

University of Oklahoma College of Law

University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

3-9-1898

Graves of American soldiers in the Maumee Valley.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indigenous, Indian, and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

H.R. Rep. No. 672, 55th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1898)

This House Report is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu.

GRAVES OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN THE MAUMEE VALLEY.

MARCH 9, 1898.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. MARSH, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 503.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 503) entitled "A bill to purchase, etc., the graves of American soldiers, etc., in the Maumee Valley," beg leave to submit the following report, and recommend that said bill do pass:

This is a bill to authorize the Secretary of War to purchase and accept gifts of ground containing graves at Fort Meigs, the battlefield of Fallen Timber, and the island of Put in Bay, to inclose the same and permit the erection of proper marks or monuments, with power of condemnation, if necessary, provided the total expense shall not be over \$15,000.

The battle of Fallen Timber was fought August 20, 1794, by Gen. Anthony Wayne against the Indians, and was a victory which gave to the United States the Northwest Territory, though at the cost of the lives of many hundreds of gallant men, who were buried on the field. Fort Meigs contains the graves of from 1,200 to 1,500 men who fell in the various sieges, sorties, and battles in and about this historic fort. It was the critical point, the defense of which saved the Northwest during the war of 1812, after the fall of Detroit.

Those who fell in the glorious victories obtained by Commodore Perry in the battle of Lake Erie were buried on the island of Put in Bay, about 30 miles from the mouth of the Maumee.

These three sites are now private property. Fort Meigs once belonged to the United States, but was sold in 1817. The graves there have been preserved till now by the patriotic sacrifice of a portion of his farm by the owner.

The Maumee Valley Monumental Association, of the State of Ohio, has raised contributions for the preservation and marking of these sites. The United States will be at no cost for monuments, though the Secretary of War will have control of their character. Any cost in acquiring the ground above the small sum named will not fall on the United States.

Your committee annex as an appendix a fuller statement as to the sites in question.

APPENDIX.

The bill provides for the acquisition and inclosure by the United States, at a cost of not over \$15,000, of certain sites, or portions thereof, of forts, battlefields, and graves of American soldiers, sailors, and marines in the Maumee Valley, and for the erection of proper monuments and commemorative tablets thereon. The bill is based upon the report submitted to Congress December 12, 1888, and which embodied the surveys of this historic ground, made by the late Col. O. M. Poe, of the Engineer Department of the United States Army. (See Fiftieth Congress, second session, H. R. Ex. Doc. No. 28.)

The principal sites for which it provides are those of the battlefields of Fallen Timber, Fort Meigs, and the burial ground at Put in Bay. Fallen Timber and Miami are on the west bank of the Maumee River, less than 3 miles apart, while nearly halfway between the two, on the east side of the river, is located Fort Meigs.

The battle of Fallen Timber was fought the 20th of August, 1794. The day before a council of war was held, and a plan of march and battle was submitted by Lieut. William Henry Harrison. This officer was then but 21 years of age, and the military judgment of the subaltern manifested itself as general in chief nineteen years afterwards in the same Maumee Valley at Fort Meigs. Lieutenant Harrison's plan was adopted.

Two thousand Indians and Canadian volunteers the following day, August 20, 1794, attacked the advance of the army of Gen. Anthony Wayne, the then commander in chief of the United States Army, from behind trees prostrated by a tornado. The troops pressed forward with great energy, and drove the enemy toward the guns of Fort Miami and the waters of the Maumee Bay.

The victory was complete, though accompanied by severe loss to the American troops, those who fell being buried on the site of the battlefield, whose bones now, after one hundred years, it is sought to save and protect by making of the site a national cemetery.

Fort Miami was built in the spring of 1794 by Governor Simcoe. One of the grievances against the British Government was the retention of the post held by the British garrison within our territory in violation of the treaty of peace of 1783. When the battle of Fallen Timber took place the negotiations which ended in Jay's treaty were in progress, but when the news of the victory over the Indians reached the British ministry an agreement was soon reached by which their posts were to be evacuated, the principal of which were at Detroit, Oswego, Niagara, Macinoc, and Fort Miami.

The day following the battle Major Campbell, of the British army, addressed this note to General Wayne:

An army of the United States of America, said to be under your command, having taken post on the banks of the Miami (Maumee) for upward of the last twenty-four hours, almost within reach of the guns of this fort, being a post belonging to His Majesty the King of Great Britain, occupied by His Majesty's troops, it becomes my duty to inform myself as speedily as possible in what light I am to view your making such near approaches to this garrison. I have no hesitation on my part to say that I know of no war existing between Great Britain and America.

