

# RIVER RAISIN NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK



## Blaze the River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA

Please join the National Park Service in saluting all of our partners who made the River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA program possible!



Join Major Muskrat on his journey to collect 20 VISA images along the River Raisin Heritage Trail!





## River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 11: A Storied Homestead



Born in Maryland in 1752, James Winchester served as a Captain in the United States Army where he fought valiantly for independence from Great Britain during the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). After the War, Captain Winchester moved to the Southwest Territory where he served in the Territorial Legislature and in 1796 became one of Tennessee's first state senators. When the United States declared war on Great Britain in 1812, he was commissioned a brigadier general in the U.S. Army and was ordered to Kentucky to build an army to relieve Detroit. Arriving near the Maumee rapids in early January 1813, Winchester was met by two separate groups of Frenchmen who pleaded for him to liberate Frenchtown from the Indians and British occupation. Winchester, after counsel from some of his field officers, ordered 570 men to the River Raisin.

Winchester sent a detachment that liberated the Frenchtown settlement on January 18, 1813.

A few days later, British & Indian forces overwhelmed Winchester in what has gone down in infamy as one of the United States bloodiest and worst defeats of the entire war. Winchester himself was taken captive and only 33 of his soldiers escaped death or capture to report back to General Harrison.

**Read the "A Storied Homestead" historic marker and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. Francois Navarre is credited with being the founder of Monroe, Michigan. Who allowed him to have his 500 acre homestead along the River Raisin?
2. Why was the Navarre homestead important to General Winchester?

*Using a pencil or crayon, place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image for both the "A Storied Homestead" and the "Monroe County" marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



## River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 12: Historic Monroe

James Monroe found himself entrenched in the establishment and development of a new nation. A signer of the Declaration of Independence and active participant in the American Revolutionary War, James Monroe adamantly opposed European rule over the new settlements in the Americas. While he opposed the ratification of the United States Constitution, because he believed it created too much government power, he embraced his role as one of the new nation's first United States senators.

Monroe served as the Secretary of War during the latter parts of the War of 1812 and then was elected President in 1816 with more than 80 percent of the electoral vote. As President, Monroe embarked on a popular tour of the country to ease partisan tensions. The Governor of the Michigan Territory prepared for President Monroe's visit by establishing Monroe County in his honor. Some believe President Monroe may have extended his visit to the Michigan Territory to visit the historic town on the River Raisin and the county that had been named in his honor.

Monroe is most known for declaring as President in 1823 that the United States would not tolerate further European colonization or interference in the Americas.

**Read the "Monroe County Since 1817" historic marker and find the answer to the following questions:**

1. What war occurred because of the controversy over Monroe County's southern border?
2. What area did Michigan gain as a result of the war over Monroe County's southern border?
3. What did Michigan lose as a result of the war over Monroe County's southern border?

**Image for VISA Stop 12 can be found on Page 11**

*Using a pencil or crayon, place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Historic Monroe" marker and gently obtain an impression above the graphic like it.*



## River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 9: Battles of the River Raisin

In one of the worst defeats Americans experienced during the War of 1812, as many as 357 American soldiers were killed in combat or the violent aftermath. The battles commenced near the mouth of the River Raisin and Lake Erie in Frenchtown, present-day Monroe, Michigan. Only 33 of the nearly 1,000 American soldiers who fought in the battles escaped death or capture. The killing of wounded soldiers by Indians on January 23, 1813, shocked people throughout the region and nation. The battles became a furious rallying cry for the rest of the war — "Remember the Raisin."

Frenchtown was a desolate settlement for eight months following the battles. American dead were left unburied due to Indian threats and more homes were burned and plundered. The River Raisin was liberated on September 27, 1813, when Colonel Richard M. Johnson's Kentucky cavalry, guided by men from the Raisin, rode into the settlement. The Americans continued their march north, liberating Detroit and destroying the British-Canadian-Indian coalition in the west at the battle of the Thames, or as Canadians call it, the battle of Moraviantown (near present-day Chatham, Ontario), on October 5, 1813. The settlement at the River Raisin remained impoverished for years after the end of the fighting.

Until recently, the River Raisin battlefield site was occupied by a large abandoned paper mill. Realizing the significance of the American sacrifice on the hallowed grounds of the battlefield, in the 1980s the Monroe County Historical Society, City of Monroe, Port of Monroe, Monroe County, State of Michigan, Monroe County Historical Commission and many others began waging a new battle to preserve it. The United States Congress authorized the creation of the River Raisin National Battlefield Park in March, 2009. In October, 2010, the first 43 acres of Battlefield land was donated to the National Park Service creating the nation's 393rd National Park. The Battlefield was opened for the benefit of current and future generations on May 21, 2011. You can help restore America's only National Battlefield Park dedicated to the War of 1812 and help ensure future generations "Remember the Raisin" by contributing to the Restoration Fund, volunteering and by telling others about its significance.

