

Written Testimony of

The Honorable Mayor Mark G. Worrell

The City of Monroe, Michigan

120 E. First Street

Monroe, Michigan 48161

Committee on Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

Raul M. Grijalva (AZ), Chairman

Subcommittee Hearing

September 11, 2008, 10:00 a.m.

RE: River Raisin National Battlefield Park (HR 6470)

Mr. Chairman:

As I talk with you today, there is a twinge of nostalgia - some of my earliest memories from childhood are from a time when my family lived in World War II government housing adjacent to the River Raisin Battlefield site. At that time, it was an operating paper mill, and while we may have had an inkling of what transpired there in 1813, our imaginations were clouded by the daily routine of hundreds of local residents going to work at the mill.

Later, as an educator and then a father, I would share with my students and daughters the stories of a fledgling nation's struggle to survive and the events that occurred there during a cold January in 1813. I could see the same questions on their face that I had as a young boy. How could an old factory be a battlefield? Needless to say, by this time the mill had lost much of its luster - its economic engine slowing.

As a member of City Council in the 1980s and the 1990s, we would face the challenges of a paper industry past its prime, the loss of jobs, and vacant, decaying buildings on our landscape.

Appearing here today, as Mayor, brings me full-circle. Today, as I talk about the images and the events and the importance of the site, our "vision" is no longer scarred by a deteriorating industrial landscape.

Our success has occurred not by happenstance, but through the formation of a particularly effective partnership. A partnership that

includes the City of Monroe; the Monroe County Historical Society; the Port of Monroe, Eastern Michigan University, Heidelberg College, and Monroe County Community College. And, most importantly, and without whose help none of this would have been possible, our Congressman, John Dingell.

This partnership has also had the benefit of working closely with the National Park Service and the American Battlefield Protection Program, both of which has provided invaluable knowledge...and, yes, on occasion funding. We have also worked with the Clean Michigan Initiative Program, where we were the first community in Michigan to receive funding for an economic heritage resource project.

The efforts to save the River Raisin Battlefield are unique in that we are not simply attempting to "save" an extant battlefield from the impacts of nearby developments. Rather we are actually "reclaiming" a battlefield that was lost to industrial development a century ago – a process, which the American Battlefield Protection Program has characterized as "cutting edge!"

To carry out these "cutting edge" activities, the partnership has expended over 5 million dollars to acquire key real estate related to the battlefield, undertake environmental remediation, and carry out crucial archaeological and academic research.

As the Department of the Interior, through the National Park Service, was completing its *Report to Congress on Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States*, our primary partner, the Monroe County Historical Society, which is represented here today by its president, William H. Braunlich, and by its past-president, Jean Guyor, commissioned a multi-disciplinary team of archaeologists, historians, and preservationists to prepare a nomination seeking designation of the River Raisin Battlefield as a *National Historic Landmark* – the nation's highest honor for a site of this kind, and another example of our commitment to this project.

The River Raisin in January 1813 is a story of heroism. It is a story of supreme sacrifice. It is a story that in 1813 electrified and galvanized the nation with the battle cry "Remember the Raisin!" It is a story that resonates with all Americans today because it speaks to the very best of the American spirit and resolve.

I am pleased to represent the City of Monroe and its partners here today not to ask this committee or the federal government for additional funds

(although we certainly would not turn any down, if offered). Neither are we here to simply put a bow on the battlefield and hand it off as a gift to the federal government.

Rather, I have the very distinct honor of being able to invite the Federal government to become a partner with us in the River Raisin Battlefield. The partnership has every intention of continuing its commitment to this project. But, we also recognize the immense value of being affiliated as a unit of the National Park Service, so we hope you will consider partnering with us. We hope you will support HR 6470.

Finally, when I drive by the battlefield and the site where I once lived I am amazed by the transformation. I think back to my time as an educator when I had so often tried to explain the events of January 18 and 22, 1813, to my students. Looking across the flat, open fields, I think today the kids would get it. For myself, standing there, I can almost hear the roar and commotion, and I do "*Remember the Raisin!*"

I thank you for your time and consideration.