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**AMERICA & THE U.S. ARMY**

**MONROE COUNTY & FORT MCCOY**

★ ★ America 250 (1776–2026) • Army 250 (1775–2025) ★



SPECIAL EDITION CELEBRATING MONROE COUNTY AND FORT MCCOY HERITAGE CONNECTION TO AMERICA/ARMY 250TH BIRTHDAYS.

# Wisconsin's Monroe County: A county named for a president who fought 250 years ago in Revolutionary War; county helps shape Soldiers who serve today

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
 Public Affairs Staff

In the rolling hills and pine-lined ridges of Western Wisconsin lies Monroe County — a place whose very name echoes the early heartbeat of the United States.

It is a name drawn from James Monroe, the fifth president, a Soldier-statesman whose life bridged the fragile birth of the nation and its confident stride into the 19th century.

To name a county on the American frontier after Monroe was no small gesture, as history shows. It was an act of remembrance and aspiration — a way of tying the raw, developing lands of Wisconsin to the ideals forged in the fires of the American Revolutionary War over 250 years ago.

## Who was James Monroe?

The White House Historical Association's biography for President Monroe states that he was considered the last "Founding Father" president.

"Monroe was born on April 28, 1758, into an affluent ... family in Westmoreland County, Va.," the biography states at <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/bios/james-monroe>. "His parents, Spence and Elizabeth Monroe, had aspirations for their eldest son, sending him to nearby Campbelltown Academy. James' childhood changed dramatically when both of his parents passed away within two years of each other. Joseph Jones, who became a paternal surrogate for the Monroe children, encouraged James to continue his education by attending the College of William & Mary. Monroe enrolled but later left to enlist in the Continental Army's Third Virginia Infantry Regiment."

After the Revolutionary War, Monroe married Elizabeth Kortright in 1786, and the couple had three children together, the biography states.

"In terms of military, political, administrative, and diplomatic experience, James Monroe was one of the most qualified individuals to ascend to the presidency during the 19th century. He fought in the American Revolution and was wounded at the Battle of Trenton; served in the legislative bodies of the Virginia General Assembly and the United States Senate, as well as Governor of Virginia; held diplomatic posts across Europe for different administrations; and served as Secretary of State and Secretary of War (briefly acting in both capacities) during the James Madison administration."

History shows Monroe also studied law with Thomas Jefferson.

"In fact, because of his relationship with Jefferson, Monroe purchased land adjacent to Monticello in Albemarle County, calling it Highland," the biography states. This plantation was one of several properties that Monroe owned during his lifetime."

Monroe's history also shows what he helped accomplish in 1803. In that year, the biography states, "President Jefferson entrusted Monroe and Robert Livingston to acquire territory from France and secure access to the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans.

The men exceeded all expectations, acquiring New Orleans and some 828,000 square miles west of the Mississippi for \$15 million.

"The Louisiana Purchase opened up new opportunities," the biography states. "After the War of 1812, the United States experienced the 'Era of Good Feelings' — relative political peace, economic growth, and nationalist fervor. President Monroe invigorated this spirit with goodwill tours throughout the country and ensuring that the public buildings at Washington — including the President's House — were restored after they were destroyed by the British.

"Working with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, Monroe professed American sovereignty from European nations while asserting a national right of influence over the western hemisphere," the biography states.

"This idea, later called the 'Monroe Doctrine,' shaped the next century of international relations between the United States and the world, influencing American presidents and policymakers who sought to make the country a global power."

## Army ties to Monroe County

Jarrod Roll, director of the Monroe County Local History Room and Museum in Sparta, Wis., said through active research, a specific reason as to who decided to name Monroe County after the president cannot clearly be found.