**Read the memorial stone and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. How many Americans were serving under Col. Lewis and Col. Wells?
2. How many forces were under General Proctor's command and what side were they fighting for?
3. Why do you think it is important to honor the sacrifice others have made to defend our nation?

**Image for VISA Stop 9 can be found on Page 10**

*Using a pencil or crayon, place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "War of 1812 Memorial" marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



## River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 10: Soldiers & Sailors Park

Established in 1909, Soldiers and Sailors Park is the oldest park in Monroe County. The park is dedicated in honor of community veterans who have served during times of war.

Many years ago, President Abraham Lincoln called for volunteers to fight in the Civil War (1861-1865). The Civil War was a fierce fight that divided the United States, and many families, over deep-seated differences on how the country should be run, most notably over slavery (the ability to own another human as property). Continuing a proud tradition of service, Monroe County men were among the first to heed the call to join the Union Army. More than 2,200 men enlisted including many still in their teens. In the end, more than 10% of Monroe County's eligible men served and around 20% of those paid the ultimate price. Monroe County soldiers served in every branch of the military and fought in almost all of the major Civil War battles.

Joining those brave and patriotic men from Monroe was George Armstrong Custer who became one of America's most famous Civil War soldiers.

**Answer the following questions:**

1. Would you have chosen to join President Lincoln's Union Army?
2. What do you think would have been the hardest thing about the Civil War?

*Using a pencil or crayon, place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image for both the "War of 1812 Memorial" and the "Soldiers and Sailors Park" marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



# RIVER RAISIN HERITAGE TRAIL SYSTEM



**SURFACE KEY & LEGEND**

- SIDEWALK (ONE SIDE)
- SIDEWALK (BOTH SIDES)
- ASPHALT PATH
- RAILROAD
- RESTROOMS**
- OPEN APR.-NOV.
- OPEN ALL YEAR



**MAJOR MUSKRAT**

Visit all 20 of the stops along the River Raisin Heritage Trail and follow the instructions in the VISA book to earn your patches!



1. FAMOUS WATERFRONT (Win. C. Sterling State Park)
2. AMERICAN LOTUS (Win. C. Sterling State Park)
3. CATCH A FISH (Win. C. Sterling State Park)
4. KNOW YOUR WATERFOWL (Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge)
5. LAKES RESTORATION (Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge)
6. NEWTON STRIKE (Monroe County Labor History Museum)
7. BATTLEFIELD (River Raisin National Battlefield Park)
8. ROUNDHEAD (River Raisin National Battlefield Park)
9. WAR OF 1812 MEMORIAL (City of Monroe)
10. SOLDIERS AND SAILORS PARK (City of Monroe)
11. A STORIED HOMESTEAD (River Raisin National Battlefield Park)
12. MONROE COUNTY SINCE 1816 (Monroe County, Michigan)
13. MEMORIAL PLACE (River Raisin National Battlefield Park)
14. HISTORICAL MUSEUM (Monroe County, Michigan)
15. GENERAL GEORGE ARMBROSE'S GUIDES (City of Monroe)
16. ST. MARY OF THE ANNUNCIATION CONCEPTION (Monroe County Historical Society)
17. VETERANS PARK (City of Monroe)
18. ST. ANTOINE, RIVIERE AUX RAISINS (Monroe County Historical Society)
19. CUSTER HOME (Monroe County Historical Society)
20. MAYNARD ANDERSON TRADING POST (Monroe County, Michigan)

# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 1: Famous Waterfront

The River Raisin is known by some to be the most crooked river in the world winding some 135 miles through southeast Michigan before pouring into Lake Erie. The area south and east of here along Lake Erie was originally inhabited by the Erie Native American tribe, from which the lake was named. The native word for Erie is “Erielhonan,” which means “long tail” and refers to cougars or mountain lions, which once roamed the lake shores. The first French settlers also sometimes referred to Lake Erie as “Lac du Chat” or the lake of the cat. Lake Erie and the River Raisin are famous for many reasons. Lake Erie is the shallowest and southernmost of the five Great Lakes!

Lake Erie began appearing on French maps as early as 1616. The famous French explorers LaSalle and Father Hennepin arrived in the River Raisin region in 1679. LaSalle marveled at the region’s beauty describing vast islands of black walnut, wild plum, and oak trees covered with grapevines throughout superb prairies. Early French settlers, impressed with the grapevines that covered the River banks, called it the “Rivière aux Raisin” or River of Grapes, which carries on today. France controlled the area around the River Raisin until 1763 when control was given to Great Britain.

