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PLANS ANNOUNCED FOR THE BATTLE OF TIPPECANOE 200TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

“The bark was flying from the trees...the Indians had the best powder and bullets as well as the bow and arrow...They fought on until the daylight came, and at the southern end of the battlefield the Indian took his last stand.” (General William Henry Harrison)

“Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it is his will, we wish to leave our bones upon them.”(Tecumseh)

November 7th, 1811, before the dawn- a cold, miserable drizzle falls as restless soldiers, underneath towering oak trees, wait and nervously listen for any sound or movement from the enemy. They have been sent to defend the white settlers in the Indiana Territory from the perceived threat posed by Prophet’s Town, which lies a short distance away from the soldiers’ encampment. Prophet’s Town, composed of members of many different Native tribes organized into a confederacy by Shawnee brothers Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa, or “The Prophet,” was begun as an effort to unite tribes into an organized defense against the growing number of white settlers. Convinced that an attack is imminent, the soldiers are sleeping fully clothed- ready for battle.

The night before, on a rock ledge, the Prophet had beseeched his Native followers to defend their homeland, culture, and ancestral way of life against the enemy of the Native confederation- the white settler. Tecumseh had warned his brother not to attack the white men in Tecumseh’s absence and to wait until the confederation was strong and completely unified. However, the Prophet decides to strike first, and gives an order to attack just before daybreak on the following day- November 7th, 1811.

The yells of hundreds of warriors spill over the white encampment; resounding gunshots are fired... and so begins the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Two hundred years later, on November 5th-7th, 2011, the men, the history, and the cultures on both sides of the conflict will be remembered at the Battle of Tippecanoe 200th Anniversary Commemoration. In a historic collaboration of museums, historic sites, parks, and not-for-profit organizations, four different entities that operate two different sites will partner together to share resources and provide the best educational experience possible, to honor those who died at the battle so many years ago.

The Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Department owns the Tippecanoe Battlefield and the surrounding park. The Tippecanoe County Historical Association operates the Tippecanoe Battlefield Museum and does on-site educational programming. Prophetstown State Park contains the original site of Prophet’s Town within its borders. Historic Prophetstown, an educational not-for-profit organization that leases land within Prophetstown

State Park, offers programming at several reconstructed buildings depicting the Native village and operates a 1920's era working farm and homestead.

These sites have been planning for well over a year, in recognition of the national prominence of the Battle of Tippecanoe and Prophet's Town in the history of the fledgling United States and for the Native cultures in the area. Allen Nail, Director of the Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Department states that "the Park Board and its staff are honored to provide stewardship for this local treasure. We anticipate a respectful commemoration of the Battle of Tippecanoe that engages and educates the public while honoring the memory of the brave men from both sides of the conflict that fought in the battle." Dris Abraham, Chief Operating Officer of Historic Prophetstown, comments that "I am thrilled that all these groups have come together to provide this venue for history." Kathy Atwell, Executive Director of the Tippecanoe County Historical Association (TCHA), notes that "the TCHA Board of Governors has taken up the challenge to present a balanced educational experience for visitors and participants."

Recreated period military units that documentably fought in the battle will be permitted to camp on the actual battlefield site, in the same locations that their predecessors camped two hundred years ago. Special precautions will be utilized to protect the battlefield, an archaeological site and burial ground, from any impact or harm caused by campfires, etc. Native reenactors will be camping at Historic Prophetstown, in the same general area that Tecumseh's and the Prophet's followers did. Other period reenactors, including civilians, military, and craftspeople, will be allowed to camp on the Tippecanoe Battlefield park grounds and at Historic Prophetstown.

Many preparations are underway at the sites in anticipation of the 200th anniversary. A special showing of some of the Tippecanoe County Historical Association's original watercolors and paintings by artist George Winter will be exhibited at the Tippecanoe Battlefield Museum beginning in September 2011 and continuing through the end of the year. Winter painted during the early to mid-19th century, and is particularly well known for his portraits of the Miami and Potawatomi peoples of Indiana. He visited the area of the Tippecanoe Battlefield several years after the conflict, and recorded his observations on canvas and paper, as well as in his manuscripts. Further preparations include a refurbishment and upgrading of the Tippecanoe Battlefield museum store.

Prophetstown State Park and Historic Prophetstown are also anticipating large crowds during the bicentennial event. The state park offers excellent modern camping facilities that overlook a beautiful restored Indiana prairie, with many lovely areas to walk, bike, bird watch, and enjoy the scenery. Historic Prophetstown will be operating in full gear that weekend, with a recreated 1812-era encampment, trollies pulled by Belgian horses wandering through the prairie, and their 1920's farmstead complete with livestock open for everyone's enjoyment. Historic Prophetstown also has an on-site store, where they sell produce, eggs, and meat fresh from their farm.

All those involved in the planning and coordination of this solemn event take very seriously the responsibility to honor the brave men on both sides of the battle who gave their lives for their respective causes.

November 30th, 1811

"Many Widows, & Orphans, are made so, by this dreadful fight, when will Brother cease to lift his hand against his Brother, and learn War no more?"

(Quote from Lydia Bacon's journal, describing her feelings when her husband returned from the Battle of Tippecanoe)

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