

William Hull: historic villain or great hero?

Attorney, distinguished Revolutionary War general, first governor of Michigan Territory and builder of Detroit. These are pretty good credentials for any figure in Michigan history but they belong to a man named William Hull — a name lost in our legacy.

In our continuing series on some of the ill-fated events and people of our past, this William Hull was branded a traitor, court-martialed, and was sentenced to be shot for surrendering Detroit in the War of 1812. The surrender marked the only time a city in the U.S. capitulated to a foreign foe.

Some historians believed that Hull suffered from old age (he was 60) and ineffectiveness, misplaced in the frontier setting of Detroit. Others claim that he was a scapegoat for all the incompetent planning and faulty execution that existed during the war with Britain.

Nevertheless, Hull's name in these parts is tarnished. There are no statues, no towns or cities, no counties in his honor. There is one Hull street in Detroit and one Hull Road near Belleville.

History records the circumstances that catapulted him to infamy. During the opening moments of the War of 1812, Hull, leading a force of 1,200 Americans, invaded British Canada at Sandwich (present day Windsor). He then began to advance southward to Fort Malden near Amherstburg before stopping and analyzing his position.

His goal was to capture the British stronghold and navy yards. The move was part of a master plan: Hull's troops were to attack Canada from the west while General Henry Dearborn led his troops from the Niagara region. The plan looked good on paper, but the execution was never realized.

A MONTH after Hull crossed over to Canada, he ordered his troops back to Detroit and, within days, surrendered to an inferior British force. Hull was taken prisoner and sent to Montreal while Americans fumed at the news. After his trial in New York two years later, he was dishonorably discharged, convicted of cowardice, neglect of duty, and unofficerlike conduct. His death sentence was, however, remitted by President Madison. Hull spent the rest of his life (he died in 1825) virtually an outcast trying to defend himself.

In my research on General Hull, I found some interesting evidence that would bring a little honor back to his name.

• Before the war began, Gov. Hull tried to impress upon President Madison the importance of controlling Lake Erie. We had few ships to achieve such a goal so the request was disregarded.

• The majority of Hull's fighting force was untrained, raw recruits from frontiersmen from Ohio — who disliked officers and especially orders. They were interested in fighting, gaining glory, and returning home in time for harvest.

• Supplies and reinforcements were cut off from Ohio by enemy attacks from land and water. At the moment of surrender, 400 of the best Ohio militiamen were trying to open up a supply route south.

• Five days after Hull's "attack" on Canada, Fort Michilimackinac on Mackinac Island fell to the British. When word of this reached the Detroit area, nearby Indians switched their allegiance to the British. Hull also feared a wave of Indians spreading down from the north.

• Action on the Niagara frontier was nonexistent. This allowed British reinforcements to advance to Amherstburg under the command of Major General Isaac Brock.

• Hull's own officers were inexperienced and uncooperative. They failed to curb a mutinous spirit among the troops and constantly second-guessed the commander.

• Hull overestimated the enemy's strength and underestimated his own. His delays over artillery movements caused his return to Detroit.

Footprints in history

• As the British crossed the river to Detroit, many of the Ohio militia deserted. His force at the surrender was actually less than the combined British, Canadian, and Indian number.

• Hull was obsessed with a fear of Indian brutality. As governor, not general, he felt responsible for the welfare of Detroit inhabitants (including his wife and daughter).

• After the surrender, one of Hull's own senior officers, Col. Lewis Cass wrote a letter to the Secretary of War denouncing Hull.

• The trial was set up to give Hull little opportunity to bring testimony on his behalf. Many of his personal papers were destroyed in the war and duplicate government records were "unavailable." He generously shielded his officers and assumed the sole responsibility for the surrender. His officers all ranged themselves against him (and were all convicted) and showed the most extraordinary zeal in the attempt to secure his conviction.

Reflecting back in history, we should remember that instead of being a humiliating surrender, it could have been a tragic massacre at Detroit. Maybe William Hull should be honored for sparing lives and saving a city, even though in the ridiculous theater of warfare, that is not important.

Save a life with CPR technique

In as little as four hours, you can learn a simple procedure that can save heart attack or drowning victims, or the victim of electrocution or other accidents: CPR.

"The Journal of the American Medical Association" June 1986, reports that without prompt administered CPR, it's unlikely that a cardiac arrest victim will be successfully revived. Considering the time it often takes for a paramedic team to reach the scene of an emergency, the presence of a bystander qualified to administer CPR becomes vital.

According to a Seattle, Wash., study, the outcome of cardiac arrest

emergencies improved greatly when trained bystanders initiated CPR. Although CPR has been around for a relatively short time, only 25 years, it is one of the most important emergency care procedures today.

PEOPLE WITH no medical background who have been trained to administer CPR have saved thousands of people who, without the help, would certainly have died. JAMA reports that CPR administered by professionals, paraprofessionals and lay people, has been successful in reviving as many as 40 percent of cardiac arrest victims.

CPR isn't hard to learn, yet you

can't do it if you haven't had the training. When you attend a four-hour class, you'll learn it's a matter of ABC's. You'll be taught how to open a person's airway (A), how to breathe for the victim (B) and how to get vital circulation (C) going to bring blood and oxygen once again to brain, heart and other vital organs.

You'll watch a movie, an instructor will review the procedure and answer questions, and you'll get to actually practice on a mannequin called Resuscit-Anna. When you've completed the course you're given a wallet card showing your certification in CPR by the American Heart Association.

"If a complete emergency care system were in place and 30 percent of Michigan residents knew CPR, we estimate that a minimum of 11,500 lives could be saved each year," says Oliver Wendt, CPR program consultant for the American Heart Association.

Qualified individuals are teaching CPR programs in many area schools, hospitals and community centers.

For more information on CPR and where it's being taught, or warning signs of heart attack, contact the American Heart Association of Michigan, a United Way agency: 557-9500.

Woman wins Pistons tickets

Shirley Abro of Farmington Hills won two tickets to the Detroit Pistons' basketball game April 13 in a drawing at the AAA Michigan Farmington Hills office, 33133 12 Mile.

Abro was among the winners drawn at 36 Ticketmaster/AAA Michigan Ticket Centers statewide. The winners and their guests watched the Pistons play the Cleveland Cavaliers at the Pontiac Silverdome.

The grand prize winner, drawn from 36 winning entries, was Paul Foglini of Rochester, who will receive dinner for two at Pettigons Restaurant in Pontiac, overnight accommodations at the Holiday Inn, West Bloomfield, and transportation from Statewide Limo Service in Detroit.

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