**Read the “Famous Waterfront” historic marker to learn more about Lake Erie and find the answers to these questions:**

1. When and who gave the first land to create Sterling State Park?
2. What has Monroe’s waterfront on Lake Erie been famous for since pioneer days?
3. What community tradition was started by the old Yacht Club in the 1900s?

*Ask a Ranger at Sterling State  
Park how to earn this patch!*



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the “Famous Waterfront” marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



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# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 2: American Lotus

The American Lotus is a *perennial* (comes back each year) flowering plant that does not have a woody stem above the ground level, which makes it a forb or herb. Appearing almost always in *wetlands* (areas of abundant water with long periods of soil saturation), the American Lotus is highly water dependent. It is easily identified by its large beautiful yellow flower that blooms through the middle of the summer.

The American Lotus is now protected as a threatened species in Michigan, but was once very important to Native Americans. A threatened species means that it is likely to become in danger of disappearing from Monroe if its wetland habitat (place that it lives) and the plant itself is not protected. You can help protect the American Lotus by learning how to save wetlands and not picking the flowers or digging up the plants. Enjoy their beauty in place!

American Indians often believed the American Lotus was a sacred plant that produced a source of medicine and food. The roots of the plant have a tuber that when baked or steamed is similar to a potato and when pounded into a pulp has been used to relieve pain from inflammatory diseases such as arthritis. The young leaves were sometimes eaten and cooked like spinach. The immature seeds can be eaten raw, mature seeds can be roasted, and you can grind them into flour to make bread. The flower and leaves are believed to have been used for ailments such as ringworm.

Acre for acre, wetlands produce more wildlife and plants (like the American Lotus) than any other type of Michigan habitat. Almost half (50%) of Michigan's 2,300 native plants live in wetlands. 48% of birds, 22% of animals, 78% of reptiles and 100% of amphibians are highly dependent on wetlands.

**Read the "American Lotus" exhibit to learn more and find the answers to these questions:**

1. What is America's largest aquatic (lives in water) flowering plant?
2. List three reasons the American Lotus has begun disappearing from Monroe?
3. What can you do to help stop pollution and the loss of wetlands?

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Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "American Lotus" marker and gently obtain an impression above the graphic like it.

## River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 3: Catch a Fish

Fish have been important in the River Raisin from as far back as history records. Indians called the River “Nummasepee” or the River of Sturgeon because of the tremendous number of sturgeon that would swim up the river each spring. There were so many sturgeon that Indians and early French settlers used to throw spears to catch them as they made their way up the river from Lake Erie.

Many fish, like the sturgeon, *migrate* (travel) from lake Erie up freshwater rivers like the River Raisin to *spawn* (have offspring) each spring and then return to the lake. Migrating fish are called potamodromous fish. Other potamodromous fish *species* (kinds of fish) that once swam up the River Raisin in the spring include muskellunge “muskie,” walleye, white bass, pike, and white sucker. The area of the River Raisin you are by was known as one of the finest bass fishing areas in the United States during the 1800s.

The water of the River Raisin also was vital to early French settlers who constructed dams along the river to power mills for sawing lumber and grinding flour. These dams changed the flow of the river and the ability of potamodromous fish to continue to use the River Raisin habitat for spawning. As the community continued to grow around the River Raisin, additional dams were constructed to control the water, which stopped many fish species from being able to move from Lake Erie up the river. Many of the lakes in the upper portion of the River Raisin *watershed* (where the water that creates the river comes from) also have dams to control water levels. These dams disrupt the movements of fish further preventing them from reaching spawning habitat.

Many community and state organizations are working together to build fish ladders at dams along the River Raisin. Fish ladders are small areas in the dams that allow the fish to swim up the river. These new fish ladders will again allow the River Raisin to become an important habitat for potamodromous fish.

**Read the “Catch a Fish” wayside exhibit and find the answer to the following questions:**

1. Name two fish you might be able to catch in Sterling State Park?
2. What is one good way to support fisheries (places fish live)?



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Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the “Catch A Fish” marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.

# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 4: Know Your Wildlife

You are within the first and only International Wildlife Refuge in North America! In fact, the Ford Marsh Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is adjacent to Sterling State Park. Just look at your map and you will see how close you are.

