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05
Wednesday
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Preparing for a Treaty at the Early War Department

POSTED BY MITCH FRAAS IN POSTS

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In honor of the start of a new semester at Penn I thought I would feature one of my favorite unique finds so far which comes from right here in Philadelphia.

Tags

G3790 1793.M37
[2242398]



— Penn G3790 1793.M37 [2242398]. Pen and Ink map with watercolor: 46 x 67 cm. on sheet 51 x 72 cm.

The hand-drawn map pictured above depicts the middle states of the US as well as a substantial portion of the great lakes, Michigan, and the Ohio river country. It was never printed as far as I can tell and was likely commissioned and used internally by some organ of the nascent federal bureaucracy in Philadelphia, most likely the War Department.

In this case we know a little about when and why the map was created

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thanks to the
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which states that it
depicts the route
from Philadelphia to
a not-yet-occurred
treaty negotiation
on the Miami River.



— “A Map of the Route from Philadelphia to the Indian-Treaty of 1793 to be held on or near the Miami River”

For nearly a decade after the American Revolution, the territory beyond the Ohio River was a constant source of conflict between the United States, Native American polities, and European governments. By late 1792 a series of military confrontations and separate agreements left both the United States and several of the most powerful Native American coalitions at an impasse. As Washington’s government in Philadelphia prepared for war to enforce US claims to the trans-Ohio it also could not afford to ignore an invitation to negotiate a settlement. In late 1792 an assembly of American Indian groups (with British backing) invited the US to negotiate terms for a peace which would set firm boundaries for further territorial claims [1]. The meeting eventually took place at Sandusky, Ohio but was originally slated to occur on the Miami [known today as the **Maumee**] River near present-day Toledo [2]. The map then likely dates to the spring of 1793 when the final location of the meeting had yet to be set.



— Detail of the place of treaty negotiation showing both the Miami River and Sandusky.

Though labeled as a “route” map, there are no markings or other information on the map which convey a planned itinerary for the three US commissioners appointed to engage in negotiations [3]. Instead I can imagine the map being used for reference in the War

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□ AUTHORS

adminuatpa

Alexander Devine

Dianne Mitchell

Jacqueline Burek

Regan Kladstrup

Marissa Nicosia

Mitch Fraas

Michael P. Williams

Richard Griscom

Nancy Shawcross

Pushkar Sohoni

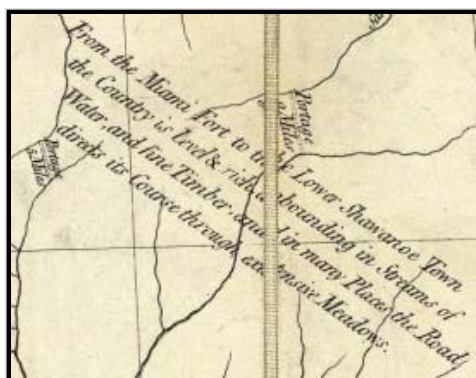
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Department or elsewhere in the halls of government as news of late-breaking events from the northwest arrived. The actual negotiations were held in late July 1793 after many weeks of delays and arguments amongst all parties. The American commissioners refused to budge on demands that the Ohio serve as a hard boundary for United States and the council ended with no treaty in August [4].

The events surrounding the 1793 treaty negotiations are well recorded, with a large number of primary sources available digitally thanks to the work done by the [Papers of the War Department project](#) at GMU. However, the possibility that the map was commissioned or used by the War Department remains supposition on my part. The map itself bears no identifying information about its creator. It seems quite possible though that it was drawn by the noted early American mapmaker Samuel Lewis in Philadelphia. Lewis (1754-1822) was a sometime cartographer for the War Department and is most famous for his role in producing many of the maps published in the first atlases produced in the United States [5]. We know for certain that Lewis was on the permanent payroll of the War Department as a clerk from October 1793 where his duties involved drawing maps [6]. Though a bit of a leap it doesn't seem too far-fetched to surmise that he created this map earlier in 1793 perhaps on contract.

