

Tippecanoe and Bartholomew too!

"Undoubtedly there have been greater battles than this one of Tippecanoe—greater in the numbers engaged and in the number killed and wounded—yet few have been more decisive, and still fewer attended with greater results."

General Lew Wallace, Indiana native and author of *Ben-Hur*, delivered these words on June 20, 1899 at the site of the Battle of Tippecanoe. Hopefully many of you have heard of this important battle, as it played a crucial role in the history of the United States, Indiana, and Bartholomew County.

In 1808, the Shawnee Chief Tecumseh and his brother, The Prophet, settled in present day Tippecanoe County. They found a settlement called Prophetstown in hopes of creating a capital for a vast confederacy of Indian tribes. Tecumseh hoped that by uniting all the tribes, the Indians would better be able to defend and stand firm against the US government and white settlers. Throughout the next 3 years, Prophetstown did start to grow and became a religious and warfare training center. As the settlement and Tecumseh's power grew, the white settlers and the US army started to get concerned about the threat.

In the summer of 1811, William Henry Harrison, the governor of the Indiana Territory, recruited a force of about 1,000 men to march on Prophetstown as a show of force against this growing threat. They specifically chose this timing as Tecumseh was away on an extended trip, leaving The Prophet in charge. The army met with The Prophet on Nov. 6 and it was agreed to have a formal meeting on Nov. 7. However, early the next morning The Prophet, acting on a vision, ordered his warriors to attack. After a two hour battle, 37 soldiers and an untold number of Shawnee were killed. The Prophet and his warriors retreated, leaving Prophetstown behind, which Governor Harrison ordered burned to the ground.

When Tecumseh returned 3 months later, he found the devastation. The Shawnee revolted against his brother and Tecumseh also renounced him. Tecumseh took his remaining followers and entered into an alliance with the British. In June, the United States officially declared war with Great Britain. Tecumseh and his forces played a large role in the War of 1812, but the Battle of Tippecanoe truly was the beginning of the end for Tecumseh and his hopes for an Indian confederacy.

This battle also opened up the Indiana territory for wider settlement. As you will note, it would take less than 5 years from this battle for Indiana to have enough inhabitants to become a state.

The importance of this battle and its participants can be seen even today. As we look at the commanders for this battle, some recognizable names should stand out: Floyd, Scott, Spencer, Wells, Daveiss, Parke, etc.... Many of the counties in Indiana received their names as recognition of their service in the Battle of Tippecanoe. This includes our very own county. The then Lt. Col. Joseph Bartholomew was in charge of the militia infantry. Also, present that day should be another familiar name- Ensign John Tipton. He became commander of the Yellow Jackets from Corydon when Captain Spier Spencer was killed during the battle. This connection between Bartholomew and Tipton would be just one of many over the years.

On Thursday May 25th at 6:00pm in the Red Room, you will have the opportunity to hear Brent Abercrombie from the State Library discuss the importance of several battle sites in Indiana

including the Battle of Tippecanoe. I hope that you can take advantage of this and all of our programs, as we strive to be your source for life-long learning.

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