Why is this refuge important? Many birds fly south for the winter and then back north in the summer, which we call migration. The paths the birds fly (which are called flyways) are even named just like we name our roads. We are at the intersection of the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways where more than three million (3,000,000) ducks, geese, swans, and coots pass through each year! These birds are very dependent on a good coastal *habitat* (places to find food and shelter) to survive. Where you are is one of the most important waterfowl habitat areas for these migratory birds, but almost 95% of the coastal waterfowl habitat has been destroyed. We need your help! Look at the Heritage Trail sign and learn about the different kinds of birds that make this area their home and help ensure they will have a good habitat each year by not damaging the plants and recycling and throwing your trash away only in designated trash cans. If you want to do more you can visit the [www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/) to learn how.

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**Read the “Know Your Wildlife” wayside exhibit and find the answer to the following questions:**

1. What are the two types of ducks talked about on this sign?
2. In addition to Sterling State Park and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge what are two other nearby areas that help manage waterfowl?



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the “Know Your Wildlife” marker and gently obtain an impression above to the graphic like it.*



# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 5: Great Lakes Restoration

Michigan's only state park on Lake Erie, Wm. C. Sterling State Park, offers more than 1,300 acres of great recreational opportunities including more than a mile of beach, boating, shore fishing, fishing lagoons, lakefront camping, wildlife viewing and miles of trails.

Before people understood the full impact of industrial activities and development on the environment, many of these activities hurt the Great Lakes water quality and ecosystems. Years ago, people and factories would dump their waste directly into rivers and the Great Lakes, which impaired the water quality and killed critical habitat. In addition, new businesses, industry, and residents were allowed to build along riverbanks and lake shorelines killing acres of *wetlands* (areas of abundant water with long periods of soil saturation) and habitat (places that have everything a species needs to live). These practices eliminated a significant amount of the area's where fish and wildlife used to thrive, including the lower 2½ miles of the River Raisin and the area of Lake Erie surrounding the river's mouth (where the river dumps into the lake). The damage to this area of the River Raisin was so severe that it has been identified by the Environmental Protection Agency as one of its most critical areas of concern and is now the focus of restoration efforts.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (the caretakers of Wm. C. Sterling State Park) is working closely with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and others to ensure the natural resources and ecosystems within and surrounding Sterling State Park and the River Raisin are fully restored. Ask a Park Ranger what projects are currently under way to help restore Sterling State Park, Lake Erie, and the River Raisin to their former pristine natural environment.

**Read the "Know Your Wildlife" wayside exhibit and find the answer to the following questions:**

1. What major project is the Michigan Department of Natural Resources working on at Wm. C. Sterling State Park?
2. List two things that project will accomplish?
3. What do you think should be done to protect the River Raisin and Lake Erie?



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*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Great Lakes Restoration" marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*

# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 6: Newton Strike

In the early 1900s, Monroe attracted new industry along with immigrants and others looking to fulfill the American Dream of a good life and high paying jobs. Immigrants found Monroe's booming paper and agricultural industries highly attractive. After the Great Depression and WWII, Monroe was strategically positioned as an industrial powerhouse resulting in a prosperous and growing community. People flocked to the area to enjoy Monroe's thriving paper, steel, automotive, and furniture manufacturing jobs. City leaders moved quickly to build roads, attract railroads, and capitalize on the transportation benefits of Lake Erie to ensure Monroe would continue to flourish.

In the 1930s, *labor unions* (organized groups that work for better pay and conditions for employees) continued to form and become more powerful. Many large, and sometimes violent, strikes occurred and were supported by the growing Unions. When many of Monroe's Newton Steel Plant workers went on strike, the Unions called for thousands to join the strikers in a peaceful demonstration to further the labor movement. Fearful of possible violence, Monroe organized a Citizen Battalion to keep the peace. When non-striking Newton workers tried to get to work they were stopped by striking workers and the situation deteriorated. Over the course of the next few days, tension continued to blossom into violence in the midst of the already hallowed River Raisin Battlefield. Monroe found itself in the center of media attention throughout the nation.

**Read the "Newton Strike" historical marker and find the answer to the following questions:**

1. The Newton Labor Strike occurred in what year?
2. In 1947, what Labor Union was recognized?

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NEWTON STRIKE  
Monroe County Labor  
History Museum

Learn more about Labor History by visiting [www.monroelabor.org](http://www.monroelabor.org)



Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Newton Strike" marker and gently obtain an impression above the graphic like it.

# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 7: Battles of the River Raisin

River Raisin National Battlefield Park is America's only National Battlefield Park dedicated to preserving and telling the story of the fledgling United States during the War of 1812 and how it influenced who you are today! Large portions of the Battlefields of the River Raisin are now being protected for your benefit and to ensure we never forget the great sacrifices that were made here for us. As you stand here, imagine back to before Michigan was even a state, when Monroe was known as Frenchtown on the American frontier. Great Britain still controlled Canada and just a few years earlier the United States had formally won its independence from the British Empire. Native Americans and the Frenchtown settlers were forging new relationships and understandings, but this was not the case in many areas of the American frontier.

