though, he was more involved than many in the European conveniences that had come to so totally dominate in many cases the lives of these nations. He liked the clothing, I've just described, tailored clothing. He had a big house. He used all kinds of western cookware and so forth. He did--he was a businessman, as many of these native people were. A businessman with ties to French traders up in Canada and had a thriving concern in which he was doing business with many, many white people. One of his wives was white, and her father was one of his trading partners, a French Canadian. So he's enigmatic in that way. He was very committed intensely to sort of purifying the Indian part of the world and just keeping the white people out in terms of settlement, in terms of encroachment, but he was in his own way extremely--he was very--he enjoyed all the things that had come with European civilization, the so-called civilizing aspects of life, some of which were not very civilizing at all. They were--they involved alcohol for example, which was not a civilizing factor. And many of the sort of real nativist, fundamentalist preachers of his--of Shawnee and others were very, very against alcohol of course, trying to get rid of all of these European influences they felt

were degrading their people. He wasn't like that, and yet he was vociferously committed to this war. And when it started to look like he wasn't gonna be able to win, he couldn't see that. He insisted that when Anthony Wayne, General Wayne, Mad Anthony the Black Snake began his march to try to complete what Sinclair had failed to do, Blue Jacket just believed they were gonna win again. He had to believe that. To see the possibility of defeat was not okay with him. Even talking about that was not okay. So that's a certain kind of warrior personality that I think we can see in every culture, and if you don't have somebody like that on your side, you know, you're not gonna get very far. At the same time there are limitations to that sort of approach. And then there's sort of his other half. They collaborated very, very well together for a long time in creating the biggest confederation. It wasn't just Miami, Shawnee, and Delaware. It reached out all over the place and brought in nations and nations and nations into this giant confederation to try to restrict white settlement to the Ohio--to east of the Ohio River. So we have the Miami leader Little Turtle. Very different personality type it seems. Philosophical, quieter, skeptical. Skeptical, practical. Had a sort of--and again a lot of this comes through the white people who met him. They liked him better than Blue Jacket. So there's always long been kind of a bias in favor of Little Turtle in this partnership, that Blue Jacket was impetuous and hotheaded and showy and wasn't really that smart, and Little Turtle was wise and philosophical. Well, we have to take all of that with a grain of salt, don't we, because this is all coming from people who wanted Indians to be a certain way, so they thought of him as more gentlemanly and so forth. But it is interesting again how as quiet as he could be comparatively, as sort of thoughtful and willing to sort of entertain various possibilities and not always banging the gong for victory, victory, victory, he was the one who just saw--he saw that without artillery we are not going to be able to defeat the US. They are going to come back. This victory over Sinclair is not going to be the be-all and end-all. The next time they come, they're going to come with more. See Blue Jacket and sort of the Blue Jacket way of thinking, which is the way I kind of talk about it, once you've defeated Sinclair, you know, they've thrown their best at us. That's it. We're done here. We're dancing on their graves. They can come back if they want, but we're just gonna do it again. Little Turtle had a different view, and I see it almost as sort of Shakespearean, kind of the wheel is always turning. There's--as soon as you're up it means you're falling down. They're gonna come back; they're gonna come back with more. So we could beat them. He believed in a practical sense that the US could be defeated, but it would take something more than just belief and certainty in your own prowess. It would take--he was very practical. It would take artillery. Well, where were they gonna get this artillery? From the British who were still holding the forts on US soil at Fort Niagara and Fort Detroit after their revolution. They were supposed to be giving them up, they weren't moving out, there was a lot of negotiation going on over that, and the British were trying to fight a kind of proxy war using this confederation that I'm telling you about as--to fight the US and push back and create kind of a buffer zone. They were really hoping--some of the British officials were really hoping to take back a lot of what they'd ceded at the--in Paris in 1783, at least affectively take it back by making it Indian country and then trying to control the Indians. So they were arming and supplying little Turtle and Blue Jacket and the others and they were advising them. And they had some really interesting characters who I'm not gonna have time to tell you about. Alexander McKee, a Shawnee who was also a high British official, and others. But they would never really, of course as often happens in these proxy war situations, commit actual troops to the field and commit openly commit arms and armaments. So Little Turtle saying, "We need artillery. Are you going to give us artillery?" And they'd say, "We're very much in support of what you're doing, and we will send you more food and so forth and so on, and we'll give you

