

Statehood

Toledo played significant role

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By David Litogot
special writer

One hundred-fifty years ago this month, President Andrew Jackson signed a bill that made Michigan the 26th state in the Union. Detroit, the capital at the time, planned special celebrations that included parades, a ball and a public dinner. At that dinner, toast after toast was given to this newly formed state.

One of the most colorful was offered to the state of Ohio: "Our neighboring sister, and her boasted million of freemen, Michigan neither forgets or forgives, yet, the dark shall be light, and the wrong made right."

What was this "wrong" that person was talking about? What will Michigan never "forget" or "forgive"?

The issue leading up to Michigan statehood centered around a 468-square-mile strip of land that was supposed to be part of Michigan but was claimed by Ohio. This wedge of land, known as the Toledo Strip, brought the two states to the edge of all-out warfare.

From the earliest days of independence, the northern boundary of Ohio, west of Lake Erie, was an east-west line drawn from the southern tip of Lake Michigan. This put the town of Toledo north of the Ohio border.

When Ohio became a state in 1803, she brought along a constitution stipulating that the boundary line must be tilted so that the mouth of the Maumee River would lie in Ohio.

footprints in history

Congress at first accepted this change, but after two years and two more U.S. surveys, declared the earlier boundary — a line that put Toledo in Michigan Territory where it belonged.

SOME OF this land was unoccupied and actually claimed by two "states." Michigan was officially still a territory even though almost all the "requirements" for statehood were fulfilled.

Stevens T. Mason, Michigan's 23-year-old "boy governor," called a convention in 1835 to make a constitution for the state. She had more than enough people to qualify.

At the same time, Ohio claimed jurisdiction over the Toledo Strip. Michigan claimed it in its constitution. Militia companies were mobilized, peace officers sworn in, parading took place and arguments and oratory were common. Money was appropriated by each side. Flags were put up on poles and hauled down by the opposition.

Michigan even asked Congress for a three-man commission to negotiate a settlement, but the governor of Ohio, Robert Lucas, refused to take part and would refuse any agreement that put Toledo in Michigan.

A Michigan militia captured an Ohio survey team. Two hundred Michigan soldiers invaded Toledo. Ohioans called Michigan's "unprovoked" because they were like the "vicious, smelly, ugly, northwoods animal."

Finally, Congress and President Jackson became involved. A plan was worked out whereas if Michigan wanted to become a state, it would have to give up all claim to the Toledo strip and in return receive the western part of the newly named "upper peninsula."

MICHIGAN HAD legitimate claim to the Toledo strip. The ordinance of 1787 awarded it to Michigan, surveys reaffirmed it. But Ohio was a state with voting power; Michigan was still a territory and anxious to receive the benefits of statehood.

The government of Michigan accepted the compromise. On Jan. 6, 1837, by a vote of 25-10, the U.S. Senate admitted Michigan to the union and on Jan. 25, the House of Representatives concurred by a vote of 132-43. On Jan. 26, 1837, Michigan was officially proclaimed the 26th state.

This mighty step climaxed years of poor fortune, ineffectual treaties and unfavorable survey reports. Americans had removed the British threat, cleared and burned acres for farming, plowed its rich soil, and came by the thousands along the Erie Canal-Lake Erie corridor. The state was seeing steam ships, railroads and a tremendous influx of people.

But those people who experienced the troubles of achieving statehood, will never "forget or forgive" our neighbors to the south.

(As a footnote to this, Michigan has filed suit in federal court to reclaim Toledo in 1915, 1922, 1932, 1943 and 1968.)

Material from: "Michigan, A Bicentennial History," Bruce Catton; "Michigan, A History of the Great Lakes State," Rubenstein and Zieve.



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Talk's theme — Soviet Union

Dr. Carol Rittner, a member of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, will address the Jewish Community Council Delegate Assembly and guests at 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 8, at Adat Shalom Synagogue.

The synagogue is at 29901 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills.

Sister Carol joined a recent delegation to the Soviet Union led by Elie Wiesel, then as chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, to invite various Soviet officials, historians and others to an international conference on the non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust to be held in Washington, D.C. at the end of February.

Sister Carol a specialist in Holocaust studies and Christian-Jewish relations is director of the February conference.

During her remarks, Sister Carol will report on both the purpose of the delegation and their encounters with the resisters community.

Aside from her conference chair-

manship, Sister Carol is also the coordinator of a project, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Office on Catholic-Jewish Relations, that is developing a Holocaust curriculum for use in Catholic schools.

In 1984, Sister Carol organized an international conference, sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, Washington, D.C., focusing on non-Jews who helped Jews during the Holocaust.

The conference, "Faith in Humankind: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust" was held at the U.S. Department of State.

Outcomes of the conference include a five-part radio series, "Stories for the Day of Remembrance" (New York: ADL of B'nai B'rith, 1985); a movie, "The Courage to Care" (nominated for a 1986 Academy Award for Best Short Documentary); a Viewers Guide for the film (New York: ADL of B'nai B'rith,

1985); and an edited book, "The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust" (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

Sister Carol and Sandra Myers are co-executive producers of the film and co-editors of the book.

Dr. Rittner received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from College Misericordia, a Master of Arts degree in English from the University of Maryland, and a doctorate in higher education administration from the Pennsylvania State University.

She is completing another master's degree in theology at St. John's Seminary, Plymouth.

Also on the agenda for the council's January assembly, open to the community and free of charge, is the announcement of members of a nominating committee who will select candidates for 1987-88 council officer and executive committee positions.

Thursday, January 8, 1987 O&E

(P7C)

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