

# RIVER RAISIN NEWS & DISPATCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MONROE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM & THE MONROE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Volume 3 Issue 1**  
**January/February 2007**

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**Monroe County  
Historical Museum**  
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**Director**  
John Gibney

**Secretary  
& Education**  
Lynn Reaume

**Curator**  
Jim Ryland

**Archivist**  
Chris Kull

**Battlefield**  
David Ingall &  
Scott Lonsdale

**Maintenance**  
Mike Jondro

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**Museum Hours**  
Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat., & Sun.  
all year long  
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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**Archives Hours**  
Wed., Thurs., Fri., & Sat.  
all year long  
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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## AU REVOIR

**From Museum Director Ralph Naveaux**

As most of you probably know by now, I've decided to retire as Museum Director, leaving John Gibney to take over as of January 1, 2007. I've enjoyed the past 17 years working here at the museum and am looking forward to continuing my association on a part time or volunteer basis. My sincere thanks goes out to the many people who helped and encouraged me during my two and a half years as director. I'm leaving with the confidence that we have a great team on the museum staff, but they will need all our support to carry on their ambitious programs.

## **In Memory of a Dedicated Re-enactor / Historian**

Each year at the commemoration ceremonies for the Battle of the River Raisin we lay a wreath in memory of those who suffered and died in the bloodiest battle fought on Michigan soil. Whenever possible, we try to select a descendant of an early settler or battle participant to carry the wreath.

This year, however, we have asked the family of Steve Polan to perform that honor. Mr. Polan was a dedicated re-enactor and a student of our battle who often participated in our event. Regrettably, he passed away last year. Ever a supporter of historical and educational programs, much of his painstakingly recreated historical equipment and clothing was donated to the River Raisin Battlefield Visitor Center and to Fort Meigs. For that, we are very grateful.

## **The Story of a Lost Flag**

John Trowbridge, Command Historian for the Kentucky National Guard, kindly shared his research with us on a mysterious battle flag that once adorned the halls of the British military hospital in Chelsea, England. Rumors circulated that the flag had been captured by the British at the Battle of the River Raisin and taken home as a trophy of the War of 1812. Unfortunately, over time, the already tattered flag rotted away, leaving no trace for us today. Officially, it is listed as Ford Collection #44, Kentucky Militia Regimental Standard taken at Frenchtown on January 22, 1813, current location unknown.

Fortunately, the flag was cited and described in several military journals, and a couple of drawings were made of it that clearly showed a brown eagle with white head and yellow beak on a white or buff background. On its breast is a shield bearing an odd version of the U. S. coat of arms. The left talon holds 3 arrows while the right carries a thin stick topped by a red toque or liberty cap. Above are 9 brown stars and a banner sporting the Kentucky state motto "United We Stand."

As part of a "United We Stand" grant project, artist Dave Stahl, assisted by Laura Davis, recreated this historic flag for the Monroe County Historical Museum to use in educational and commemorative programs. For the first time in 194 years, this flag once again will fly over the River Raisin Battlefield.

### **United We Stand Footsteps to the Bicentennial**

In 2005-2006, the Monroe County Historical Museum partnered with the Monroe County 4-H and the Perfect Stitch Vocational Center to teach youth sewing skills and to reproduce garments of the War of 1812 period. The "United We Stand" project was funded by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts, with matching funds provided by Monroe Bank and Trust, La-Z-Boy, Inc., Holcim, Inc., the Monroe County Historical Society, the Friends of the River Raisin Battlefield, the Frenchtown Chapter of the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan, and Loomis Battery of Michigan Light Artillery. It is but one of several initiatives taken by Monroe County citizens in preparation for the coming Bicentennial of the War of 1812. By the end of 2006, the project had produced 40 sets of Kentucky frock coats, hats, and haversacks, along with a regimental flag, and had involved dozens of youth, senior citizens, and volunteers.

### **Battlefield Legislation**

In December of 2006, the U.S. Senate passed the River Raisin National Battlefield Study Act directing the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability of the battlefield for affiliation with the National Park Service. The Senate bill was introduced by Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, following its initial proposal by U.S. Representative John Dingell and its passage by the House.

Currently only 4 of our 390 national park properties commemorate the War of 1812. It is hoped this relatively untold story will be recognized as a cultural asset for our community with the approaching 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of French Town and the River Raisin.