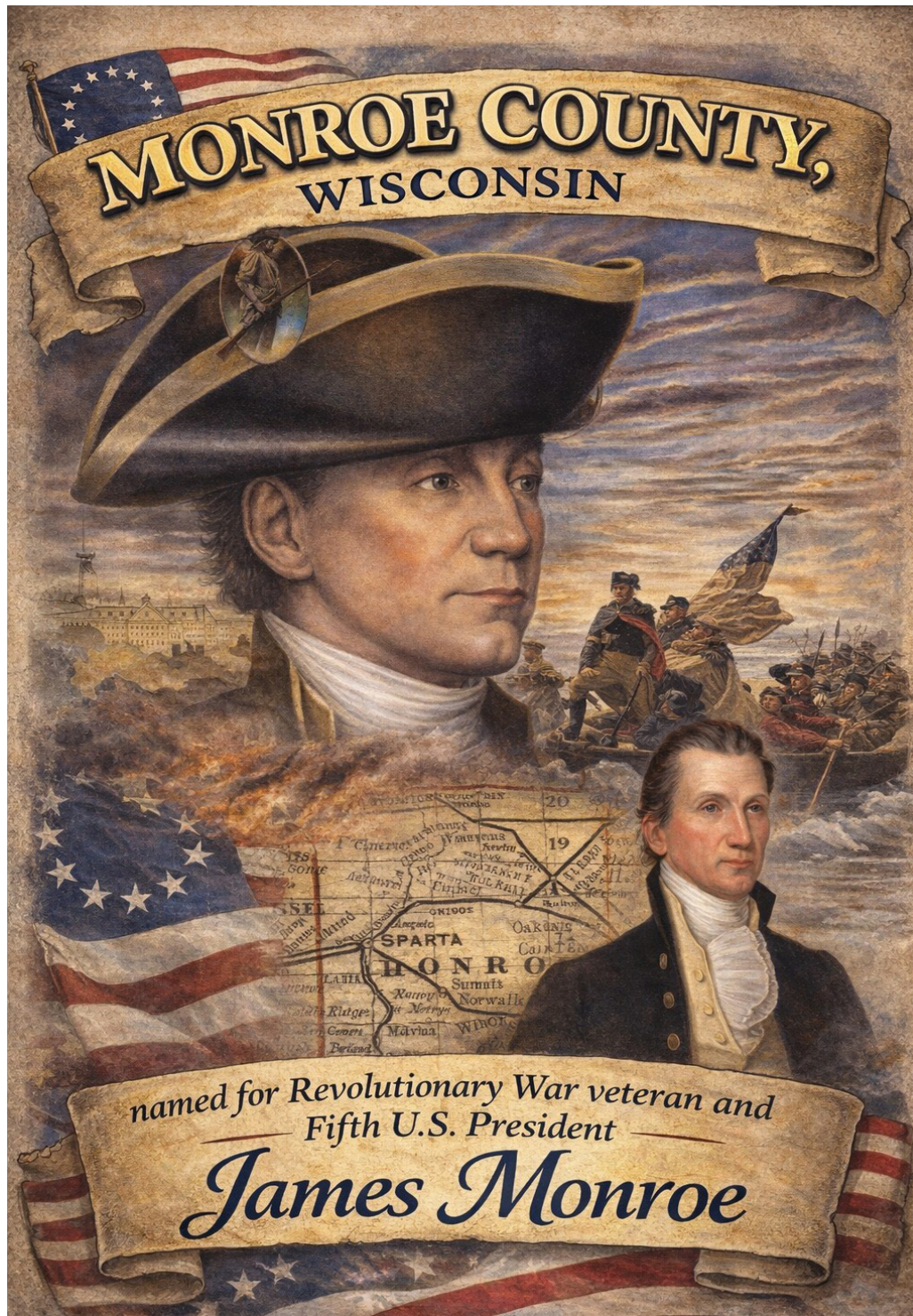
"Wisconsin counties were typically named for U.S. presidents, prominent politicians, military figures, geographical features, or Native American associations," Roll said.

"Over the years we've tried to track down any explanation as to who suggested President James Monroe as the namesake of Monroe County, Wis., in 1854, but unfortunately, we found none. The oldest explanation we have for the naming is in 1902."

Henry Gannett, "Origin of Certain Place Names," in U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin No. 197 in Washington in 1902 states, "Monroe County, State of Wisconsin, was named for James Monroe, ex-president of the United States."

Wisconsin isn't the only state with a Monroe County. Nationally, Monroe County exists in 17 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

But Wisconsin's Monroe County is the only Monroe County with a major Army installation like



Fort McCoy. Monroe had not merely governed; he had bled for independence with the Continental Army, crossing icy rivers with George Washington and enduring the brutal trials at Trenton (N.J.).

## Army kinship with McCoy

His legacy was one of perseverance, expansion, and a belief that the United States was destined to grow and endure. And grow it did — westward, steadily — until places like Monroe County, Wis., emerged from forest and prairie.

Yet Monroe's spirit did not remain confined to the name alone. It found a living presence in the soil itself, most notably, possibly, in Fort McCoy, a vast military installation that would come to define the county in the 20th century, and still in the 21st century.

Fort McCoy bears the name of Robert Bruce McCoy, a distinguished Army officer whose career reflected the evolving might and professionalism of the U.S. Army, which itself is more than 250 years old.

Where Monroe fought as a young officer in a fledgling Continental Army, McCoy served in a modern, organized force — one that had grown into a global instrument of American power and stability. And yet, across the span of more than a century, the two men share a striking kinship.

Monroe and McCoy were both shaped by service before recognition. Monroe, wounded in battle and tested in the crucible of revolution, carried those experiences into his presidency — where he would articulate the Monroe Doctrine, asserting America's place on the world stage.

McCoy, too, rose through the ranks not by chance, but through steady dedication, leadership, and an understanding of the Army's mission in a changing world. His name, affixed to the fort, represents not only his own service, but the countless Soldiers trained there — Citizen-Soldiers preparing to defend the same republic Monroe helped secure.

In Monroe County, their legacies intersect in a uniquely American way. The county's name recalls the founding generation — men who fought for the very idea of the nation.

Fort McCoy represents the continuation of that idea — defended, trained, and renewed by each generation that followed. One symbolizes the birth of American independence; the other, its preservation. There is something poetic in that alignment.