General Wayne at once replied to this demand:

Without questioning the authority or propriety, sir, of your interrogation, I think I may, without any breach of decorum, observe to you, that, were you entitled to an

answer, the most full and satisfactory one was announced to you from the muzzles of my small arms yesterday morning in the action against the horde of savages in the vicinity of your post, which terminated gloriously to the American arms; but had it continued until the Indians, etc., were driven under the influence of the post and guns you mention, they would not have much impeded the progress of the victorious army under my command, as no such post was established at the commencement of the present war between the Indians and the United States.

Major Campbell prefaced this reply the next day with the statement that he had forborne for the past two days to resent the insults which had been offered to the British flag flying at the fort.

But [continued Major Campbell] should you after this continue to approach my post in the threatening manner that you are at this moment doing, my indispensable duty to my King and country and the honor of my profession will oblige me to have recourse to those measures which thousands of either nation may hereafter have cause to regret, and which, I solemnly appeal to God, I have used my utmost endeavor to arrest.

When this communication was received, General Wayne, in company with General Wilkinson, Lieut. William Henry Harrison, and other officers, reconnoitered Fort Miami in every direction. It was found to be a strong work, the front covered by the Miami of the Lake (Maumee) and protected by four guns. The rear had two regular bastions furnished with eight pieces of artillery, the whole surrounded by a wide, deep ditch, about 25 feet deep from the top of the parapet. It is said to have been garrisoned by 450 soldiers.

General Wayne then sent a note to Major Campbell, stating that the only cause he had to entertain the opinion that there was a war existing between Great Britain and America was the hostile act of taking post far within the well-known and acknowledged limits of the United States and erecting a fortification in the heart of the settlements of Indian tribes now at war with the United States. "I do hereby desire and demand, in the name of the President of the United States, that you immediately desist from any further acts of hostility or aggression by forbearing to fortify and by withdrawing the troops, artillery, and stores under your order and direction forthwith, and removing to the nearest spot occupied by His Britannic Majesty's troops at the peace of 1783, and which you will be permitted to do unmolested by the troops under my command."

Major Campbell replied in effect that he was placed there in command of a British post, and acting in a military capacity only; that the right or propriety of his present station should be left to the ambassadors of the different nations. He was much deceived if His Majesty the King of Great Britain had not a post on this river at and prior to the treaty of 1783. "Having said this much," continued Major Campbell, "permit me to inform you that I certainly will not abandon this post at the summons of any power whatever until I receive orders for that purpose from those I have the honor to serve or the fortune of war should oblige me. I must still adhere, sir, to the purport of my letter this morning, to desire that your army, or individuals belonging to it, will not approach within reach of my cannon without expecting the consequences attending it."

Recognizing the strength of the position, General Wayne withdrew his army and retired to Fort Washington, Cincinnati, leaving the British in possession.

And it was not until the decisive victory won by General Harrison in February, 1813, over General Proctor and the Indian chief Tecumseh that this British fort was finally yielded up and the redcoat withdrawn from American soil.

It was the purpose undoubtedly of the English to prevent the settle-

ment of the Northwest by the American colonies, with a view to ultimately possessing it.

Fort Meigs, one of the most historic points in the war of 1812, and which successfully withstood two sieges, embraces a territory of some 55 acres, in which are preserved to-day the earthworks thrown up in the fall of 1812 by General Harrison and his gallant men, almost intact.

Within the inclosure lie buried between 1,200 and 1,500 of the troops that fell in the sieges and sorties and final battle in and around this historic fort.

The 650 of Colonel Dudley's command, made up of Kentucky troops, who were massacred by the Indians upon the opposite side of the river, after having spiked the English guns, are buried here.

Here are also buried over 250 of the Pittsburg Blues, the balance being troops from Virginia, Ohio, and New York, that made up the rank and file of General Harrison's army.

It is impossible to estimate the real importance of the success of General Harrison at Fort Meigs in this war. Detroit had surrendered, and the conquering English were pressing forward toward the interior. They were stopped on the banks of the Maumee by General Harrison at Fort Meigs. Two determined sieges were withstood, and the English were finally routed. But for this, the disastrous war must certainly have been prolonged, and who can say but in the final treaty the great Northwest, which had so long been coveted by the English, would not have been granted to them.

