

TWINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2012 NEWSLETTER ARTICLES REGARDING THE WAR OF 1812

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February 2012

The War of 1812: The War that Nobody Won.

History is often organized around wars and wars have a way of acquiring names and epithets. The Great War, The Civil War, The American Revolution, The War to End All Wars. Of course the naming rights often go to the victors and can add a touch of romance to what is a bloody business.

This year is the bicentennial of the War of 1812 much of which took place here in Ohio. The focus of the conflict for Ohio was what settlers saw as the encroachment of the Indians on their territories. The conflict was not universally supported and neither of Ohio's Senators voted for the declaration of war. Senator Campbell did not attend the War Congress of 1812 and Senator Thomas Worthington voted against it. He said that the advocates were much noisier than those opposing it.

Ohio Governor Miegs was a strong advocate of the war with the British and attempted to gain the allegiance of the local tribes of Indians. The state militia was woefully inadequate and the Ohio generals were veterans of the revolutionary war and past their prime.

On June 18 1812 President Madison signed the declaration of war and the young country was once again in battle with Great Britain. Declaring a war and fighting one are very different enterprises. Canada was the enemy and they were very close at hand. Most of the native Americans were in league with the British and they were fierce warriors. The war ended on Christmas Eve 1814 when American and British diplomats met in Ghent, Belgium to sign the peace treaty. Neither side really gained anything but both sides lost much.

In the next few newsletters we will be highlighting some of the people and battles of the forgotten war.

Next month; Who was Tecumseh? How does he figure in this battle and our history?

Sources:

Marrin, Albert *1812 The War that Nobody Won*. New York: Athenium, 1985

Roseboom, Eugene H. and Francis P. Weisenburger *A History of Ohio*. Columbus:

March 2012

Tecumseh:

Tecumseh, born in 1768 in what is now Clark county, was a boy during the American Revolution, but that did not keep him from joining with the British attacking American colonists. In 1794 he began working to form an Indian confederation to resist the pressure of the white man. The settlers had pushed game from the Indian hunting grounds precipitating the breakdown of the Indian economy

Tecumseh had a younger brother, Tenskwatawa (The Open Door). Their father was Shawnee and brutally murdered by the U.S. frontiersmen. Their mother was of the Creek tribe. Tenskwatawa was also known as the Prophet because of his religious leadership and his promotion of temperance and a return of the Indians to their traditional ways. The brothers attracted followers from both the Shawnee and the Creek tribes, who were discontented with the continued American expansion as well the squabbling among the British, French and Americans.

The brothers wanted to form an Indian confederation. Americans blamed the British for heightening tension with the Indians. The governor of the territory of Indiana, William Henry Harrison fought the Battle of Tippe-canoe in 1811. This destroyed the Indian Settlement at Prophet's town. Tenskwatawa placed a curse on Harri-son. Harrison went on to become the ninth president of the United States in 1841. He died of pneumonia after only a month in office. He was the first president to die in office.

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On October 5, 1813 the 3,500 U.S. troops led by General William Henry Harrison fought and defeated the army of 600 British regulars and 1,000 Indian Allies led by Tecumseh. This was known as the Battle of the Thames. Tecumseh died in the battle and his body was buried in a secret place and never found. He was 45 years old. The Indian power in Ohio and Indiana was broken and most of the tribes broke their association with the British.

Sources: Coate, Bill : Shocking Secrets of American History New York: MJF Books
The American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Britannica Educational
Publishing
Wikipedia

April 2012

And the Beat goes On:

The War of 1812 is called the “Forgotten Conflict” but there are many things that still linger. There are at least three musical milestones that came out of this war.

The campaign slogan “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too” was the title of a song written for the presidential campaign of 1840. Whig candidate, William Henry Harrison and his running mate John Tyler of Virginia. In 1811 Harrison was the governor of Indiana and responsible for the destruction of Prophet’s Town, and Indian stronghold.

The Prophet, was the brother of the Indian leader Tecumseh. According to legend, The Prophet placed a curse on Harrison. Harrison was elected but died one month after his inauguration. He was the first president to die in office. The song, however, firmly established the power of singing as a campaign device. Francis Scott Key, a Georgetown Federalist, had come to Baltimore in September of 1814 to secure the release of a prisoner. He was on board a British ship when Fort Henry was attacked at the Campaign of Chesapeake. On the morning of the fourteenth he was amazed to see that the American flag was still flying. That sight inspired him to write the poem “The Star Spangled Banner” which was set to the tune of an eighteenth century British drinking song. The song was a great hit almost immediately but it did not become the national anthem until 1931 over one hundred years later.