The United States was struggling for true independence, while the British Empire continued to exert control over the young nation by forcing American sailors to work on British ships (called impressment) and interfering with trade. It was feared that the British were providing guns to Native Americans and greatly hindering the westward expansion of the United States. Things got so bad between Great Britain and the United States that the United States declared war.

Soon after the war started, the British, who convinced the Native American leader Tecumseh to join forces with them, took over control of the entire Michigan Territory. This proved to be bad for the people of Frenchtown, the second most populated area in the Michigan Territory. Most of the local settlers had moved to the River Raisin to get away from British control, but once again found themselves occupied by unfriendly armies.

The British and Indians understood the importance of the River Raisin in strategically protecting Canada and their new territory. The Indians desired most to be able to protect their native lands and customs from further expansion of the United States and European colonization.


## Read the "Artillery" historic marker and find the answer to the following questions:

1. How far was the Kentucky rifle considered accurate?
2. What size were the cannons used in the Battles of the River Raisin?

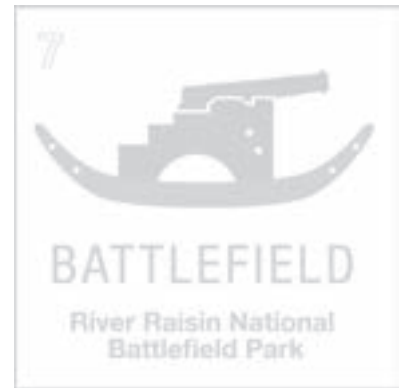
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*Ask a Ranger at the River Raisin National Battlefield Park how to earn this patch!*

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*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Battlefield" marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



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# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 8: Battles of the River Raisin

At the repeated request of Frenchtown settlers, American soldiers under the command of colonels Lewis and Allen, were dispatched by General Winchester to the River Raisin on January 18, 1813. The Americans quickly pushed the 63 British/Canadian soldiers and approximately 200 Indian allies out of Frenchtown.

The Americans set up camp among the homes on the north side of the River Raisin and were reinforced by troops under the command of revolutionary war veteran General James Winchester, bringing the number of American troops to nearly 1,000. Meanwhile, the British and Indians prepared a counterattack just across frozen Lake Erie at Fort Malden.

Just four days after the American's freed Frenchtown, the British, Canadians and Indians attacked the sleeping soldiers along the River Raisin. Although surprised, the Americans quickly returned fire. In just 20 minutes, the right flank was forced to run across the frozen waters of the River Raisin toward Ohio. Of the 400 Americans who retreated, about 220 were killed and 147, including General Winchester, were captured.

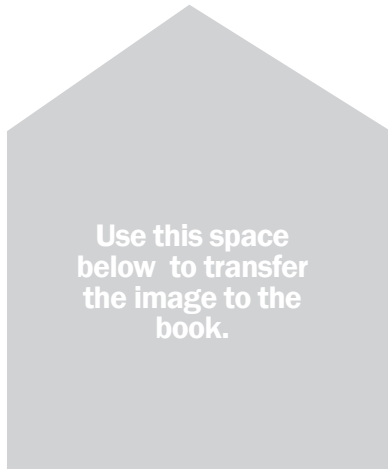
The Americans' left wing continued to fight from behind the Frenchtown picket fence. Successfully holding off the attack, the Americans expected the British to ask for a cease-fire when they saw them waving a white flag. The Americans were shocked to find out that the British had instead carried a message of surrender from their General Winchester. After a short negotiation, the remaining American forces surrendered.

The British quickly withdrew due to heavy casualties and the expectation that the Americans were soon to be reinforced by General William Henry Harrison's troops, who were along the Maumee River near present-day Toledo. When the British departed, they left the Americans, who were too wounded to walk, in the homes of the Frenchtown inhabitants under the guard of a small British detachment and Indians.

The morning after the Battle, Indians plundered and burned homes in Frenchtown, killed and scalped many of the remaining Americans, and took others as personal property. Official U.S. estimates of the aftermath include a dozen named individuals killed and up to 30 more presumed killed in this manner. British estimates put the number at about six.