Where Monroe once marched under uncertain skies, fighting for a nation not yet fully realized, Soldiers at Fort McCoy train under that nation's flag — its stars now numbering 50, its strength unquestioned. The wilderness Monroe never saw became the proving ground for the Army he helped inspire.

And so, Monroe County stands as more than a place on a map. It is a living narrative — where the ideals of James Monroe meet the enduring service symbolized by Robert Bruce McCoy. From revolution to readiness, from musket to modern force, the story of Monroe County is, in many ways, the story of America itself.

Fort McCoy's motto beginning in 2026 is "Training the Total Force and Shaping the Future since 1909."

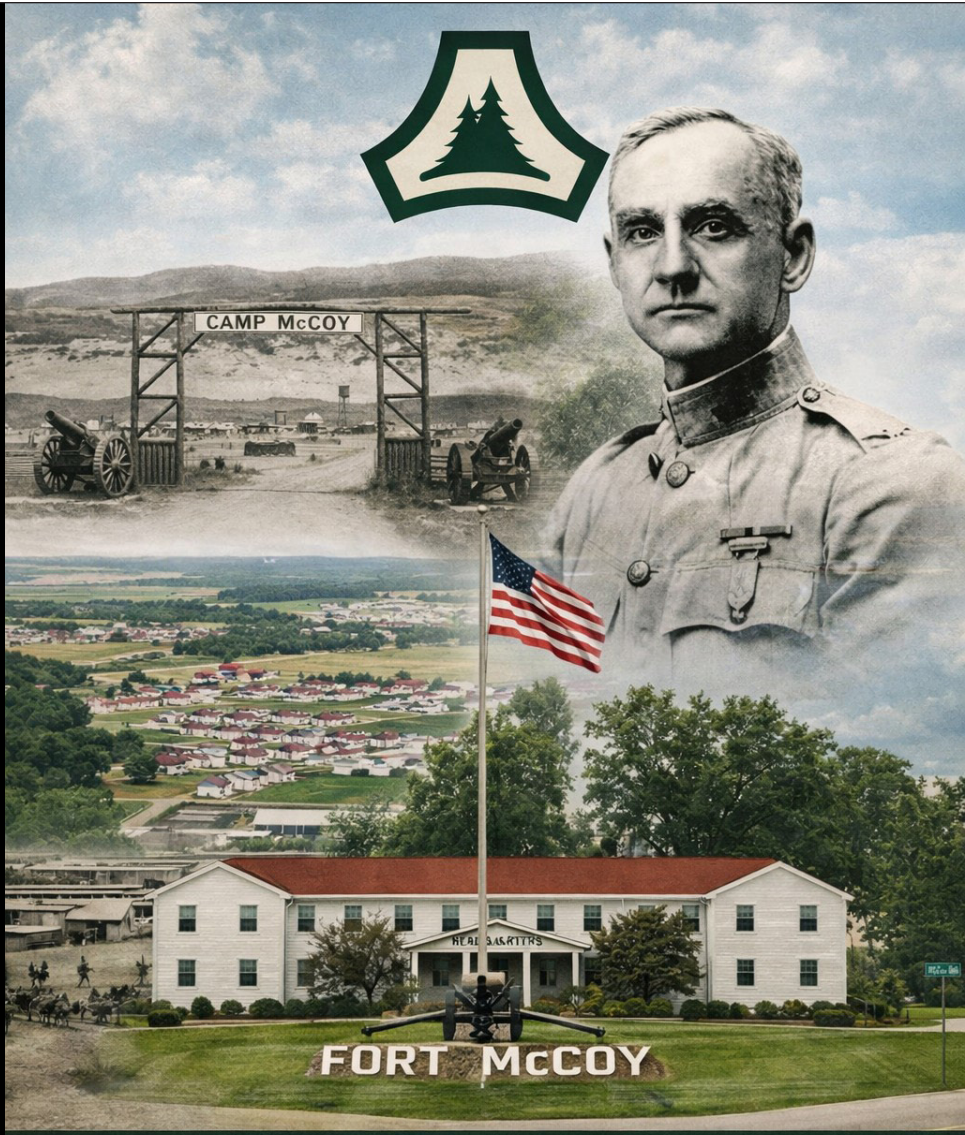
The installation's mission: "Fort McCoy strengthens Total Force Readiness by serving as a training center, Mobilization Force Generation Installation, and Strategic Support Area enabling warfighter lethality to deploy, fight, and win our nation's wars."

And Fort McCoy's vision is, "To be the premier training center supporting the most capable, combat-ready, and lethal armed forces."

Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin. The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy>, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," on Flickr at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi/>, and on X (formerly Twitter) by searching "usagmccoy." Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base.

