

More and More Americans Landing at British Landing

A concave bay on Mackinac Island's northwest shore is the goal of many bikers, hikers, and riders of drive-yourself carriages. This spot, marked with a century-old cannon and a historical marker, is British Landing.

British Landing is actually misnamed. The force that carried out a successful amphibious assault on Mackinac Island on the night of July 16-17, 1812, was primarily made up of several hundred American Indian allies of the British. Stiffened by a few dozen fur traders and red-coat soldiers from a tiny fort on Canada's St. Joseph's Island, this force waded ashore in the darkness. Dragging a small cannon to "the heights above Fort Mackinac," the Indians and British fired a blank shot toward the defenseless fort at daybreak.

The scene that then occurred is replayed in sound-and-light inside Fort Mackinac's North Blockhouse. The American fort, garrisoned by 57 officers and men, had heard rumors that war had broken out between the United States and the British Empire. However, no message had yet gotten through from Washington to confirm the start



British Landing Road in this early postcard view shows the old Early homestead on the far right. The field at left is now Wawashkamo Golf Links. (Postcard courtesy of Tom Pfeiffelmann)



A Look at History

BY FRANK STRAUS

British Landing

of hostilities, and the tiny fort on the outskirts of the U.S. found

itself virtually defenseless. As a result of the energetic alliance between the Indians and the British, and the daring assault by the larger force upon Mackinac at British Landing, the Americans were forced to surrender the fort and retreat to Ohio. No casualties were suffered by either side.

The events of the early 1810s marked the climax of the fight

by Midwestern Indians to retain their ancestral lands, culture, and way of life. Key figures on the Indian side were the Shawnee war chief Tecumseh and his brother, a religious leader known to whites as "The Prophet." These men built alliances with many of the tribal groups living in and around the Great Lakes. Pointing to the exponential growth of white American settlement in the new state of Ohio, they urged Indian unity and offered their support to the British authorities of Upper Canada.

During the battles that we Americans know as the War of 1812, Tecumseh was killed and the Indian alliance that he had helped to put together was broken up. However, Tecumseh's native region is today called the state of "Indiana" in honor of the Shawnee, Miami, Pottawatomie, and other Indians of the region, many of whom were fierce warriors, successful hunters, and champion fur trappers.

After Tecumseh's death, the balance of power again shifted on the Upper Great Lakes. A small flotilla of fresh-water naval vessels, bearing heavy cannon and flying the Stars and

Stripes, sailed northward from Detroit in an attempt to recapture Fort Mackinac. On August 4, 1814, it was the turn of the Americans to wade ashore. This was the second landing at British Landing, and it was different from the first landing in two key respects: firstly, in 1812 the Indians and British had landed at this spot at night, while the Americans landed in broad daylight; and secondly, in 1812 the Americans had not known that the Indians and British were coming, but in 1814 the British on Mackinac Island were well aware that they were under assault.

With knowledge of the Americans' plans and order of battle, the Indians and British were able to forestall their attack. As the American forces climbed up what is now British Landing Road toward a farm field in the northern interior of the Island, an open space now occupied by Wawashkamo Golf Links, the Indians posted themselves along the edges of the woods surrounding the field. A small troop of redcoats set up a line of fieldpieces along a ridge near the southern edge of the field; this ridge is now used by the 1st and 6th tees of the golf course.

Catching sight of the light British cannon, the Americans tried to outflank the fieldpieces by sending a column of men on a flank assault to the south and southwest. This thrust against the British left was stymied when a band of Indians, lying in ambush near what is now Wawashkamo's ninth tee, fired a volley against the American flankers. The ambush was completely successful and caused heavy losses among the Americans, including the death of the American second-in-command, Major Andrew Hunter Holmes. The discouraged Americans retreated to British Landing and left Mackinac

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Friends of the Animals is a local non-profit organization which has been helping animals in Mackinac County since 1999. In the last 2-1/2 years, the group has focused on a program they created called "Pet Fix" which offers pet owners an opportunity to

get their animals spayed or neutered very affordably, males \$10, females \$20.

A number of Mackinac Island families have taken advantage of "Pet Fix". Anyone interested in the program can call 906-643-6252. Leave a message with a phone number.

Friends of the Animals have thus far had 335 dogs and cats go through "Pet Fix" which will result in fewer unwanted litters, strays and homeless animals.

Friends of the animals is a 501 (c) 3 organization. Donations are tax deductible. All financial resources come from fund raising and donations. No funding comes from any county, state or governmental agency.

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