**Read the "Roundhead" historic marker and find the answer to the following questions:**

1. Who delivered General Winchester to the British?
2. Who was the British Commander?



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Roundhead" marker and gently obtain an impression above the graphic like it.*

# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 13: Kentucky Monument

During a cold winter week, many years ago, nearly 1,000 American volunteers (many of whom were from Kentucky) faced a larger British and Indian force as they defended the United States and local settlers at the Battles of the River Raisin. Major General William Henry Harrison declared the battles a “national calamity” with the loss of more than 300 American Soldiers and the capture of all but 33 of those remaining alive. These soldiers who served to protect the United States are known as veterans. When they volunteered, these brave men agreed to pay an amount up to and including their very lives. Memorial Place and the Battlegrounds of the River Raisin exist to honor those who defended the United States in what is now known as the deadliest one-day battle (accounting for 15% +/- of all United States combat deaths) of the entire War of 1812.

Nine counties in the State of Kentucky are named in honor of soldiers who fought on the now hallowed grounds of the battlefield. Eight of those soldiers honored perished in battle. The remains of many of the soldiers who died in the battles are still spread throughout the battlefield and in unmarked graves. Approximately 15 fallen soldiers are buried in a single container at the Frankfort, Kentucky, cemetery, but their identities are unknown. As Americans, we owe a debt that can never be repaid to these and all soldiers who have given everything to defend our freedom. The battles of the River Raisin galvanized our nation, out of which came the cry “Remember the Raisin” that carried us to victory in the retaking of the Northwest Territories. Today, we continue to “Remember the Raisin” including the many Kentucky soldiers who came to the rescue of Frenchtown and defended our freedom.

**Read the “Memorial Place” historic marker and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. What happened at this site in 1812?
2. What does this monument stand for?
3. Why do you think it might be important to continue remembering what happened at the Battles of the River Raisin?
4. What do you think it would be like to live in Monroe at the time of the battles?



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the “Memorial Place” marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



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# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 14: Historical Museum

The Monroe County Historical Museum is located on one of the most historically significant properties in Michigan – George Armstrong Custer and his wife Libbie's first home. While the original house was moved in 1910, you can go inside the museum to learn how General George Armstrong Custer became a household name and one of the most famous and infamous individuals in U.S. military history.

Inside the museum you will also encounter southeast Michigan's earliest settlers, the Woodland Indians, and see first-hand how Frenchtown was established on the wild frontier. If that's not enough, discover what life was like for foreigners in a new territory... How they survived, got along with the Indians and the traditions they celebrated.

Experience how Monroe thrived in the industrial age producing extraordinary entrepreneurs such as August Ferdinand Meyer and Charles Sumner McIntyre who turned a firm that manufactured automobile and bicycle tire pumps into a business that changed the world. Stop by the museum to find out what company they formed and how they did it!

The name La-Z-Boy has become synonymous with comfort, quality and Monroe. Cousins Edwin Shoemaker and Edward Knabusch started building furniture as a hobby. In 1927, they opened their first furniture store Kna-Shoe Manufacturing Company, which later became Floral City Furniture. In 1928 they unveiled what came to be known as their first La-Z-Boy chair and in 1940 the company officially became the La-Z-Boy Chair Company. Today, La-Z-Boy is one of the best known furniture companies in the United States and the world with showrooms and factories across the globe. Monroe continues to be home to La-Z-Boy's world headquarters.

Visit the Museum or for more information call 734-240-7780, or visit the website at: <http://www.co.monroe.mi.us/museum>

**Read the "Historical Museum" marker and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. Who was Monroe's famous daughter?
2. What did the museum building formerly house?

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the image to the  
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HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM

Monroe County, Michigan

Ask a guide at the Monroe County  
Museum how to earn this patch!



Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Historical Museum" marker and gently obtain an impression above the graphic like it.

# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 15: Custer Statue

Commanding Michigan's Cavalry Brigade at the Battle of Gettysburg, George Armstrong Custer is credited with stopping General J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry from infiltrating the Union rear and dividing their forces. A Union victory, the battle is considered the turning point of the Civil War. Within one year, General Custer was promoted to the rank of Major General, the second youngest soldier in U.S. history to ever receive this rank. At the end of the war, Custer was honored by receiving the surrender flag from Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

After the Civil War, Custer was made Lieutenant Colonel of the United States Seventh Cavalry charged with protecting settlers moving west. United States Indian policy required Native Americans to be assigned to Reservations, although many of them refused, preferring instead to live as they always had—off the land. Colonel Custer was instructed to catch and return Indians who left their Reservations. As more settlers moved west, tensions mounted and battles broke out with Indians who struggled to preserve their way of life. Colonel Custer became a hero as papers published his victories in the Indian wars and his reputation as the defender of westward settlers grew.