In 1959 an Arkansas principal wrote a silly song about the battle that took place in New Orleans. He wanted to create an enthusiasm for history among his students. The song was a rather biased account of that battle as told through the eyes of an American. The melody came from an older tune titled “The 8th of January” the title of the battle. Johnny Horton recorded the most popular version and he also adjusted the lyrics for a version to be marketed in the U.K. The song is popular to this day. “The Battle of New Orleans” made the Billboard Hot 100 chart at number 28 for 1959. It was the number one country song in that year.

Sources:

1812 the Video PBS

Current, Richard N., T. Harry Williams and others American History: A Survey Volume 1
Heidler, David S. and Jeanne T. Heidler, ed. Encyclopedia of the War of 1812

Hickey, Donald R. The War of 1812: A Forgotten conflict

May 2012

Dolly at the White House:

Dolley Madison was the wife of President James Madison during the War of 1812. They were an odd couple. He was taciturn and cerebral, and she was charming and the center of society. They were soul mates and were soul mates and devoted to each other. Madison's personality did not endear him to the public but Dolley turned the White House into the social center of the Capitol City. Her liveliness and charm coupled with her ability to relate to all facets of society made her one of the most beloved of First Ladies .

On August 24, 1814 she showed the world how courageous she was. The British were approaching Washington and the president left in search of the commander of the district's defenses. He left all the cabinet papers in Dolley's care with the instruction to take them with her if she had to escape. Dolley was advised by everyone that it was time to go. In the meantime all of the troops and the 100 militia assigned to the White House "melted away."

Dolley spent two days packing her carriage with the papers and all of the valuables she could fit. Her last concern was saving the portrait of George Washington by famous painter Gilbert Stuart. She ordered the frame broken so the portrait could be carried away as she fled.

Four thousand Red Coats invaded the city that evening. After eating the dinner that Dolley had prepared for a party that night, the British voted to burn the house down. The subsequent pillage left the Post Office as the only government building standing. They stole everything possible including Madison's love letters to his beloved Dolley. The city was then hit by a hurricane and then a tornado driving the invaders out and leaving a sad and soggy city for the Americans to rebuild.

Heidler, David: Encyclopedia of The War of 1812 ABC-CLIO Santa Barbara 1997
Klaphor, Margaret Brown: The First Ladies White House Historical Association 2001
The War of 1812: Video The History Channel

June 2012

Last Battle of the War

Andrew Jackson, Old Hickory, Hawkface was the hero of this final battle of the Second War of Independence. New Orleans was a logical target for the British as it was the port through which 40 percent of the goods came down the Mississippi. Controlling New Orleans would be a huge advantage to the British. It was the Achilles Heel of the U.S.

Andrew Jackson was captured by the British when he was thirteen and nearly died of the smallpox that killed his brother. His hatred of the British grew from that time. He was rash and hot tempered. He killed a man in a duel. He practiced his own brand of law as a circuit judge. His marriage to Rachel was plagued by accusations of bigamy and then later adultery. Rachel's divorce from her first husband was not final before she married Jackson. Jackson was the commander of the army in New Orleans. The British troops, fresh from their defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte were marching five thousand strong to attack the Americans in Louisiana. Jackson organized the ragtag militia and summoned the Tennessee riflemen from Baton Rouge. He welcomed the services of the black troops and insisted that they be paid the same as the white. He even enlisted a force of one thousand Baratarians pirated under the leadership of the notorious Jean Lafitte. Lafitte's intimate knowledge of the boggy topography earned him the position of aides-de-camp.

The attack began under darkness and a heavy fog, but as the British neared the main enemy line the fog lifted, exposing them to withering artillery fire. Within minutes, the American 7th Infantry arrived, moved forward, and fired upon the British in the captured redoubt: within half an hour, Rennie and most of his men were dead. In the main attack on the right, the British infantrymen either flung themselves to the ground, huddled in the canal, or were mowed down by a combination of musket fire and grapeshot from the Americans. A handful made it to the top of the parapet on the right but were either killed or captured. The 95th Rifles had advanced in open skirmish order ahead of the main assault force and were concealed in the ditch below the parapet, un-able to advance further without support.