clothing. And good luck. We're right behind you." He could hear in that what they were really saying, the he was never gonna get artillery, so he came up with a very strategic way of defeating the US troops who were now beginning to regroup. He would just raid supply. He didn't try to take casualties. He would take them if he had--you know, in the process, but he wasn't trying to get glory for the young fighters and so forth. It was just, disable them. Make them unable to move. And he did that very effectively for a while, but as he and--you know, with success against Sinclair, this great partnership of Blue Jacket and Little Turtle began to fray as, again, so often happens. Everywhere you look in history, you'll find the coalitions that have joined together to have massive successes, suddenly the tensions that were always there begin to emerge once they've had that success, and now they're fighting each other, and they're arguing about how to handle the US as it begins to regroup. And so there's a tragic dimension to what occurs as the US begins to come back and Little Turtle and Blue Jacket end up in the end not really speaking. They don't speak. They are completely at odds. And really Little Turtle stepped down from leadership--not from fighting. He kept fighting, but he stepped down from leadership because he couldn't really agree with Blue Jacket's view of what was going to happen, and his skepticism in the end ruled his way of thinking, and Blue Jacket's sort of vociferous gung-ho qualities ruled him. And we see this in generals everywhere and leaders everywhere. In the end personality plays a big role in strategy and tactics. So I just need you to know about them. I mean, they're just not household names. They did so well, and then they have this tragic story. And it's easy to pass them over when talking about Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and other people that we're all so interested in anyway. And then we come to really kind of conclude, 'cause we can't leave him out, we come to General Wayne. Mad Anthony, the Black Snake, as he was named by his adversaries in grudging respect because they said--Little Turtle said, "The man does not sleep." And they believed that the black snake, just the common black snake of North America, is an animal that doesn't sleep. So when Little Turtle saw Wayne coming he said, "If we don't get that artillery, you know, we're done. We have to--we'll have to make a deal because this--he's not another Sinclair." And Blue Jacket said, "He's just another Sinclair." Again, no suspense. The Battle of Fallen Timbers is--will never go down in military history as one of the great battles that they'll teach at war colleges and everyone will argue about forever, because it was very brief. But Wayne did lead of course American troops to victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 and then dictated terms of the Treaty of Greenville, which really did end what had been possible, which was holding white people back behind the Ohio, and began everything that we know. Everything that we know. I mean, that was--they gave up their territory and moved to reserves, or what became known later you can say as reservations. And they got pushed and pushed from there. It starts in 1794 with Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers and the Treaty of Greenville, in which what was considered then a sort of a small provision of the Treaty of Greenville, not the most important one, few--some acreage around the mouth of Chicago River as it--where it enters Lake Michigan, was also included as US territory there. So when I say things like, you know, if it wasn't for Wayne, say, we wouldn't be here, I mean specifically here. And when I go around the country talking to people--I've talked in Philly and in Washington D.C. and in New York--I often talk about the Midwest out there. Now I'm talking about--now I'm standing where--in the territory that was actually at issue. And so it's even more palpable to me, to me here. Wayne I'll just sort of conclude by saying, he is generally I think in military history not--US military history or general military history, not thought of as one of the most fascinating generals that's someone that everyone should know about. We don't talk about him the way we talk about Grant or Lee or--or Patton, you know, and so forth. There's one fact about him, which is without his victory at Fallen Timbers I would say