On June 25, 1876, along the Little Big Horn River in Montana, Custer found himself in the battle that cemented his place in American history. The exact events of the battle remain lost in history, but we know that as Custer and his troops attacked an Indian camp they were ambushed by a much larger Indian force. Custer, along with all of the men with him, perished. Custer's fate that day, now called "Custer's Last Stand," has become the subject of countless books, movies, cartoons, and debates.

Many joined the Custer family and nation as they mourned the loss of Colonel Custer and his troops at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Monroe. Custer was eventually reinterred at West Point. His wife Libbie moved to New York, but returned to Monroe to dedicate the statue of her husband in 1910 alongside President William H. Taft and a crowd of more than 20,000 people.

Now, you are the Judge. Learn who George Custer was, where he came from, what events shaped him, and what he was called to do for his Nation. Once you have the facts, render your verdict.

**Read the "Major – General George Armstrong Custer" historic marker and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. George Custer grew up in Monroe, but where was he born?
2. In the Civil War George Custer was made a Major-General at what age?
3. Do you think General Custer was a hero or villain to his Nation?



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Custer Statue" marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



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# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 16: St. Mary's Church

St. Mary Church traces its origins to the St. Antoine aux Rivières Raisin, which was founded on October 15, 1788. St. Mary's Church is the oldest church in Monroe County. The current site was constructed in 1834, consecrated in 1839, and renamed in 1845 when it came under the leadership of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit. The Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, were also founded in Monroe in 1845. In 1846, the St. Mary all girls academy was built down the road from St. Mary's church and the Monroe Catholic Central, all boys, school was built right next to the main church. These two schools merged in 1986 to form St. Mary Catholic Central (SMCC) high school, which remains to this day as the largest private school in Monroe County.

The original church building remained unchanged from its completion in 1839 until it was expanded in 1903. The Brothers of the Holy Cross residential building was constructed in 1870, and the St. Mary Parochial Elementary School was completed in 1903. The current rectory was added to the north side of the church in the 1920s. Today, the St. Mary's complex is a recognized Historic District and landmark of the community.

**Read the "St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception" historic marker and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. What does the granite monument next to St. Mary's memorialize?
2. Who was the pastor at the time the order of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was founded?

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# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 17: Veterans Park

*“The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were Treated and Appreciated by their nation.”*

— George Washington

The citizens of the community of Monroe have a long, distinguished, and honored tradition of serving their Nation. Committed to Never Forgetting and Always Honoring the men and women of the United States Armed Forces you will find numerous Memorials throughout the community. Monroe is, without a doubt, the United States Military capital of the Old Northwest Territories.

- Caretaker of the blood stained soils and deep scars of the hallowed battlefields of the River Raisin – America’s only National Battlefield Park dedicated to honoring those who served in the War of 1812 and sacred soil of the site of the largest number of United States Combat deaths in the entire war.
- Named in honor of the Secretary of the War of 1812 and later President of the United States James Monroe.
- Life changer of General and later President William Henry Harrison.
- Childhood home and formative influencer of one of America’s most famous and infamous Military figures, General George Armstrong Custer.
- Birthplace of thousands of honored soldiers.

Many from Monroe have sacrificed everything in service to our nation. Some are risking their lives for you as you read this. Each time you see a veteran consider taking the time to thank them for their service. As a nation we are forever indebted to each and every veteran.

**Visit the memorial markers and record three things that stand out in your mind:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the “Veterans Park” marker and gently obtain an impression below the graphic like it.*



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# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 18: St. Antoine

Monroe's first church was St. Antoine de la Rivière aux Raisins. Just behind the present day cross is the St. Antoine's Cemetery where Jean-Baptiste Solo and René LeBeau were buried after being killed by Indians at Sandy Creek during the Battles of the River Raisin. Other local settlers who became casualties of the Battle of the River Raisin were also buried here including Henry Chovin and Captain Jean-Baptiste Couture. History of the site reveals that the cemetery contains more than 500 graves of French-Canadians and some Christian Indians.

St. Antoine de la Rivière-aux-Raisins was founded in 1788 by the Bishop of Quebec, Canada, and abandoned in the 1830s for a newer church and cemetery subsequently renamed St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in 1845.

Father Gillet found that Monroe had no school for the daughters of the descendants of French Canadians, most of whom were Catholic. Father Gillet petitioned the local bishop, Peter Paul Lefevere, Bishop of Detroit, for a religious order to assume teaching duties. The bishop declined, so Father Gillet invited three women to form a new religious congregation, which would become known as the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The original community of the order remains headquartered in Monroe, Michigan. The sisters originally began as teachers, but their ministries have become more diverse.

The co-foundress and first religious superior of the Monroe community was Mother Marie Theresa Duchemin. Her companion, Mother Theresa Maxis, had been one of the foundresses of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first religious congregation established in the country for women of African descent. On January 15, 1846, the first St. Mary Academy opened with 40 students.