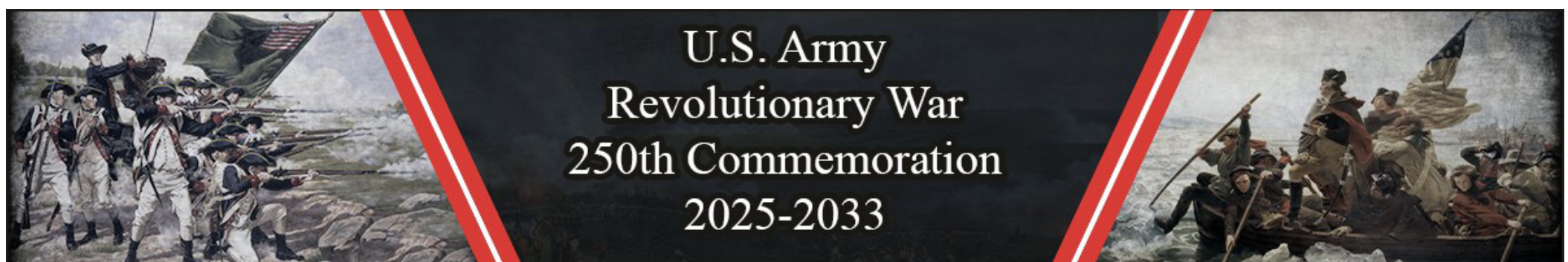
Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."



★ **CAMP MCCOY** ★  
**TO FORT MCCOY**  
 — MONROE COUNTY, WISCONSIN —



## REMEMBERING ORIGINS OF MONROE'S CONTINENTAL ARMY/REVOLUTIONARY WAR



## U.S. Army Revolutionary War 250th Commemoration 2025-2033

# Looking at history of Continental Army

BY U.S. ARMY CENTER FOR MILITARY HISTORY

Fort Lesley J. McNair Washington, D.C.

### 'This We'll Defend'

The U.S. Army's official motto, "This We'll Defend," has been in use since 1775. This phrase signifies the Army's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the nation's freedom and democracy against all threats, both foreign and domestic.

It serves as a constant reminder to soldiers of their duty to protect not only themselves but also the safety and democratic values of every American.

Over time, while "This We'll Defend" remains the enduring motto, additional expressions such as "No mission too difficult" and "Duty — Honor — Country" have been adopted to encapsulate various facets of Army life and values.

These mottos collectively embody the core principles outlined in the Army Creed, including loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

### Establishment of the Continental Army

On June 14, 1775, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia adopted the New England Army of Observation, making it a "continental" army — a united fighting force — that could represent all 13 colonies with the addition of the troops from the three middle colonies. The Continental Army thus became America's first national institution.

The Continental Congress further:

"Resolved, that six companies of expert riflemen [sic], be immediately raised in Pennsylvania, two in Maryland, and two in Virginia; ... [and] that each company, as soon as completed [sic], shall march and join the army near Boston, to be there employed as light infantry, under the command of the chief officer in that army."

The U.S. Army also recognizes this resolution as establishing the infantry branch, making it the oldest branch in the Army.

### Selection of George Washington as Commander in Chief

The next step was to select a commander in chief. George Washington of Virginia wanted the job.

He had extensive experience, had commanded units from other colonies in the field, and was a delegate to Congress. On June 15, 1775, Congress unanimously voted on the measure, and the next day presented Washington his commission.

It read, in part:

"We, reposing special trust and confidence in your patriotism, valor, conduct, and fidelity, do, by these presents, constitute and appoint you to be General and Commander in chief, of the army of the United Colonies, and of all the forces now raised, or to be raised, by them, and of all others who shall voluntarily offer their service, and join the said Army for the Defence [sic] of American liberty, and for repelling every hostile invasion thereof. And you are hereby vested with full power and authority to act as you shall think for the good and welfare of the service."

Thus, the Continental Congress commissioned George Washington as commander in chief of the Continental Army, 19 June 1775.

### Life of the Continental Soldier

Continental soldiers came from many different backgrounds and included Black people and Native Americans.

By 1780, persons of color made up as much as 10 to 15 percent of the Continental Army.

Some estimates range as high as 30 percent.

The average age of the Continental Soldier was 22, although the general age range fluctuated from ages 15 to 70s.

The first oath of enlistment for the Continental Army adopted on 14 June 1775 ran as follows:

"I \_\_\_ have, this day, voluntarily enlisted myself, as a soldier, in the American continental army, for one year, unless sooner discharged: And I do bind myself to conform, in all instances, to such rules and regulations, as are, or shall be, established for the government of the said Army."

On the march, the Continental Soldier carried 45 to 60 pounds of gear, including musket, bayonet, knapsack, haversack, ammunition, blanket, and other mission-critical items.

Continental Army uniforms varied by state and branch of service. In 1779, the Continental Congress established the blue uniform coat as the color for the Army, but shortages of dye meant that many regiments wore brown or green coats until the end of the war.

The Continental Army often employed women to provide important services such as nursing, laboring, laundering, and other logistics functions.

To fill vacancies in the Continental Army, Congress assigned yearly quotas to each state, which offered recruiting inducements such as bounties and land grants. States that were unable to fill positions with volunteers resorted to drafts from the state militia.

