

# [Mapping the war of 1812](https://assignbuster.com/mapping-the-war-of-1812/)

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Battle of Thames – 5 October 1813 The Battle of Thames took place in Thames, Ontario, near Moraviantown which was home to Delaware Indians who had become Christians. The battle took place on 5 October 1813 and while it was a small battle in military terms, the outcome had many serious consequences for the overall War of 1812 (The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2011). The War of 1812 had initially stemmed from a litany of complaints based on British blockading of Europe under Napoleon. The Americans had vessels stopped and searched; civilians and soldiers were taken from ships and some were even forcibly taken into British service. As well, the economy of the fledgling American state was suffering due to restricted European trading (The Star, 2012).
It was in Thames that General Henry Proctor, a British General, took a stand against the advancing Americans. Although small, this battle was to have consequences that affected not only the British and Americans, but also the Aboriginals of Canada. General Proctor had retreated from Detroit as he had little supplies and his military command capabilities were inadequate to meet the needs of the situation or to marshal and guide the forces under his command. The Americans advanced from the south, where they had just won the Battle of Lake Erie under Captain Oliver H. Perry (The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2011). Flush with victory, they were a force that General Proctor was reluctant to tackle.
Chief Tecumseh, the great Shawnee war chief did not agree with Proctor’s decision to retreat. He feared that the advance of the Americans would adversely affect the Aboriginal communities west of Detroit and in the whole northwest. Proctor assured Chief Tecumseh that the army would make a stand against the Americans and the Shawnee war chief had little choice but to follow him.
The Americans landed near Amherstburg and slowly followed Proctor’s retreating forces. Meanwhile, Proctor failed to order the destruction of access points such as bridges. In Thames, Ontario, Proctor took his stand. The Aboriginals were positioned to the right of the British, in the swamp, where, after the British were routed by the Americans and had surrendered, the Aboriginal warriors fought valiantly against the mounted American army. Chief Tecumseh and another Aboriginal leader, Chief Stiahta, were killed in this battle and the Aboriginal warriors were left leaderless and disheartened. Over 200 British soldiers managed to escape to northern Lake Ontario, leaving behind over 600 killed or captured (The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2011). The Aboriginal warriors lost 33 comrades and took their bodies with them as they retreated. Proctor’s army had disintegrated and the then American Secretary of War, John Armstrong, made note of the fact that American casualties were the result of Aboriginal fighting and not the result of wounds inflected by the British forces.
The Battle of Thames is important because Proctor’s poor military leadership led to the defeat of the British and to his eventual court martial for incompetence. As well, the deaths of Chief Tecumseh and Chief Stiahta were a great loss to the Aboriginal communities. Under Chief Tecumseh, the unity of the tribes was built and maintained. Without his leadership the Aboriginal tribes were unable to unite and present a united front against the British and the Americans. The small town of Thames, Ontario, therefore, played a significant role in the War of 1812.
Bibliography
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