In 1920, St. Mary Academy and College had outgrown its facilities and the order made plans to construct a new college facility. The Sisters initially planned to build the new campus in Monroe, but Bishop Michael Gallagher invited them to build in nearby Detroit. In Detroit the college would have a larger field of influence and offer a Catholic higher education to thousands of young women who might otherwise not have such an opportunity. The Sisters built their new college in Detroit and named it Marygrove College.

**Read the historic marker at St. Antoine and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. The Bishop who dedicated the church in 1788 came from Montreal in what?
2. Father Steven Badin was the first?



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "St. Antoine" marker and gently obtain an impression above the graphic like it.*

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ST. ANTOINE,  
RIVIERE AUX RAISINS  
Monroe County  
Historical Society

# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 19: Custer Home

George Armstrong Custer came to Monroe to attend Stebbin's Boys Academy when he was 8-10 years old. He lived with his half-sister Lydia Reed and her husband. After he completed school he returned to the state where he was born, Ohio, and became a teacher. George left Ohio when he was appointed to the West Point Military Academy in New York in 1857. Upon graduation, George joined the cavalry and became embroiled in the Civil War that was engulfing the nation. In 1863, he was appointed Brigadier General at the age of 23, making him the youngest General in the war. His actions with the Michigan Cavalry Brigade led to his promotion to Major General. General Custer went on to distinguish himself throughout the Civil War all the while returning home to Monroe and courting one of its most eligible young ladies, Elizabeth (Libbie) Bacon. In 1864, Elizabeth and George were married in Monroe at the First Presbyterian Church (southwest corner of Washington and First Streets). Libbie went on to accompany her husband during the rest of his military career trading in her finery and bed for a tent and companionship of her beloved husband.

After the Civil War, in 1866 George was assigned Lieutenant Colonel of the 7th Cavalry and was sent out West to fight the Indians. In 1871 George, Libbie and George's brother Nevin and his wife purchased a 116-acre farm (3048 North Custer Road). George never actually lived in the house, but Libbie did for a short time.

In 1871 and 1872, Colonel Custer assisted with reuniting the veterans of the Battles of the River Raisin (fought January 1813). Having lived some of his most formative years a short distance from the hallowed battlegrounds, Colonel Custer was very familiar with the battles and often talked with the veterans and listened to their accounts of what happened. At the reunion, the survivors relived those pivotal moments of the battle that were etched in their memories forever. Surely he heard about the 17th and 19th U.S. Infantries being completely surrounded on the right flank by Indians on that cold fateful January day. Ironically, four short years (June 25, 1876) after the reunion, Colonel Custer found himself in a similar dire circumstance. Colonel Custer and the 7th Cavalry, badly outnumbered, were ambushed by the Sioux Indians on a hill near the Little Bighorn River. Custer, now 37 years old, would not make it home to tell this tale.

**Read the historic marker at the Custer Home and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. On what type of farm did the Custer home sit?
2. What was Custer's war horse named?



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# River Raisin Heritage Trail VISA Stop 20: Trading Post

For centuries along the meandering course of the River Raisin, the Native Americans, especially the Potawatomi, hunted and fished in an area that was a wilderness. In the late 1700s, French habitant families from the Detroit-Windsor area migrated further south following the rivers and streams that were teaming with fur bearing animals and fish. They started to tame the wilderness by carving out their homes in narrow ribbon shaped farms along the banks of the river. In these early days of Frenchtown, the Native Americans and French forged a relationship based upon the common ground of the fur trade.

The fur trade, along with hunting and agriculture, formed the basis of Frenchtown's early economy. Fur pelts were traded for money or other goods at the local trading post. What is believed to be the first trading post in Frenchtown was built upon land that the local Potawatomi's gave to Hutreau Navarre, one of the very first French settlers in this area. He built the trading post around 1789 on the north side of the River Raisin. Hutreau was actually given the name Hutreau by the Native Americans. Today this building stands as a reminder of the peaceful relationship between the French habitants and the Native-Americans, as well as being the third oldest wooden structure still standing in Michigan and is an excellent example of French-Canadian architecture.

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**Read the historic marker at the Trading Post and find the answers to the following questions:**

1. What type of trading did Mr. Navarre and Mr. Anderson do?
2. Hutreau Navarre constructed the trading post out of what type of timbers?



*Ask a Guide at the Trading Post  
how to earn this patch!*



*Using a pencil or crayon place your VISA Book tab over the VISA image at the "Trading Post" marker and gently obtain an impression above the graphic like it.*