In 1778, Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben designed the first drill regulation for the Continental Army.

Known as the "Blue Book," it synthesized European and British tactical doctrine and shaped the Continental Army into a professional fighting force.

The Continental Army provided soldiers with daily rations of meat, bread, vegetables, sugar or molasses, and beer or cider, with weekly allowances of candles and soap. However, shortages were common, and most soldiers received well below the authorized ration.

Most Continental Soldiers carried the British Short Land Service Musket ("Brown Bess"), or a locally made copy or the French Infantry Musket ("Charleville" muskets), both of which ranged between .80- to .69-caliber and weighed just over 9 pounds (12 with the addition of a bayonet).

Infantry Soldiers were expected to fire three rounds per minute.

### Weapons

The weapons of this period consisted of firelocks for infantry; pistols, firelocks, and sabers for mounted troops; and cannons for artillery.

Firelocks included flintlock muskets, carbines, fusils, rifles, and a few other, less common arms.

The musket, by far the most common arm, was loaded using a paper cartridge containing a 1-ounce ball and black powder rammed down the barrel.

A musket required 13 steps to load and fire. A good Soldier could manage about three shots per minute and reliably hit a target within 100 yards.

Rifles were accurate out to about 300 yards but took up to a minute to load. The spent black powder created enough white smoke to obscure a battlefield in a matter of minutes.

Armies often closed to less than 50 yards before firing and used the bayonet to decide the outcome of the battle.

Mounted troops, called dragoons or light horse, scouted for the army, delivered messages, and sometimes closed in with sabers to follow up a bayonet charge. Artillery softened up the enemy line or fortifications or knocked out enemy cannons.

All of these weapons required sophisticated tactics to maneuver the lines of highly disciplined troops into range to use their weapons effectively.

Infantry Soldiers of all ranks had to learn and understand the complex movements explained in works such as British army Lt. Col. Humphrey Bland's *Treatise of Military Discipline*; *The Manual Exercise, as Ordered by His Majesty in 1764*; and later Gen. Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben's *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of*



U.S. ARMY photo illustrations

the Troops of the United States, or the Blue Book.

By maintaining tightly ordered ranks, soldiers could concentrate their fire or bayonets to maximum effect. Mastery of these intricate maneuvers gave the Army of the United States the tactical proficiency to prevail on the battlefields of the Revolutionary War.

### Tactics

The Continental Army waged war using linear tactics. It fought in closely formed lines or ranks of Soldiers, usually two but sometimes three deep.

The Soldier in the front rank and the soldier in the rank behind him formed a file. Soldiers typically stood between 18 inches and 4 or 5 feet apart, depending on the type of combat.

If facing enemy infantry or mounted troops in an open field, they might form at closer order to better concentrate their fire. If fighting in woods or if facing artillery, they might open their files — increasing the distance between Soldiers — in order to get around trees and bushes or to make themselves less of a target.

Commanders sometimes ordered independent fire by files, with each pair of soldiers shooting in turn. Light infantry troops often practiced this tactic.

When firing as part of a platoon or battalion, officers gave the command to march, load, and fire.

To communicate information over the noise of the battle, drummers used different drumbeats that conveyed commands and enabled soldiers to fire in near-perfect unison.

Any missed step or unheard command could put soldiers in the wrong place and open them up to severe injury or death.

Commanders therefore demanded strict discipline to execute linear tactics. Corporals ensured that privates knew and understood their drill and kept order within the ranks.

Sergeants kept the ranks and files together on the battlefield, protected the officers, and helped them to evacuate the wounded and resupply ammunition.

Both corporals and sergeants wore an epaulette or strip of cloth on their right shoulder to show rank.

Those of the corporals were green, those of the sergeants were red. After 1779, the epaulettes were white cloth, one for corporals, and two for sergeants. Sergeants usually carried swords in addition to muskets, and early in the war sometimes carried a polearm known as a halberd.

Drummers, who also played fifes, often wore uniforms of opposite colors so that their officers could find them in the heat of battle.

Officers wore uniforms in the color of their regiments, with a sword, sash, and epaulettes to denote rank, or a long polearm called a spontoon. Immediate recognition was critical in the heat of battle, and armies of the day often wore brightly colored uniforms, if they were available, to distinguish friend from foe.

At other times, Soldiers wore simple linen hunting shirts. Few

thought about the need for camouflage, as the capabilities of the weapons that soldiers carried meant that most battles were fought in the open at relatively close range.

### Rations

The Continental Army had two types of rations.

The rations issued in a garrison, such as a fort, generally included freshly baked bread, fresh meat, and fruits and vegetables.

Rations in the field consisted of dried bread (often called ship's biscuit); salted beef (also known as corned beef) or pork; and dried peas.

Commissaries either issued beer to the Soldiers or provided an allowance to buy it.

