



The War of 1812

On June 18, 1812, the U.S. Congress declared war on Great Britain.

There were many causes for this war. For years, the British had stopped U.S. ships, removed American sailors and forced them to work on British ships. Americans also blamed the British for Indian uprisings in the Ohio River valley. For years, Native Americans and American settlers fought with each other in Ohio.

When the British left Detroit after the American Revolution they built Fort Malden at Amherstburg.



During the early days of the war things did not go well for the Americans. In July 1812 Fort Mackinac was taken when the Americans were surprised by a British force. One month later, Detroit was surrendered to the British. The loss of Michigan's biggest settlement was a major setback for the Americans. The outlook of the

war improved for the Americans in September 1813 when a U.S. Navy force defeated a British fleet near present-day Sandusky, Ohio. The American victory at the Battle of Lake Erie forced the British to leave Detroit.

The War of 1812 ended in December 1814. Unlike many wars, this war ended without any exchange of territory. American troops reoccupied Fort Mackinac in July 1815.

The war, however, did have a terrible effect



In August 1812, General William Hull, Michigan's first territorial governor, surrendered Detroit to the British without a fight. Detroit is the only American city ever surrendered to a foreign enemy.

upon Michigan. As one Michiganian noted, "the desolation of the territory is beyond all perception." There was very little food and many of the homes and farms were in need of repair. The one bright spot was Michigan's new leader. In 1813, Lewis Cass, an Ohio officer who had come to Michigan to fight the British, was named Michigan's territorial governor.

BATTLE OF THE RIVER RAISIN

One of the most tragic battles of the War of 1812 was fought where the River Raisin enters Lake Erie at Frenchtown (present-day Monroe).

On January 18, 1813, an American force under the command of General James Winchester arrived at Frenchtown. Against orders, General Winchester had moved his 900-man army into Michigan when he heard that the British planned to burn Frenchtown.

When the Americans reached Frenchtown they defeated a smaller British force. Winchester's army also captured lots of flour and beef. For the first time in months the Americans ate well. But General Winchester failed to take the necessary **precautions** in case the British might attack his men. The American general also ignored reports that the British were headed back to Frenchtown.

At dawn on January 22, a British force of 1,300 men (500 soldiers and 800 Indians from a variety of tribes) attacked the unprepared Americans.



Although Indians did massacre American soldiers at River Raisin, this picture, created after the War of 1812, exaggerates what really took place.

Shortly after the battle started General Winchester was captured. The British commander told him that if the Americans did not surrender, his Indian **allies** might kill any American prisoners. Although many American soldiers were still fighting, Winchester ordered his men to lay down their guns. They surrendered, but only after receiving a promise

from the British that their wounded would be protected.

American **casualties** at the Battle of the River Raisin totaled 220 killed, 80 wounded and more than 500 taken

prisoner. Only a few Americans escaped. The British reported 24 killed and 161 wounded.

Fearing the arrival of more Americans, the British commander took his army and all Americans who could walk and left Frenchtown.

He left behind the wounded Americans. Early the next morning, about 200 Indians rushed into Frenchtown and killed many of the American soldiers.

The massacre of the Americans shocked the American public. The editor of one national newspaper described the event as one of the worst acts of "cold blooded butchery ever committed . . . by civilized man." For many Americans the angry battle cry became "Remember the River Raisin."

LEWIS CASS

One of the few good things to come out of the War of 1812 for Michigan was Lewis Cass.

Born in New Hampshire in 1782, Lewis Cass received a good education before moving to Ohio with his family. When the War of



1812 started he joined the Ohio militia. He was at Detroit when the city was surrendered in August 1812. The following year, President James Madison appointed Cass Michigan's new territorial governor.

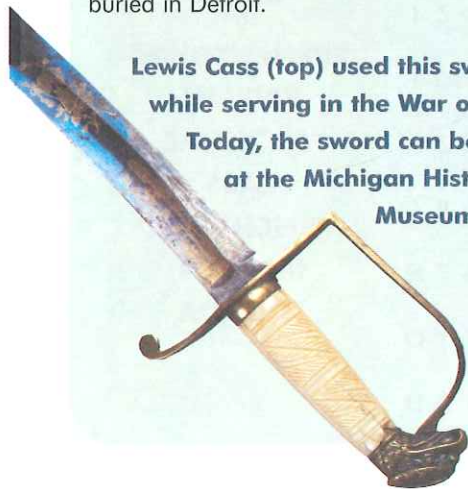
Cass served eighteen years as governor—longer than any one else in Michigan history.