The two large main assaults on the American position were repulsed. With most of their senior officers dead or wounded, the British soldiers, having no orders to advance further or retreat, stood out in the open and were shot apart with grapeshot from Line Jackson. After about 20 more minutes of bloodletting, General Lambert assumed command and eventually ordered a withdrawal.

At the end of the day, the British had over two thousand casualties: almost 300 killed, including Generals and over one thousand wounded (including General Keane) and more than four hundred captured or missing. The Americans had seventy one casualties: thirteen dead; and thirty nine wounded and nineteen missing.

The news of the victory brought great joy to the Americans and when it came time to ratify the Treaty of Ghent it was clear that America was a force to be reckoned with.

July 2012

Time Travel to 1812

Since I began my research for these articles I kept seeing the phrase the “forgotten war”. From my discoveries this war has not been forgotten in Ohio. Summertime is the perfect time to take short trips and to wander the roads that history was made on. It’s great to enjoy the lovely summer weather and brush up your knowledge of the War of 1812.

There are five nearby spots to target as you plan a summer getaway. Fort Meigs is in Perrysburg which was named for Oliver Hazard Perry who defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Erie on September 10, 1813. The site includes a battlefield from that war and a reconstructed fort. Visitors get to see what life was like for soldiers and civilians. There is a visitors center and museum. Check the website at fortmeigs.org Put-in-Bay is home to Perry’s Victory and International Peace Memorial on South Bass Island. It commemorates the Battle of Lake Erie one of the most significant battles to take place in Ohio. You can climb to the top of the 352-foot tall monument and look out over the spot where this decisive naval battle took place. More details on nps.gov/pevi/index.htm. Fort Amanda is an Auglaize County, nine miles northwest of Wapakoneta. One in a series of 1812 forts across western Ohio. It is marked by a tall granite obelisk built in 1915. Located on the banks of the Auglaize River, Fort Amanda served as a major supply depot during the war. A diary kept by Ensign William Schillinger of the Ohio militia gives us a daily account of weather conditions, activities at the fort and his personal thoughts and observations. Check out ohiohistory.org

Several monuments are on the lawn of the Birchard Public Library at 423 Croghan St. to mark the site of Fort Stephenson. The victory at Fort Stephenson came at an important time during the war, as the United States had few military successes. In addition to raising American morale, it also made Croghan famous across the country. President James Madison promoted him to the rank of lieutenant colonel as a reward for his service. Years later, the United States Congress voted to award him a gold medal for his success during the War of 1812. The site of Fort Stephenson is now part of the city of Fremont, Ohio.

At the Harrison Tomb in North Bend near Cincinnati you can see the final resting place of William Henry Harrison, commander of the Army of the Northwest during the War of 1812, who went on to become ninth president of the United States. Outdoor displays tell the story of Harrison and a 60-foot tall marble memorial completed in 1922 marks the site of his tomb.

These are just a few of the sites but they are within easy traveling distance of Twinsburg. Check the website or Google ohiohistory.org for more information as to hours and location. Some venues have events with re-enactors. This would be a great year to go because the 200 year anniversary has peaked people’s attention.

August 2012

William Wetmore

The Twinsburg Bulletin of July 12 published a guest column by Sharon Myers who will be our speaker in November. If you missed it the Bulletin is online WWW.TWINSBURGBULLETIN.COM It is full of great information. Myers is the President of the William Wetmore Chapter of the Daughters of the War of 1812. There are eleven veterans of the war buried in our own Locust Grove Cemetery.

We will be focusing on these veterans in the Tales of Locust Grove in October and it's not too early to get involved. We will need more men than ever. Wives and children too. If you are interested email martifalk@aol.com William Wetmore was born in Middletown, Connecticut on September 16, 1777. Wetmore moved to Ohio in 1804 and became one of the original proprietors of Cuyahoga Falls. He built the second house in what became Stow Township. He was elected Justice of the Peace of Stow, as well as Clerk of the Court of Ravenna, Ohio.

During the War of 1812, William Wetmore was appointed commander for troops stationed at Old Portage, the northern Portage Path at the Cuyahoga River. Acting as an agent for Joshua Stow, owner of the township, William also gave permission to Francis Kelsey and Isaac Wilcox to build a dam across the Cuyahoga River and to erect a sawmill. It is said lumber from this mill was used by the army to build ships at Portage for use against the British. The dam washed away soon after.