Several people have expressed to me their fears that federal involvement could lead to a bureaucratic nightmare for those of us who want to make use of the

battlefield. However, NPS affiliation comes in several different forms, some allowing for local entities to take care of most of the operation of the site.

### **Buildings & Grounds**

Our request to the U.S. Army for an 81mm mortar to be displayed at Heck Park has been approved, pending a possible inspection visit by a team from Warren.

Due to mud, bad weather, road construction, and intervening events, we got a late start in buttoning up the trading post and country store for the winter. The water has been turned off, but wigwams and some shelter parts still have to be put away. Woodchuck will be cutting down the dead ash trees as soon as the ground is hard enough.

Mike Jondro has turned off the water at Heck Park and is replacing the sensors on the security lights at the Battlefield visitor Center.

Jim constructed an 1812 exhibit in the upstairs gallery and we brought in chairs from the battlefield visitor center for our November fundraising gala held for the 1812 bicentennial steering committee. No sooner was that over than Lynn Reaume began filling the space with the first of some 50 trees for our December Christmas Tree festival.

Thanks to Mike Bosanac, a painting crew began work on the museum windows on Monday, November 27. Unfortunately, the crew was interrupted by bad weather and they have not returned to finish the job.

### **Archaeology**

The River Raisin Chapter meeting brought 25 people to the museum on the evening of November 8 to observe a power point program on the Ohio mound builders by Dr. Ken Mohny, archaeology instructor at the Monroe County Community College.

The Port Commission is letting contracts for final building demolition and environmental cleanup on the River Raisin Battlefield. They had planned to use the farmer's field behind the visitor center for piling clean fill dirt until their archaeological consultants objected that could disrupt an area where artifacts are still being found.

### **Bicentennial Buildup**

It never ceases to amaze me what fascinating tidbits keep turning up regarding events that happened almost 200 years ago during the War of 1812. Ray Dushane has been researching early pioneers like Laurent Durocher, who just recently has been added to Monroe County's wall of fame. A number of objects and papers belonging to this prominent citizen are included in the

Verhoeven Collection that the museum is trying to raise enough funds to obtain.

The 1812 Roundtable was hosted by the Friends of the River Raisin Battlefield on November 11 with a presentation by Mike Waskul and Dave Washburn on "Unfortunate Events at Chicago" in which they detailed the abandonment of Fort Dearborn and subsequent killing of its garrison as they attempted to evacuate in the summer of 1812.

Our Gala fundraiser and wine tasting attracted 50 people to the Museum on November 20. Bob Vergeils acted as MC for a program that was presented in the upstairs gallery where remarks were made by Congressman Dingell, Randy Richardville, Molly Coy, Ralph Naveaux, Kris Theisen, and Bill Braunlich. Special recognition was given to the participants in our "United We Stand" sewing project. The steering committee's logo was unveiled and the sale of official bicentennial souvenirs began.

Our annual commemoration of the Battle of the River Raisin will take place on Saturday, January 20, starting at 11:30am at the River Raisin Battlefield Visitor Center. Included will be the introduction of the new Kentucky Battle Flag, presentation of a plaque by the Daughters of the War of 1812, the laying of a wreath by the family of Steve Polan, a re-enactor and benefactor of the visitor center. This will be followed at 2pm in the afternoon with a program at the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church on Kentuckians in the War of 1812 by John Trowbridge, Command Historian for the Kentucky National Guard.

On Friday, January 26, the War of 1812 Bicentennial Steering Committee will hold what is intended to be an annual fundraising event to support plans for the coming 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the River Raisin. The event will take place at the Monroe County Community College and will include refreshments and a performance by the Madame Cadillac Dance Theatre, which will take the audience back to the foundations of the community that inhabited French Town on the eve of the War of 1812.

The Algonquin Club will be returning to Monroe for another fabulous muskrat dinner hosted by the Friends of the River Raisin Battlefield on February 20. Turkey and venison are also on the menu. Dinner will be followed by a talk on the local militia on the eve of the War of 1812 presented by Geoff Hoerauf. Call the Museum for reservations, location, & time.