The typical Continental Soldier should have received the following in November 1775:

- 1 pound bread or flour per day.
- 1 pound beef, 1 pound fish, or ¾ pound pork per day.
- 3 pints peas or beans, or vegetable equivalent, per week.
- 1 pint milk per day.
- ½ pint rice or Indian meal (cornbread) per day.
- 1 quart spruce beer or cider per day, or 9 gallons of molasses per company per week.

— 3 pounds candles per company per week.

— 24 pounds soft or 8 pounds hard soap per company per week.

An amended ration from 24 December 1775 authorized "corned beef or pork four days in a week, salt fish one day, and fresh beef two days." In lieu of milk during the winter, General Headquarters increased the meat ration to 1½ pounds beef and 18 ounces of pork.

The rice and cornmeal ration became a weekly rather than a daily ration. A ration of 6 ounces of butter or 9 ounces of lard per week also was added.

To cope with food shortages, Gen. Phillip Schuyler issued a general order authorizing substitutions for various foods.

For example, when only bread and pork were available, a soldier's full daily ration was 2 pounds of bread and 1 pound pork. Cooking equipment was equally simple.

On Dec. 21, 1775, Congress authorized 100 haversacks, a camp kettle for every six soldiers, as well as a cord of hickory "or other wood in proportion," and forty iron pots for cooking at the barracks.

Not much detail is known about eighteenth-century field cooking. Soldiers generally cooked their rations in tin camp kettles, initially with six soldiers to a "mess"— the term for a group of soldiers who all ate together.

There is some evidence that some soldiers may have roasted their meat over open fires, but it is more likely that most used kettles to boil the meat.

Some states, such as Pennsylvania, issued skillets when camp kettles were not available.

Read more about this history by visiting <https://history.army.mil/Revwar250/Continental-Soldier/#establishment>.



MONROE COUNTY TODAY

Where history lives: Inside one man's mission to preserve Monroe County

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday, there is a natural pull to look back — to reconsider the people, places and moments that shaped the nation.

In Monroe County, Wisconsin, that reflection carries a certain irony. The county bears the name of James Monroe, the nation's fifth president, even though he never set foot in the region. Yet the story of Monroe County is not defined by its namesake, but by the generations of people who built lives there — and by one man who has spent more than two decades making sure those lives are remembered.

For more than 20 years, Jarrod Roll has served as director of the Monroe County Local History Room and Museum, a position that is at once highly visible and largely unseen.

Visitors know him as the person who can guide them through exhibits, answer obscure questions, or help trace a family lineage. But much of his work happens quietly — behind the scenes, in the steady, meticulous effort required to collect, preserve and interpret the story of an entire county.

Roll is quick to correct a common assumption about what he does.

"When I applied, it was for county historian," he said. "But I'm not a county historian... I'm a manager of a museum and archives."

It is a distinction that says as much about the evolution of the job as it does about Roll himself. The position was created in 1976, during the surge of patriotic energy surrounding the nation's bicentennial. Across the country, communities rediscovered an interest in local and family history. In Monroe County, that interest took hold in a particularly lasting way.

A bicentennial committee formed to organize celebrations quickly realized that the enthusiasm were seeing — people digging into genealogy, asking questions about their communities, wanting to preserve artifacts — should not be temporary. They approached county leaders with an idea: create a permanent space and a paid position dedicated to safeguarding Monroe County's history.

The county agreed, funding both a facility and a role that would anchor that mission for decades to come.

Looking back now, as the country approaches its 250th anniversary, the symmetry is hard to miss. The same spirit that led to the creation of Roll's position — an awareness that history matters, and that it must be actively preserved — remains just as relevant.

Roll often reflects on that origin story, not as a historical footnote, but as a responsibility.

"It was the foresight of those folks in 1976," he said. "They saw the value in it, and the county has honored that for 50 years."

Honoring that legacy has meant adapting the role to fit reality. The title "county historian" suggested a singular authority on the past, but Roll quickly realized that Monroe County's history was far too broad — and too rich — for any one person to fully know.

"There are people in this county who know way more about specific topics than I do," he said.

Instead, his job is to bring those pieces together—to create a place where knowledge can be collected, organized and shared. It is part administrator, part curator, part educator, and part collaborator. It is also, at times, an exercise in balancing priorities.

The work he enjoys most—immersing himself in research and crafting narratives—often has to wait.

"In order to write and create a presentation, I had to do it outside my normal work hours," he said. "During the day, there's no time to buckle down and start researching."

That reality reveals something essential about the nature of local historical work. It is not simply about discovering stories; it is about maintaining

the infrastructure that allows those stories to exist in the first place. Collections must be cataloged, preserved and made accessible. Exhibits must be designed. Visitors must be assisted. Partnerships must be maintained. And all of it must function within the constraints of time, funding and space.

The result, in Monroe County, is a facility that often surprises those who walk through its doors.

Roll recalls a recent visitor researching family history who was struck not just by what was available, but by how easy it was to access.

"I cannot believe how wonderful this facility is," the visitor told him.

