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THE ANNUAL BATTLE COMMEMORATION



In January each year, on the Saturday closest to the anniversary date of the actual battle, a memorial service is held on the battlefield. This event commemorates the service of the Americans, Muskrat French, British, and Canadians who fought at the River Raisin, as well as Native-Americans from tribes as diverse as the Wyandots, Hurons, Potawatomies, Ottawas, Chippewas, Delawares, Shawnees, Miamis, Creeks, Winnebagoes, Sauks & Fox.



Recreated Battle Flag of Kentucky Militia reportedly captured by the British at the Battle of the River Raisin.

River Raisin Battlefield



The River Raisin Battlefield Visitors Center

1403 E. Elm Avenue
 Monroe, Michigan 48162
 Phone: (734)-243-7136 or (734)240-7780



1/4 mile west of exit 14 on I-75

HOURS

June & July & August
 Friday - Tuesday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 May, September & October (Weekends Only)
 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 November - March Closed
 (Except For Special Events)

Phone: (734)-243-7136 or (734)240-7780
www.co.monroe.mi.us/museum





The History

The Battles and Massacre of the River Raisin were among the largest military encounters in the War of 1812. More American casualties occurred here than in any other single battle.

In the summer of 1812, the River Raisin militia was called into service to build a military road which linked Detroit with Ohio. In July, General William Hull, commander of the U.S. Forces in the old Northwest, marched several thousand Ohio volunteers over that road to defend Detroit. Hull's plans to invade Canada and capture British Ft. Malden in Amherstburg, Ontario, were dropped when the supply road between Detroit and the River Raisin was cut by hostile Indians. Hull made three unsuccessful attempts to open the road. Hull, confronted with a large army of British Soldiers and Indians, surrendered his entire army to the British at Detroit on August 16, 1812, without firing a shot.

The local militia on the River Raisin were expecting an Indian attack. They were shocked when a British officer arrived on August 17 with the news of the surrender of Detroit and with orders from General Hull for them to surrender. After a brief British occupation, the settlement's fortified block house was burned and the British left.

In November 1812, a small detachment of Canadian militiamen, armed with a small cannon, were stationed here to watch the advance of another American army. The new American army had been recruited in Kentucky in August of 1812, with the elderly Revolutionary War veteran, General James Winchester, in command. This army suffered on their march from the lack of winter clothing and food, yet when Frenchtown settlers arrived pleading for rescue from the British and Indians, Winchester's army moved to strike at the enemy.

Over six hundred men, under the command of Colonels William Lewis and John Allen, were dispatched. They arrived south of the Raisin in the afternoon of January 18. Facing them were 63 Canadian militiamen and 200 Potawatomi Indians. The Americans were reinforced with 100 men from the River Raisin, and quickly routed the British and Indians and drove them into the woods a mile north of the settlement. The fighting continued, tree to tree, log to log, until dark. The Americans won at the cost of 13 killed and 54 wounded. The British and the Indians retreated north to Brownstown, across the river from the British at Fort Malden.

The Americans set up camp among homes on the north side of the river. General Winchester arrived with reinforcements several days later, bringing the number of American troops to 934.

The British counterattacked. On the morning of January 22, 1813, 597 British and Canadian soldiers with six cannons, and 800 Indians launched an attack. As they moved forward in the pre-dawn darkness, they were

discovered by an American sentry. Although surprised, the Americans took positions quickly and returned fire.

The fighting raged for twenty minutes when the U.S. 17th Infantry, camped on the right in an open field, was flanked by Canadian militia and Indians. Orders were given to retreat to the river and make a stand, and 240 more Americans were sent from the center to help. The retreat became a disastrous flight for Ohio. Of the 400 Americans who ran, nearly 220 Americans were killed, about 147 including General Winchester, were captured. Only 33 escaped to safety.

At the same time, the left wing of nearly 500 Kentucky militiamen were fighting from behind a picket fence. They successfully repulsed three British frontal attacks and drove back the British cannon with their rifles. These Americans, with only 5 killed and 40 wounded, expected the British to ask for a truce. They saw a British officer with a white flag, but were shocked to find he carried a message from General Winchester advising surrender, after insisting on terms that the American wounded be protected.

The British withdrew hurriedly, due to the heavy casualties and the news that more Americans under General Harrison were nearby. The American wounded were left behind in homes of the settlers. On the morning of January 23, 1813, all of the British guards left. Indians returned to the River Raisin. They plundered homes and the wounded for valuables, and then killed and scalped Americans who could not walk. Bodies were tossed into burning houses. Those able to walk were claimed by the Indians and taken to Detroit where they were ransomed. Over 60 unarmed American wounded were killed. This was the "Massacre of the River Raisin."

Americans in the west rallied to the flag. Eager for revenge, their battle cry became "Remember the Raisin!"

The River Raisin was a desolate, nearly abandoned settlement for eight months following the massacre. American dead were unburied; many homes were burned and plundered. Most settlers fled to Detroit or to Ohio. Local citizens later supported the Americans at the sieges of Ft. Meigs in Ohio, but could not stop the Indians from using the River Raisin settlement as a base of operations and supply depot.

The River Raisin was liberated on September 27, 1813, when Col. Richard M. Johnson's Kentucky cavalry, led by men from the River Raisin, rode into the settlement. Moving on, the Kentuckians quickly pushed the British and the Indians deep into Canada and decisively defeated them at the Battle of Thames on October 5, 1813.

Although the British and the hostile Indians could not return, destruction was so severe that the River Raisin settlement remained destroyed and impoverished for five years.



INDIAN PEACE MEDAL

Medals like the one drawn here were handed out to Native-American leaders who maintained friendly relations with the United States Government. An image of President Madison appeared on the reverse.



The Battlefield Visitor Center contains displays of original weapons and artifacts from the battle. Visitors can also view miniature dioramas, artwork, and full-size replicas that relate the history of the military and civilians involved. Armchair strategists will appreciate a fiber-optic map presentation that graphically shows the maneuvers of each side.



Please visit our other sites in Monroe and along the River Raisin:

The Martha Barker Country Store Museum

The Navarre-Anderson Trading Post

The Monroe County Historical Museum