The Monroe County Historical Society will be sponsoring a dinner lecture at the La-Z-Boy Center at Monroe County Community College on March 22. Brian Dunnigan, head of the Map Department at the Clements Historical Library at the University of Michigan will be the

speaker. His program is entitled *Troubled Waters: The Great Lakes Frontier on the Eve of the War of 1812*. Mr. Dunnigan is the author of several historical works and will bring books with him to sign and sell. The **dinner** will be served at 6:30 p.m. in the Atrium with the presentation scheduled for 8 p.m. in the Meyer Theater. The **cost** will be \$35.00 for the dinner and lecture; there will be **no extra charge** for just **the lecture**. Dinner tickets must be purchased from the College in advance.

**Menu: Salad, Filet** (Cracked pepper and Jack Daniels cream sauce) **and Mediterranean crusted salmon** with sundries tomato and pine nuts **Vegetable:** Green Beans with Feta Cheese and Red Pepper **Dessert:** To be determined

Scott Lonsdale, our Battlefield interpreter requested permission from the Port Commission to use the open field behind the Visitor Center for a fife & drum corps muster. The Port Commission denied the request, citing liability concerns for a construction site, so Scott redirected his request to the City of Monroe. The city offered use of "Riviere aux Raisins Park (at the ice arena) or Hellenberg Field if a liability insurance waiver could be obtained. We are hoping to finalize arrangements to bring this wonderfully entertaining historical program to Monroe some time in June.

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**By John Gibney**  
**Director**

### **Standing United**

On December 7, we took our completed "United We Stand" grant project to the Lansing Center for the Driving Michigan's Economic Engine Conference. We showed off our completed "United We Stand" flag, our finished Kentucky Cavalry frock coats and hats, and our Bicentennial merchandise shirts, hats, and patches. Monroe students Laura and Julia Davis joined us for the day and demonstrated how their sewing and painting skills contributed to the project. We talked to many state officials and local historical societies who wanted to know what Monroe is all about and what we have to offer. Most of them echoed the same theme stating, "We didn't know there was so much history in one place!"

### **Teach Your Children Well**

We are working with our friends Rick Angelosi and Chuck Estep from the MISD to establish Virtual Field Trips for Monroe County students. The MISD has established computer drops at the Main Museum, which gives us the ability to film various parts of our collections for classroom use. We will be filming at the January Commemoration of the Battle of the River Raisin, as well

as interviewing reenactors about the War of 1812. In March we will have an open forum for area teachers where we will demonstrate and discuss the Virtual Field Trip project.

### **Lee's Old War Horse**

January is the most important month of the year for students of Confederate history. The first month of the year contains the birthdays of the three most important men in the Confederate Army: Robert E. Lee, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, and James Longstreet. While the first two men are household names, James Longstreet remains an enigma. His story will be the topic of a program I will deliver at the Ellis Branch Library on Thursday, January 11. Stop by and learn this fascinating story and hear about the efforts to reestablish a Civil War Roundtable in Monroe County.

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### **From The Archives...**

by Chris Kull, Archivist

I have a great idea for folks to undertake in 2007... GENEALOGY!!! What better way to spend your spare time than looking up information on your family? If you have Monroe County ancestors the best place to visit is the museum archives. I would be happy to help you get started.

Speaking of getting started, the best place to start is at home on your computer. You can check out the archives obituary index at [www.co.monroe.mi.us](http://www.co.monroe.mi.us) This is Monroe County's web site and an index to the obituary file is on line. Log on and see what obituaries we have that you may be interested in. Make a list and you can come into the archives and research the families or you can send me the list along with payment. The charge is \$1 each for the first five obits (\$5) and 50 cents each thereafter. Of course, if you come in you can also check out the census records, marriage, death and birth books, and the other sources we offer. Also, photocopies are 25 cents per page for in house research. So, you could fit as many obits as possible on a page and pay just 25 cents per page! It's a bargain!

The archives is open Wednesday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Closed for lunch 1 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Saturday hours may vary in the future, so it's best to call ahead. The archives phone # is 240-7787.

Other resources available include books concerning Monroe's military, religious, and "just" history. I also have published and non-published genealogies people have put together.

Genealogy is a wonderful way to learn about your family, the history of your community, and a great past time to share with others. I hope to see new faces in the archives looking up the past!