you could say no Grant and Lee. No Patton. So he's that--he's important just on that level alone. As a personality though he was at least as interesting as anyone else I've ever read about. I mean, he took over the army, which is to say he started it up again after it had been demolished. He was absolutely at the end of his rope. He was at wits end. He had blown his life having had a really interesting Revolutionary War career and was a hero, really, a military hero of the revolution, he spent the next number of years just spiraling into debt in a just ill-conceived attempt to become a big rice planter, a big slaveholding rice planter in Georgia and South Carolina and entering that world from Pennsylvania, which is where he came from, the world he knew. He just decided he wanted to be one of those guys. The war was over; he was gonna be one. He borrowed money. He actually was turned down for loans and said he--told people he had them anyway and wrote bad checks everywhere. It was just--his reputation, you know--what those guys really cared about was reputation. His reputation was done. I mean he was just all done. He was--when he got his appointment from Washington as the commander of this new army, he had been just been thrown out of Congress for having engaged in election fraud gaining his seat. And yet from this really unpromising moment where people--you know, James Monroe was particularly--he was in Congress then and particularly just disgusted by the fact that Wayne in particular had been appointed to this position. Like, what's Washington thinking? It could have been one of the worst decisions he ever made. From that incredibly unpromising beginning, Wayne--he brought the force of his personality that had so poorly served him in private life to bear in a way that's really kind of stunning to watch unfold. From total failure in--I sometimes think of him as just a super adapted military personality. He couldn't do anything else, but he could do this. And he built the army the way they built armies in those days, with training and drill and maniacal attention to detail and of course physical punishment--flogging, hanging. It's a pretty brutal story, but what you see throughout is this personality reinventing himself from total failure in the one place where he thought he might be able to do it. And so when he leads American troops newly trained by him over the course of--with incredible patience over a couple of years, held back by Washington from invading when he was taking casualties all the time, and yet Washington had these political reasons why it wasn't time to invade yet, which I won't go into now, but he was in the classic position of a commander in the field being held back for political reasons while seeing his men killed. He almost--a couple of times it seems clear he almost just broke loose and went anyway, which would have thrown the entire civil control of the army into question. He didn't in the end, but he got awfully close. There was some great tension between him and Washington. When he finally goes and leads those troops up the great Miami River and then all the way to Kekionga, which was the great Miami town capital, and to the Glades where they had moved where they were running their whole operation and finally succeeded in showing the Indians that the British were not going to help them. In the Battle of Fallen Timbers the British closed the door of the fort and would not let the fleeing native troops in, having built that fort saying that it was for the native protection. And so by doing that, it may not be one of the world's greatest battles, but Wayne felt that what he succeeded in doing at that battle was two things: show the American forces, the American men--his men--the uses of the bayonet and show the Indians the faithlessness of their British allies. He did those two things in one move, and he felt pretty satisfied by that, and it changed the world as a matter of fact. And he should--there are many towns named for him now. There's Waynes everywhere he went. And yet people have sort of forgotten why they're named that, and I think that's unfortunate. However you may feel about him or about his victory, it was crucially important. And I'll just close by reminding you or--this was something I didn't know, so it's not necessarily a reminder. It was new information to me. The actor Marion Morrison

was his name when he began to make movies. That wasn't a great name for a tough guy actor, so he took the name John Wayne because of Anthony Wayne. So he was once, you know, better thought of than he is today. So we need to remember Blue Jacket and Little Turtle and Wayne, and we need to think of Washington--one of the signal achievements of Washington's administration was of course the success of building the army and conquering what became the Midwest. This is something that, you know, while we don't talk about it very much, may be the most important achievement of Washington's administration, for better and for worse for the various people involved. So that's--that's my sort of spiel about the sort of little hints of the story that's here. And I'll stop there. I think we might have some things to talk about, but I'll stop there. And thank you very, very much for your attention and for listening to the story.

(Applause)

1: I know you've also written about the Whiskey Rebellion, perhaps more well known than this episode. Could you tell us what's the difference between the two in being the roots of the US Army? Compare and contrast these two foundational stories of the US Army.