William's conscientious dealings with the Indians soon made them his faithful friends. It was this close relationship that saved the settlers during the War of 1812. The British wanted the Indians to kill the white settlers, but the tribe moved away, rather than slaughter their friends. Wetmore and Joshua Stow owned 210 acres, the southern border being Portage Trail, and began developing Cuyahoga Falls in 1825. William Wetmore built his home at the corner of Front Street and Portage Trail. In 1830, St. John's Episcopal Church was organized by William Wetmore. They met in a schoolhouse at Front and Wadsworth Streets. Shortly thereafter, construction was started at its present site on Portage Trail and Second Street. Wetmore died on October 27, 1827, aged 56, in Ohio and is interred in Stow Cemetery. The National Society United States Daughters of 1812 was organized on January 8, 1892.

Com. William Wetmore Chapter was organized November 7, 2009 in Stow, Ohio. Their first project was to place a War of 1812 marker on the grave of William Wetmore in Stow Cemetery. This was done on July 31, 2010. This year they provided memorial flags to cemeteries all over northeast Ohio including Locust Grove. There are thirty members in this chapter.

Sources:

Adapted from Akron and Summit County, by Karl Grismer

Com. William Wetmore Chapter Daughters of 1812 sharonmyers1.tripod.com/

September 2012

War of 1812 on hold this month

As you readers know, we have been running a series on the War of 1812 in the Newsletters this year. These have been provided by one of our Trustees, Marti Franks, who has spent quite a bit of time doing research at the Library. By the time we have our November 7th program we should all have a bit of knowledge about this war from 200 years ago! It is interesting to note that anyone who travels to Canada this summer will hear a slightly different perspective on the War. We in the USA feel that we defeated the British. Canadians, however, celebrate their victories against the US (initially Detroit and the Niagara frontier) and feel that via the War of 1812 they avoided being annexed to the States. History is always interesting! There will not be an article on the War of 1812 this month but there will be a final one for the October Issue.

October 2012

This is the last of my stories of the War of 1812.

By the time you get the next newsletter (November's) you will have had an opportunity to hear Sharon Myers share her knowledge of the veterans of this war on November 7 at the Twinsburg Public Library. At the time our country that was young and divided. It did not have a national identity. The War of 1812 created heroes like Andrew Jackson and Oliver Perry, Tecumseh, as well as national symbols and slogans that endure today. Uncle Sam, the Star Spangled Banner, "Tippecanoe and Tyler too", the popular song "The Battle of New Orleans" "Don't give up the ship", "We have met the enemy and they are ours." Professor Donald Hickey, author of *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, suggested. "All those symbols of the war have developed an iconic significance.... these help Americans understand who they are and where they are headed as a nation." The United States would establish a peacetime army. The Treaty of Ghent, ensured that Britain never harassed the United States again. The United States raised its profile among Old World powers.

James Madison was never happy with the war or its outcome. He let others speak of it. As Madison's Presidency ended, John Adams who was not a huge fan of Madison wrote "...[Madison's] administration has acquired more glory, and established more Union, than all three predecessors Washington, Adams and Jefferson, put together."

The war would always be connected to Madison, he blamed no one and took no credit. His focus through his whole career was union. He became increasingly convinced that "disunion" was like "the serpent creeping with his deadly wiles into paradise". Madison felt the nation's life force was its desire for freedom, and independence. He accepted the simple truth that "history knows about as much of the past as she does of the future."

I do not believe the war is forgotten. Whether it was a victory for the United States has still not been decided. Canadian, Native Americans, descendants of the British all live together in relative peace. The United States still maintains a standing army and we still sing songs that celebrate the battles. The Star Spangled Banner is still our national anthem no matter how tricky it is to sing. There are at least eleven and perhaps more veterans resting on our Locust Grove Cemetery and at least one of them fought on the side of the British and this year for the first time their graves were decorated on Memorial Day through the efforts of Sharon Myers, President of the William Wetmore Chapter of the Daughters of the War of 1812.

History is written in retrospect and is always shaped by the historian. It is never a good idea to just read one account. Facts do not always reveal the truth. Cervantes once said "facts are the enemy of truth". I have enjoyed wandering through this story. If nothing else the war has inspired a great deal of conversation. As I write this I can hear Johnny Horton singing "The Ballad of 1812". At the beginning of every Tribe game, when I hear "The Star Spangled Banner", history comes alive again. History should keep us thinking. See you on November 7, 2012 at the Twinsburg Public library.