

Site of Hardin's Defeat  
Allen County  
02.1966.1

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### **Marker Text**

Colonel John Hardin, of the Kentucky Militia, with 180 men and Captain John Armstrong, U.S. Army, with 30 men were routed here on October 19, 1790, by Indians under Miami Chief Little Turtle during General Harmar's Campaign.

### **Report**

IHB research raised three concerns with this marker. First, the location of the marker is reliant upon information from a secondary source. John B. Dillon's *A History of Indiana* (1859) is the earliest secondary source located that described the location of the military action as "about eleven miles from Fort Wayne, and near the point at which the Goshen state road crosses Eel River." Other later secondary sources concur, but identified primary sources do not mention the river's name.

Second, there is some question about the number of men under Hardin's command. The number is not implicitly stated in any of the located primary sources. The *Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny* recounted, "[October] 18th. - Colonel Trotter was ordered out with three hundred men, militia and regulars." Trotter returned that evening, against General Harmar's wishes. Harmar then redeployed the troops under Colonel Hardin on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Denny wrote, "I saw that the men moved off with great reluctance, and am satisfied that when three miles from camp he [Hardin] had not more than two-thirds of his command." Therefore, according to Denny, Hardin had approximately 200 men with him including the 30 regulars under Captain John Armstrong. However, John Parker Huber's 1968 dissertation, *General Josiah Harmar's Command: Military Policy in the Old Northwest, 1784-1791*, cited a report from Denny to Arthur St. Clair that stated Hardin's force numbered 210 men; the number of militia, minus the 30 regulars, would equal 180 men.

Third, primary sources do not state whether or not Little Turtle led the attack on October 19, 1790. Secondary sources, beginning with Dillon's *History of Indiana* stated that Little Turtle commanded the Indians at this skirmish. Trusted secondary sources, like Douglas Hurt's, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830*, and Andrew Cayton's, *Frontier Indiana*, also identify Little Turtle as leading the attack on Hardin's men, but they are without citations that would specifically account for Little Turtle's presence. Little Turtle is generally given credit for General Harmar's defeat, but he was not leading alone. Blue Jacket and Le Gris were also leading with Little Turtle.