Hogeland: Yeah, the Whiskey Rebellion is probably better known than the story I tell in *Autumn of the Black Snake*, and yet it's really not that well known either. And that's kind of what I do. I find these stories that I think are foundational and that aren't really well known. So, yeah, it's a little better known, and it was an insurrection of course. It was not a war against other people--other, the other, quote/unquote. It was a war against American citizens, sort of. It was a military action against American citizens, at least that's what Washington and Hamilton did. The rebellion itself was against Hamiltonian finance, and it took place in Western Pennsylvania around the--right around the headwaters of the Ohio River. And the difference militarily speaking--a number of differences--there really wasn't any kind of fight to put down the Whiskey Rebellion, so that's a big difference. They brought a large--they brought 12,000 troops. Washington personally as commander in chief, which is really rare, a president serving in the field, led 12,000 troops against western Pennsylvanians. And that's a large number. That's more than were at the Battle of Yorktown, say. So, against American citizens who had been engaged in an insurrection with some secessionist elements, so it was at a crisis. So it was a military action on the part of Washington. Hamilton actually did a lot of the actual leading of that. But one important difference is that the US Army had been formed for the purpose of fighting the war I'm talking about today and was very busy and not big enough anyway. Recruitment was difficult. It never really filled out its compliment, legal compliment, even under Wayne. And so there really weren't--there wasn't an army to use, because it happened right at the same time. So what are you gonna do? You have to find--you have to raise militia forces. The other reason Washington wanted to suppress Western Pennsylvania with militia forces was that he said, "If we bring the army into this, they'll just"--the anti-army crowd was still very strong in Congress. And he said--he wrote a letter to Hamilton and said, "If we use the army for this, they'll say, 'Look, this is why they raised an army: to suppress American citizens.' So let's not give them that. Let's make sure we do this with militia." And they raised a large, large militia from the eastern cities. And that's how they put down--put down the Whiskey Rebellion is one way to say it. I would say brought a massive military force against the citizenry of western Pennsylvania.

2: So once Wayne had won, then what happened to the army? I mean, that's the foundation point. Did it stick around in smaller form, or what happened then?

Hogeland: Yeah, it's a long, complicated story what happens to the army after this, and it's, you know, up to today. You've got many, many permutations if you think about the War of 1812 and the Civil War and then all the way--the army of course has changed

over the years, and the whole military establishment has been restructured and so forth. So without trying to go through a whole thing about that, I would say that one of the things that's interesting to me about what happened here isn't that the army then stayed rigidly as conceived by Wayne and Washington. Of course it didn't. It went through major changes. The thing that was established here for the first time is that there would be a standing US Army. That is it wouldn't necessarily be disbanded when the mission was over. A peacetime establishment, as Washington and Hamilton called it-- that had been at question, and it ceased to be at question basically after Fallen Timber. So that's a huge--once you've done that then the army can change and go through all kinds of permutations, as it has. But the idea of having one or not, which is the thing that is so hard for us to wrap our minds around, that that was ever really in question, that question was answered in the course of this. But to go a little bit into what happened next, I think one of the--I talk about a little bit in the book. One of the interesting things is the Republican party as it was called then, Jefferson's party, the Antifederalist party began to call the Federalists, Washington's party--now Washington's out of office. Hamilton's trying to run everything even though he's out of office too. He's trying to run Adams' cabinet kind of against Adams. It's just kind of a chaotic nightmare. The Federalist party became very--with Hamilton's influence from outside--became very militaristic. They started asking for huge appropriations, like, we're just gonna build this army. There's the Quasi War with France, as it's know, where Hamilton really wanted to go to war with France, and the Republicans ran on that. Jefferson's party ran on that. They said, "These guys are militarists. They're building this giant military establishment, and it's just going against every principle that we have." And they came into office partly on that. So you would think, well, then of course they're gonna start dismantling the army, right? But they did not. And as we know Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase for example, so the Western imperial expansion goes on under Jefferson. And while Jefferson could never really deal with it, he needed--he knew he needed a professional regular army. The Republicans actually--as long--when you're out of power you always shoot down everything that people in power are doing. You gain power and you actually find, "Oh, yeah, well, we actually need an army." And actually we --they always knew that anyway. They knew militia couldn't fight real wars. They knew that. So once they get in they have to find ways to, you know, construe that and make it sound okay and make it sound Republican. But really Jefferson knew that he was gonna have to have an army, and so that could be the moment where really you can say we never looked back on the question of whether there would be one, because once the opposition also kind of acquiesces in the idea that there's gonna be one, well then there's really no argument anymore. You can argue about how big it's gonna be, where it should go, what it should do, etcetera. You can construct that and make it sound like it's just a peacekeeping force. We're not really aggressive. You can put all kinds of rhetoric around it. You can have serious and legitimate debate about it. But the idea that there's gonna be one is just on the table for good at that point.

Clarke: Bill, thank you.

Hogeland: Thank you all so much.

(Applause)

Clarke: Thank you to William Hogeland for an outstanding discussion and to Farrar, Straus, and Giroux for sponsoring this program. The book is *Autumn of the Black Snake: The Creation of the US Army and the Invasion that Opened the West*, published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.

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(Theme music)

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(Theme music)

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