The result of these battles was far-reaching, for it ended in the complete subjugation of the Indian tribes of the Northwest, and enforced for the first time the provisions of the treaty of peace of 1783, by which British power was forever destroyed in the territory northwest of the Ohio River.

It opened the almost unknown territory from the Alleghenies on the east to the Mississippi on the west. It gave birth to a new era in American civilization, and five great Commonwealths bear witness to the historical importance of those battlefields.

To the decisive victories of General Wayne at Fallen Timber and General Harrison at Fort Meigs and Miami, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, as well as Ohio, owe their statehood.

The main purpose of this bill is not so much to perpetuate a sentiment as it is to protect at a critical moment the bodies of American soldiers, which so far have been preserved only, as it would seem, by a just Providence. Some of them lie together in such cemeteries as the exigencies of war would permit, and some have been lost altogether.

The other place mentioned in the bill is a spot of ground at Put-in Bay where the soldiers and sailors who fought under Commodore Perry and were killed in the battle of Lake Erie are buried.

No more important and glorious victory can be found in American history than that of Commodore Perry. As an evidence of this stands the magnificent painting hung in the stairway of the Capitol on the Senate side.

The Government which, proud of this achievement, unhesitatingly spent \$25,000 for this adornment will surely not now hesitate to appropriate a sum sufficient to protect the ashes of its devoted sons who paid the price of their lives for this victory.

A more detailed statement of the dead who are buried in the valley of the Maumee is furnished by Col. D. W. H. Howard, president of the Maumee Valley Monumental Association, in a recent letter to Congressman Southard, as follows:

Wayne's dead lie buried on the most elevated portion of the battlefield of Fallen Timber, over a portion of which passes the public highway, where hourly the traffic of the farmer and of a great city passes without a thought of the sacred dust so ignominiously disturbed.

The slaughtered dead of General Harmer's little army lie buried in the low bank of the river at the ford of the Maumee, where they were cut down by the tomahawk in such numbers that the river was dammed by their bodies, and some of the Indians crossed over upon them without wetting their moccasins. I visited this spot a few years ago with the late Gen. O. M. Poe, of the United States Army, and found the cornfield of a Frenchman covering nearly all the ground where these slaughtered soldiers of more than a century ago lie buried. A few of the graves just outside the corn rows were still plainly to be seen.

The dead of Fort Meigs lie at four different places, some within and others without the earthworks. There are nearly 1,000 buried in and just outside the walls of the fort. One grave only—that of Lieutenant Walker—is marked. This is by a rough bit of river stone about 8 inches square above the ground, placed there by the hand of some sorrowing comrade. A few others lie scattered around his grave, but none are marked. I found them by close and careful investigation. Two hundred and fifty of the Pittsburg Blues lie across the ravine under the remains of an old wheat stack. Colonel Dudley's gallant 650 lie east of a high knoll on the bluff bank of the river, and the ground is so filled and leveled by time that no one would dream that 600 or 700 are buried under his feet. I said Lieutenant Walker's grave was the only one marked, but that was an error.

I had forgotten the brave and intrepid savage, Chief Turkey Foot, who commanded the confederated tribes at the battle of Fallen Timber, on that memorable day, August 20, 1794. This chief lies buried near a large rock weighing 3 or 4 tons, upon which his name is cut, with a tomahawk, and thousands of people visit the spot yearly. I am glad that it is there, for it marks the important battle ground of Anthony Wayne. But we should all feel a far greater pleasure could we see appropriate marks placed by our Government where the gallant white man sleeps. I trust that this will be done while there are those left who can point these places out.

All these burying places are on private property. Some of the bones have already been unearthed. At Fort Meigs not one of them has so far been disturbed, but the man who so nobly sacrifices a large portion of the best of his farm, out of respect for the achievements of his sleeping tenants, is rapidly approaching the end of his own life, after which the property will pass into the hands of several heirs. It is certainly not just to expect these thrifty farmers to pay the debt of the nation's gratitude. This property once belonged to the United States, and was sold in 1817 to a private individual, the Government probably being unaware that in this transaction it was bargaining away the bodies of its preservers.

The appropriation asked for in the bill is based upon the estimates furnished Congress by Colonel Poe in his report as follows:

Summary of estimates.

Fort Meigs	\$30,500
Battlefield of Fallen Timber	5,000
Put in Bay	2,500

It will be seen that a large part of the cost is to be furnished by patriotic subscription, and so far the ground will be given to the country.