That reaction is not uncommon, and it speaks to decades of work — not just by Roll, but by the volunteers and predecessors who helped build the collection.

"This isn't something I did by myself," he said. "We've been doing this for 50 years."

If the archives are the backbone of Roll's work, the people of Monroe County are its heart. And one of the first things he noticed when he began his job was just how deeply military service runs through the community.

"It became very clear right away," he said. "There were a lot of veterans living here."

That realization shaped some of his earliest efforts, including an exhibit on Korean War veterans that connected him with local service organizations and opened the door to countless personal stories. Over time, those connections expanded, reflecting the broader influence of Fort McCoy, the military installation that has long been central to the county's identity.

The presence of Fort McCoy has created a unique dynamic. Soldiers come to Monroe County from across the country — sometimes for training, sometimes for deployment—and many of them return later in life.

"They come back and retire here," Roll said. It is a pattern that adds layers to the county's history, blending local and national narratives in ways that are both subtle and profound. A visitor signing the guest book might list South Carolina or Texas as their home, but their connection to Monroe County is real—formed through experience, memory and, often, a sense of belonging.

Roll sees those connections play out every day. A group of visitors walks in on a quiet afternoon. They are not from the area, but they are curious. They explore the exhibits, ask questions, and begin to see how their own experiences interact with the place.

"It's just great talking to them," he said. Those interactions reinforce a central truth of Roll's work: history is not static. It is something people carry with them, something that evolves as new stories are added and old ones are rediscovered.

In Monroe County, those stories stretch far beyond any single theme. There is military history tied to Fort McCoy and the Veterans Administration Medical Center. There are stories of global significance, like the Japanese American soldiers who trained in the area during World War II, or the Cuban refugees who arrived in 1980, bringing an international dimension to a rural Wisconsin community.

There are also deeply personal stories — like those of families displaced during World War II to make way for military expansion. Roll recalls one volunteer who still remembers that moment vividly, even though she was only a child at the time.

"She remembers her mom crying," he said. Such memories underscore the human impact of historical events, reminding visitors that history is not just a series of dates and facts, but a collection of lived experiences.

Beyond those narratives, Monroe County's identity has been shaped by geography and movement. Long before modern infrastructure, the area sat at the crossroads of early travel routes — paths that would later become state roads, then rail lines, and eventually major highways. Each layer of transpor-



Photos by Theresa Fitzgerald

Jarrod Roll, the Monroe County Local History Room director in Sparta, Wis., speaks as an organizer in the "Lost Voices of Mariel" Panel that answered questions Feb. 13, 2020, at the Monroe County Local History Room. The panel recalled the 1980 Cuban Refugee Program at Fort McCoy. In 1980, the Mariel Boatlift brought 14,000 people to the refugee compound at Fort McCoy. An exhibit and this panel explored the lives of the Cuban refugees who began their journey in the United States and how the event impacted Monroe County.

ation brought new opportunities, new people, and new stories.

"Sparta was at the crossroads of two state roads," Roll explained.

That position helped accelerate development, turning the county into a hub of activity. Even today, the legacy of those early routes can be seen in the region's continued growth and connectivity.

Yet for all its connections to broader networks, Monroe County has retained a strong sense of local identity. It remains, in many ways, a rural place — one where agriculture has played a central role for generations, even as economic changes reshape the landscape.

There is, Roll notes, a quiet pride in that continuity.

"People will tell you they're third or fourth generation," he said.

That pride is not just about longevity; it is about belonging. It is about the sense that, despite change, there is something enduring about the community.

For Roll, capturing that sense is just as important as preserving artifacts or documents. History, after all, is not only what happened — it is how peo-

ple understand what happened, and how they carry that understanding forward.

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, that work takes on added urgency. Milestones invite reflection, but they also raise questions about what will be remembered and what might be lost.

In Monroe County, those questions are answered, in part, by the steady work of one man and the institution he helps lead. Day by day, Jarrod Roll gathers the fragments of the past — stories, records, memories—and ensures they remain accessible to the present.

The county may be named for a president who never knew it, but its true history lies in the people who have lived there, served there, and passed through its crossroads. And thanks to Roll, those stories—large and small, local and global—are not slipping away. They are being preserved, shared, and carried forward, ready to be rediscovered by the next generation as America begins its next chapter.

Learn more about Monroe County history by visiting the Monroe County Local History Room in Sparta, Wis., or go online to <https://monroecountyhistory.org>.



Photo by Kaleen Holliday

Former Fort McCoy Senior Enlisted Advisor Command Sgt. Maj. Raquel DiDomenico is pictured with Jarrod Roll on Nov. 22, 2021, during the opening reception for a new holiday exhibit at the Monroe County Local History Room that featured a 1960's theme.



Courtesy photo

Jarrod Roll, director of the Monroe County Local History Room and Museum, speaks to visitors Dec. 30, 2025, during an event with Lego masters from Eau Claire, Wis., at the Deke Slayton Museum in Sparta, Wis.