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### **Battlefield Plans New Event for 2007**

by Scott Lonsdale

The River Raisin Battlefield Visitors Center is planning a new event for 2007, The River Raisin International Fife and Drum Muster. Currently in the early planning stages, the Visitors Center is hoping they can attract about twenty to twenty five fife and drum corps from throughout the Midwest and Canada. The fife and drum corps will range in the time period represented from the French and Indian War through the Civil War, including corps representing units from the War of 1812. The site for the muster, although we are awaiting confirmation from the city, will be the large portion of the Battlefield on the corner of Dixie Highway and Elm Avenue attached to the Monroe Multi-sports Complex.

Fifes and Drums are instruments of war. In camp they regulated the life of a soldier telling them when to wake up, go to sleep, go to church, eat, as well as many other activities. They would also provide music on the march as well as give signals and commands on the battlefield. Today's fife and drum corps portray these musicians, many only playing music that can be documented to their respective wars. A muster is a gathering of these fife and drum corps.

Our Muster will give each corps fifteen minutes of concert time; the musical units will play their concerts back to back in a continuous fashion. At the end of the event all the fife and corps will mass into one large fife and drum corps and play music that is common among the corps. In addition to the muster we will have a parade of the fife and drum corps down Monroe Street. The muster is set for June 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00p.m. with the parade taking place at 10:00am. We are looking for funding sources, if you know an organization that would like to be involved please let us know. We are also looking for volunteers to help set-up and takedown as well as serving food for the corps, if interested please contact Scott Lonsdale at the museum 734-240-7780 or email [stlonsdale@hotmail.com](mailto:stlonsdale@hotmail.com)

## EYE ON EDUCATION

by Lynn W. Reaume



The Christmas trees and wreaths are all put away now, and the business of a new year has started. The Museum was wonderfully decorated with 49 trees and wreaths, from 2' tall to a towering 9 footer. Decorations ranged from children's classroom-made to store-bought. There were holiday pink flamingos, angels, cookie cutters, flags, scouting paraphernalia, snowflakes, fabric decorations, lotus pods, school buses and much more highlighting the trees. The Monroe Evening News featured the Festival in the Sunday Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> edition with a photograph of the decorated gourds on the Monroe Art League's tree.

Participants were: the Sawyer Homestead; Trinity Episcopal church; the Farm Trotters, 4-Unlimited, Carleton Country Critters, Whiteford Workers, Lazy Angels, Maybe Muskrats, Raisinville Wranglers, Carleton Go-Getters, and Frenchtown tailors 4-H Clubs; St. Charles (Newport) 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, Holy Ghost Lutheran Elementary school; Monroe Cooperative Preschool groups; Tiger Cubs, Den 538; the Homemakers of Monroe County Extension; Monroe Council of Churches; Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints; the Monroe County Library System; Monroe Girl Scouts and Airport Cluster of Girl Scouts; Neighborhood Garden (Carleton), Lotus Garden clubs and the Bedford Herb group; Genealogical Society of Monroe County; MARPS; the Southeast Baptist church; Custer school kindergarten and Hurd Road Elementary classes (6 in all!); the Daughters of the American Revolution; TLC/CHEA; the Exeter, Monroe County and the Bedford Historical Societies; Pack 547, Boy Scouts; the American Red Cross; the Frenchtown Friendship Club; Ida Brownie Troop #665; the Monroe Quilt Guild; Lutheran High School South; Pack 579, Bear Den 1; Orchard Center; Friends of the River Raisin Battlefield, and the Monroe Art League. Thanks to all participants, returning and brand-new!

This year a special exhibit was set up in the Victorian Newton room- complete with a candy counter with Victorian candies and a children's Christmas morning breakfast table from a 1903 woman's magazine. Missed it? Write the Festival on your calendar for next year!



Hundreds of visitors come every year to view the decorations; also hundreds of school children, scouts and 4-H club members who come as a group to find their tree.

Happy New Year!

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Plans are underway for the Museum to work with Monroe County ISD on Educational video projects. Meetings have been proving exciting and this will be a new venture for us. More information in upcoming newsletters.

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FYI: River Raisin Bicentennial Logo Merchandise is for sale at the Community Foundation of Monroe County and this Museum. See the merchandise at the Museum Front Desk. More items are soon to follow. Help support activities of the War of 1812 Bicentennial Steering Committee, of which museum staff are a part. This group hopes to coordinate and sponsor upcoming 1812 activities.