Cass worked hard to help Michigan recover from the war. He encouraged new settlers to come to Michigan. Under Cass's leadership, roads and lighthouses were built. When Cass left the governorship in 1831 to serve as the U.S. secretary of war, Michigan was ready to become a state.

Cass served in the U.S. Senate, as ambassador to France and as U.S. secretary of state. In 1848 Cass was the presidential nominee for the Democratic party, but he lost the election.

Lewis Cass returned home to Michigan in 1861. He died five years later and was buried in Detroit.

Lewis Cass (top) used this sword while serving in the War of 1812. Today, the sword can be seen at the Michigan Historical Museum.



RIVER RAISIN BATTLEFIELD VISITOR'S CENTER

Located on a portion of the battlefield, this museum has exhibits on the soldiers who fought at the Battle of the River Raisin. A short interpretive trail guides visitors through the action that took place in the biggest battle ever fought in Michigan. The museum is located at 1403 East Elm Avenue in Monroe. Telephone (734) 243-7136.

MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Exhibits on display about the War of 1812 period at the Michigan Historical Museum include Lewis Cass's War of 1812 sword, a wooden canteen and Native American weapons. The museum is located at 717 West Allegan, Lansing, MI 48918. Telephone (517) 373-3559, TDD: (800) 827-7007 or visit on-line at www.sos.state.mi.us/history.

Learn more about THE WAR OF 1812

FORT MALDEN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

During the War of 1812, Fort Malden was the center of British defenses on western Lake Erie. Today, the site includes remains of defensive earthworks and four buildings, including a brick barracks built in 1819. The fort is located on Laird Avenue in Amherstburg. Telephone (519) 736-5416 or visit on-line at http://parks.canada.pch.gc.ca/parks/ontario/fort_malden.



British reenactors at Fort Malden

FORT MACKINAC

Built on Mackinac Island by British soldiers during the American Revolution, Fort Mackinac was captured by the British in July 1812. The British held the fort until 1815. Today, visitors can tour exhibits covering more than 150 years of the fort's history. Operated by the Mackinac Island State Historic Parks, the fort is open from May until October. Telephone (906) 847-3328 or visit on-line at www.mackinacparks.com/fortmackinac/.

What Did You Learn?

BONUS:

Who did Americans blame for Indian uprisings in the Ohio River valley?

- a. the Spanish
- b. the French
- c. the British

1. *What is the only U.S. city ever surrendered to a foreign enemy?*

- a. St. Ignace
- b. New York
- c. Detroit

2. *What was the name of one of the most tragic battles of the War of 1812?*

- a. the Battle of the River Raisin
- b. the Battle of Lake Huron
- c. the Battle of Fort Mackinac

3. *Who was Michigan's first territorial governor?*

- a. William Hull
- b. Lewis Cass
- c. Richard Amherst

Vocabulary

WORDS



precautions: to prepare in advance against danger

allies: people joined in a common cause

casualties: people killed, wounded or captured in battle

nominee: a person chosen to be a candidate

B R N M F E U O S B S H Q D Q H K I C F
 R E W E E K D Q Z B C A N A D A R A W B
 Q T O J E P C W D A X F B N V M S L F R
 J S T M H L D A K P O K Q C V S Z G Z I
 C E H A Z A J Z N H U R C U Q S V Y G T
 H H C L Z R D V E I W S I H N O D E Z A
 R C N D P F R U D T K Q C Z P T G T P I
 K N E E W B X Q R A O C X H J X U O Z N
 C I R N V R K T H J N J A X K O L N Y O
 Y W F P C K S R V F G Y N M Z E F D D D

Find the following
WAR OF 1812
 words

FRENCHTOWN
BRITAIN
MACKINAC
CASS
WINCHESTER
MALDEN
CANADA