Courtesy photo

Jarrod Roll (left) is pictured with staff members and volunteers in November 2024 for an event at the Monroe County Local History Room and Museum.

# MONROE COUNTY HISTORICAL PHOTOS

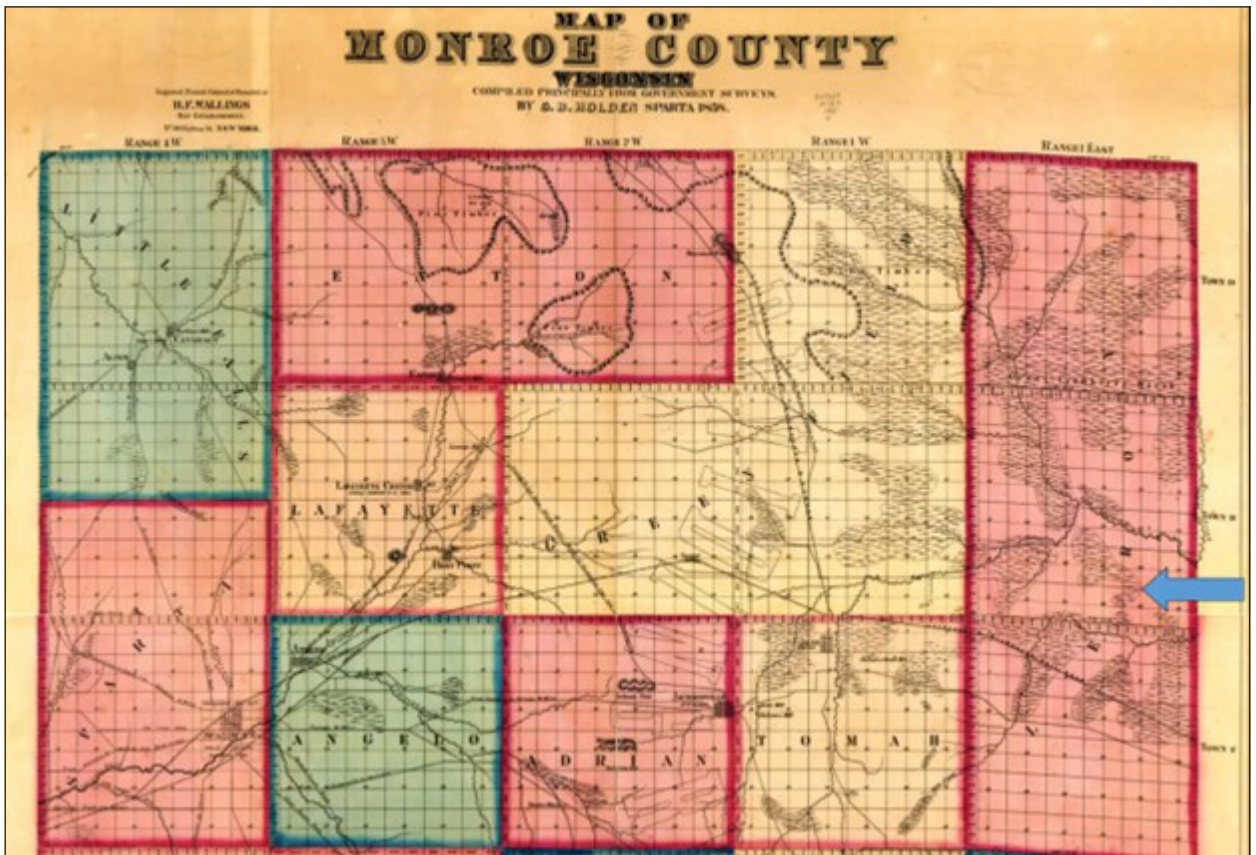


Monroe County Local History Room archive photos

A Veterans Day parade is shown taking place on Camp McCoy on Nov. 11, 1943, during the installation's time training service members for fighting in World War II.



This photo is of a large crowd gathered under the wooden arches erected at the intersection of Water and Oak Streets in Sparta for the welcome home parade on May 19, 1919, for the 32nd Infantry Division returning from overseas following the end of World War I. The arches remained up until 1933.



Did you know Monroe County used to have a township called Leroy? This 1858 Monroe County, Wis., map shows it at the right encompassing what is now Scott, Byron, and Oakdale Townships. Leroy was later renamed Oakdale after the mail kept getting confused with Elroy.



Photo shows construction work on the Chicago & North Western Railroad in Tunnel City, Wis., in 1911. Did you know that Monroe County has six railroad tunnels? Three are in Tunnel City and three are on what is now the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail. This tunnel is located just a few miles from Fort McCoy.



This is a photograph of a group of people by the stone pillars Camp McCoy sign on South Post in 1947. The area still stands today and was built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s.



In honor of the anniversary of Pearl Harbor (Dec. 7), here's a photo of three Pearl Harbor survivors from Monroe County in front of a military exhibit at the Monroe County Local History Room in 2001. Pictured are: Bill Richgruber, Walter Friske, and Spencer Olsen.