

Although America won its independence from England in 1782, English traders and hunters remained in many parts of the Northwest Territory (which included what are now Ohio and Michigan) after the Revolutionary War.

England eventually went to war against France and at that time established a military fort at Detroit. Very shortly afterward, while trying to discourage the United States from trading with France, English navy vessels began intercepting our ships on the Atlantic Ocean and even kidnapping our sailors and forcing them to man their ships. This is one of the reasons for the War of 1812 against England.

During that war the United States began to worry about the threat of England invading our country from nearby Canada, so they sent an American army here to the Foot of the Rapids of the Miami of the Lake (now known as the Maumee River) to build a fort. They knew that the enemy could sail down Lake Erie from Detroit and use the river to supply their army as it went further into the middle west toward the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

General William Henry Harrison led our army and he chose the high ground just upriver from what is now Perrysburg to build his fort which he named in honor of Ohio Governor Return Jonathan Meigs. His soldiers cut down nearby trees and built a strong stockade with seven log block houses and five cannon batteries that looked exactly like the rebuilt fort you see today.

The fort had no sooner been completed when the British and their Indian allies began an attack on May 1, 1813 with cannon and musket fire. There were 522 British regulars, 452 Canadian militia and about 1,000 Indians under the command of the Shawnee Chief, Tecumseh. The Americans dug a huge traverse running the length of the fort. It was a mound of earth 20 feet



Fort Meigs as depicted on Wood County Courthouse murals

thick at the base and 12 feet high. The men dug holes into the base large enough to take cover from the cannon fire, so they were fairly well protected. However, many men were killed and wounded during the siege.

For some 10 days the attack continued with cannon shot coming from artillery batteries directly across the river. Some of the cannon balls were heated red-hot and then aimed at the fort's powder magazines. The Indians meanwhile occupied the woods to the rear and on the flanks of the fort and kept up their light arms fire. Each day a few

of our soldiers were killed or wounded, but the fort held.

On one day the troops were cheered up when some 1,200 volunteers from Kentucky arrived to help. They came down the river but before arriving were told by a messenger from the fort to land about 800 men on the north side of the river to destroy or disable the British cannons. They did so successfully, but when the Indians who were guarding the gun batteries retreated, the Kentuckians disobeyed orders and charged after them. Unfortu-

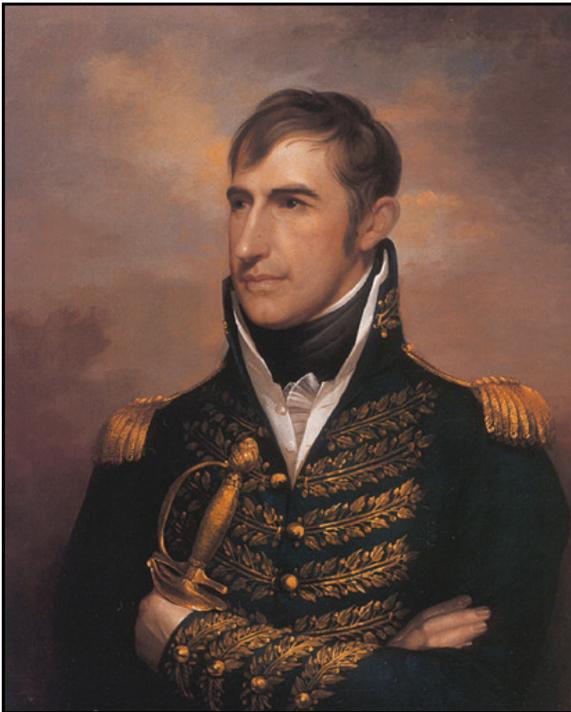


Reconstructed Blockhouses and Traverse at Fort Meigs

nately, the retreat was a trap and nearly 650 of the men were surrounded and either captured or killed in what is known as Dudley's massacre. The survivors were made to run the gauntlet toward Fort Miami, a little down the river in what is now Maumee, and there the Indians began killing the helpless men until finally being stopped by their commander, Tecumseh. In all, 45 to 50

Kentuckians, including Captain William Dudley, were killed and scalped in this massacre.

After 10 days the British and Indians gave up the fight and withdrew; but not for long. On June 21 they returned with even more Indians and commenced heavy cannon and musket fire. This continued for some time, but gradually slowed down and ceased after a week. The enemy then became discouraged



General William Henry Harrison

at their lack of success and finally withdrew, shifting their attention to targets east of here.

The fort defenders held their ground on this siege with a loss of 70 to 80 men killed, with the result that American troops blocked England's aim to

use the Maumee River as a highway into the interior of our country.

Had England succeeded in the battle for Fort Meigs, Perrysburg could very well be a part of Canada today. Accordingly, the battle for Fort Meigs is considered to be one of the most important in our country's history.



Fort Meigs Monument— Erected 1908

Things You Should Know About Perrysburg, Ohio

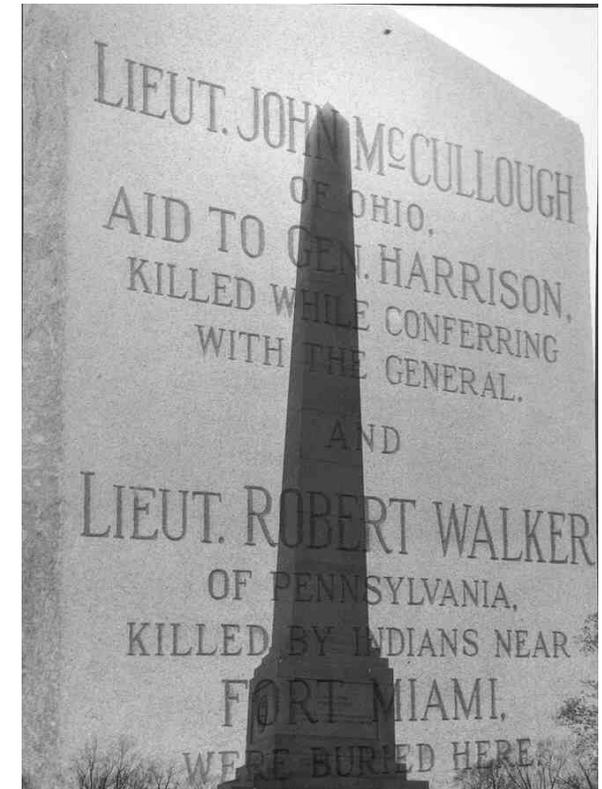
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FORT MEIGS BATTLES War of 1812



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