Items currently for sale:

Embroidered logo patch: \$5

Embroidered adjustable ball cap: \$10

Screen printed large-logo t-shirt: \$15

"War of 1812: Battles of the River Raisin" video (DVD or VHS) \$20

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On December 7<sup>th</sup>, staff and other Monroeites went to Lansing Center for the Creative Michigan Conference, which focused this year on Michigan's use of culture and tourism to promote economic growth. We hosted a booth in the exhibition center, highlighting our use of the Michigan Rural Arts and Cultural Affairs grant in "United We Stand". Some staff went to the talks, others manned the exhibit table, or visited the other exhibitors' offerings. We brought our painted Kentucky battle flag, uniforms, brochures and information on our use of the grant, along with 1812 Bicentennial materials. Thanks to all who helped promote our Museum and projects!



Two sisters, Laura and Julia Davis of Monroe, both participated at the Museum during the "United We Stand" grant projects. Here at the conference Julia (upper) demonstrated her sewing skills, while Laura (lower) painted a smaller version of the Kentucky Battle Flag she helped Dave Stahl paint.

Their talents helped make our projects a large success!

\* \* \* \*

And from all of us here at the Museum, a Big GOOD BYE to our former Director, Ralph Naveaux. GOOD LUCK on your retirement, and don't forget us here.



Ralph and a few friends contemplating his birthday last September.



Ralph speaking to the crowd at a Battlefield Commemoration

## VOLUNTEERS

If you would like to volunteer at the Monroe County Historical Museum, please call:

John Gibney  
Lynn Reaume

Monroe County  
Historical Museum  
126 S. Monroe St  
Monroe, MI 48161  
(734) 240-7780 Phone

We need greeters, tour guides, interpreters, craftspeople, demonstrators, gardeners, and more.

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## ARTICLES

The Monroe County Historical Museum Staff would like to invite anyone who is interested in the history of the Monroe area to submit an article for possible publication in the RIVER RAISIN NEWS & DISPATCH.

Send articles to:

John Gibney  
Monroe County Historical Museum  
126 S. Monroe St  
Monroe, MI 48161  
(734) 240-7780 Phone  
[john\\_gibney@monroemi.org](mailto:john_gibney@monroemi.org)

Articles to be included in the March/April 2007 RIVER RAISIN NEWS & DISPATCH should be submitted to John Gibney for his review by February 1, 2007.

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## COMING EVENTS

194th Anniversary of the Battles on the River Raisin. Please call 734-240-7781 if you have any questions.

THE RIVER RAISIN BATTLEFIELD VISITOR CENTER  
STARTING AT 11:30AM, SATURDAY, JANUARY 20,  
2007

PLEASE COME  
CEREMONY & LECTURE ARE FREE & OPEN TO THE  
PUBLIC  
PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND IN PERIOD  
ATTIRE

### **DETAILS**

LOCATIONS: Ceremonies will be held at the  
River Raisin Battlefield Visitor

Center, 1403 East Elm Avenue,  
Monroe, Michigan 48162, ¼ mile  
west of I-75 exit 14.

Lecture will be held at the 1<sup>st</sup>  
Presbyterian Church, 108  
Washington Street, downtown  
Monroe.

### **SCHEDULE:**

Visitor center opens at 10:00 a.m.,  
re-enactors arrive by 11:00 a.m.  
Commemoration ceremonies start  
at 11:30 a.m.  
Lunch for re-enactors only starts at  
12:30 p.m. at the First Presbyterian  
Church hall. Free parking off 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Street behind church or at Monroe  
Museum.  
Public Speaker presentation starts  
at 2:00 p.m. at the church hall.

### **2 p.m. PROGRAM:**

John Trowbridge, Command  
Historian for the Kentucky  
National Guard, will be the  
speaker. Mr. Trowbridge is a  
retired U. S. Army officer,  
published author, and former head  
of the Kentucky Military History  
Museum. His topic will be on  
“Kentuckians in the Old Northwest  
Territory During the War of 1812,  
from Tippecanoe to the Battle of  
the Thames.”

### **INFORMATION:**

1812 Era Re-enactors for ceremony  
welcome; for questions, call the  
main Museum at 734-240-7780 or  
e-mail:  
[lynn\\_reaume@monroemi.org](mailto:lynn_reaume@monroemi.org)