Regardless of who actually drew the map it was by no means an original creation. Most of the details and geographic shapes on the map are taken from Thomas Hutchins' (1730-1789) *A New Map of the Western part of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina* first published in 1778 and based in part on his own surveys. Note the almost identical descriptive text below giving information on southern Ohio as well as a note about a local portage [7]:



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**Hutchins, A New Map of the Western... Penn G3790
1793.M37**

(from the [David Rumsey collection](#))

Surviving records show that the State Department sent a copy of this Hutchins map to the War Department in 1793 in relation to planning the upcoming treaty negotiations [8]. It seems likely then that the Penn map was drawn by Lewis or some other cartographer from that source shortly thereafter. It remains a mystery how the map came to Penn (sometime before the 1940s judging by the style of the library stamp) but it fits in nicely with the university's longstanding [strength in early American studies](#) and serves as a great example of the kinds of unique and undiscovered treasures available at the library.

[1] For a narrative account of these conflicts and the negotiations of 1792-3 see Timothy D. Willig, "Diplomatic Turning Point in the West: The Six Nations and the Ohio Confederacy, 1792-1794" in C.S. Patrick ed. *Preserving Tradition and Understanding the Past: Papers from the Conference on Iroquois Research, 2001-2005* (NYSM, 2005), pp. 49-60 as well as [R. Horsman, "The British Indian Department and the Abortive Treaty of Lower Sandusky, 1793," *The Ohio Historical Quarterly* 70 \(3\): 189-213](#). For a contemporary take on the negotiations see [Jacob Lindley's Account of the Quaker Expedition to Detroit](#). For a broader look at the politics and history of early American conflicts over the Ohio country see Dan Richter's *Facing East from Indian Country* (Harvard, 2001) especially Chapter 6 and the Epilogue.

[2] Not to be confused with present-day Miami, Ohio. For correspondence on the change of venue see the Papers of the War Department Project: Letter from Henry Knox accepting invitation to treaty negotiations: [12 December 1792](#) and Message of Henry Knox regarding a translation error resulting in confusion as to the location of the meeting: [28 February 1793](#).

[3] The US commissioners, Benjamin Lincoln, Beverly Randolph, and

Timothy Pickering eventually traveled from Philadelphia to Albany and then to Niagara where they proceeded by boat. See their instructions of [6 April 1793](#).

[4] The tide in Native American/US relations in the west changed completely the following year with General Anthony Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers on the banks of the Miami.

[5] These atlases were published in Philadelphia by Mathew Carey between 1794 and 1796 and later in many subsequent editions. Lewis created eleven of the twenty maps in Carey's *American Atlas* including maps of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, as well as a map of "The British Possessions in North America." See *Carey's American atlas: containing twenty maps and one chart*. (Philadelphia : Engraved for, and published by, Mathew Carey, no. 118, Market Street. 1795) [[ESTC W11839](#)] These maps appeared a year earlier in the Philadelphia edition of William Guthrie's *A New System of Modern Geography* also printed by Carey [[ESTC W23181](#)]. For more on Lewis and his career as a drawing master and artist see [William H. Gerdtz](#), "A Deception Unmasked; An Artist Uncovered," *American Art Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring, 1986), pp. 12-23; For his career in Carey's service see [R.G. Silver](#), "Mathew Carey's Proofreaders," *Studies in Bibliography*, Vol. 17, (1964), pp. 123-133.

[6] Lewis appears on the payroll of the War Department for [October-December 1793](#); evidence of payment for his maps [exists in 1795](#) and he later recalled in a [1801 letter](#) to Thomas Jefferson some of his mapmaking duties.

[7] The text block from Hutchins reads "From the Miami Fort to the Lower Shawanoe Town the Country is level & rich, abounding in Streams of Water, and fine Timber, and in many Places the Road directs its Course through extensive Meadows." The Penn map is identical except for an error in copying, producing "Springs of Water" instead of "Streams."

[8]. See "Report Relative to the Boundaries of the lands between the Ohio and the Lakes Acquired by Treaties from the Indians" 10 March 1793, which reads in part "...several lines are delineated on the copy of Hutchins' map accompanying this report..." Printed in Ford ed. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* vol. 6 (New York, 1895), p.197.



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About Mitch Fraas

Mitch Fraas is the Scholar in Residence at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. He is also the interim director of the Penn digital humanities forum. At Penn, Mitch works on a variety of projects cutting across general and special collections, with a special focus on digital humanities. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in history from Duke University and earned his bachelor's degree at Boston College. His doctoral dissertation examined the legal culture of British India in the 17th and 18th centuries, arguing for the existence of a unified early modern British imperial legal culture whether in Philadelphia, Bombay, or London.

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