



HILLCAT HISTORY CORNER

HDMS JOURNALISM

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BY CYRIL ~ GRADE 7

Fall of Constantinople



What was this particular event in history?

In May of 1453 Byzantium is on its edge. Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror had already besieged the city on the Bosphorus. A mercenary from Genoa named Giovanni Giustiniani commands his troops to hold the fortress. Constantine the 11th stands in his palace waiting for his downfall. Karaca Pasha pushes his forces up to the walls. The Sultans Elite Janissaries push up in the third wave, scaling the ramparts near the Saint Romanus Gate. Constantinople falls, and a gateway to Europe opens to the Ottomans.

By 1400 the Ottoman Turks had taken chunks out of the Byzantine empire. They had ravaged through Anitolia and some of the Balkans. Ever since the Ottoman Turks had come into Anatolia they had been taking chunks out of the Byzantine Empire. Byzantium had been cut down to a sliver of its former self. Its African lands had been taken over by Arab and African tribes, its lands in Mesopotamia and the Levant had also been conquered by Arab tribes. Now the Turks had pushed Byzantium to Greece, Thrace, and most importantly, the city on the Bosphorus Constantinople.

In 1451, Mehmed the 2nd had ascended to the Ottoman throne. Mehmed had already rained once over the Ottomans but had been deposed for being but a child. He had ideas implanted in his head by his advisors to capture Constantinople and to create an Ottoman Empire. He started the strengthening of the Navy and Army to prepare a siege of the city. Mehmed would start by ordering most of the Balkans. His troops over the course of a year or two captured most of the Byzantines lands in the Balkans. With his troops prepared he would lay siege to Constantinople on April 6th of 1453.



WHAT HAPPENED?!

The Byzantine Emperor would call out for aid. He called for men from Christian Europe to come and assist the siege of his city. The Pope wrote back to him, asking for reunification of the two christian churches of Catholicism and Orthodoxy and if so he would offer assistance. The Orthodox council voted yes, but the people of Constantinople rioted in the streets refusing the proposal. The real help would arrive from Venice and Genoa. When the Italian troops from the two city states were moving to the harbour of Constantinople the Ottomans would engage in a naval battle with them. The Italians thankfully were able to enter the harbour. The Genoese leader Giovanni Giustiniani entered Constantinople with his privately funded 700 Soldiers. He was a renowned Tactician of the Defense of fortresses so knowing this, Constantine the 11th ordered for him to be placed in charge of leading the Defense of his walls.

The Ottoman Sultanate wheeled out their Great Guns made by famous Hungarian Blacksmiths. They would start a bombardment on the city. The Guns bombarded the city for weeks. After 53 days most of the famous Theodosian walls were reduced to rubble, but the defenders on the walls did not give in. They continued to hold the fortress to the last man. Before an assault on the 7th of May, the Mehmed needed to get around the Golden Horn, a chain set over the harbour of Constantinople disallowing ships in. Instead of breaking or destroying the chain, Mehmed ordered his ships on greased logs. He had the ships slide to the other side of the Bosphorus, allowing him to take on the other side and help assist the attack.

On the 7th of May, the Ottomans saw a breach in the Byzantine defenses. The St Romanus gate had been subject to the bombardment, damaging it. The Ottomans saw the weakness and ordered an assault upon the gate. The Byzantines and Italians were stalwart in their defense. They pushed back the Ottoman irregulars as they started scaling the walls. They had helped but their leader, Giovanni Giustiniani had been injured. The Italian made the decision to pull out of the city. To add insult to injury a full red moon had projected red light onto the Hagia Sophia after a large storm. The religious Byzantines saw this as an Omen that they would lose the battle. The Ottoman men made a final assault on the 29th of May. They were ordered back to the very same St Romanus gate. They would breach the lines of the defenders. The Ottoman Janissaries climbed up over the wall as the news was delivered to Constantine XI. He dropped his regal attire and rushed to the walls. He would die in a last stand with his men. The city would fall soon after.

The fall of Constantinople opened the Balkans to the Ottoman Sultanate. They would rush up the peninsula over the course of a few hundred years. They would besiege Vienna and be pushed back down to Anatolia. They held control over the Black Sea for a long time, and they held North Africa. The Ottomans would perish after WW1, where nationalists from each culture they conquered would rise up against their ruler. This led to the rise of Greece, Bulgaria, and many Middle Eastern Countries.

Sources:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mehmed-II-Ottoman-sultan>

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Fall-of-Constantinople-1453>

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Hillcat History Corner!

The Battle of Waterloo!



What happened in this battle?!

It's a muddy sunday near the town of Waterloo, Belgium. Two armies approached each other on the 18th of June, 1815. The British, led by the Duke of Wellington, veteran of the Peninsular Campaign, Arthur Wellesley. He is accompanied by Brits, Dutchmen, Belgians, both Flemish and Walloons, and the Black Brunswickers. On the other side are the French. Napoleon had come back from his exile on Elba and had taken back over the country. He is accompanied by his regiments of the line and his Old Guard.

Napoleon had been exiled to an island in the Mediterranean known as Elba. After fighting the 6th war of the coalition he had been deposed. The great powers of Europe feared him more than they feared each other. Napoleon stayed there for 9 months. He had been discontent with his forced retirement and decided to leave. He got on a boat with his guard and sailed to France. By the time the reintroduced royalty of France heard about his return they ran and left Paris. Napoleon took over the country again with almost no resistance. The great powers saw this and wouldn't let it happen. They declared war, not on France, but on Napoleon. The British force led by Arthur Wellesley traversed across the English Channel. They would meet Napoleon in Wallonia. A few miles south of Brussels.

Napoleon's army marched from France to match the British force. Napoleon was overconfident that he could beat the British in a battle and quickly wipe them out. The British were accompanied by the Prussian force led by Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher. The British would face the French 2 days earlier at the battle of Quatre Bra. The Prussian had been driven out earlier from the French border so Wellington was alone with his force. The French would assault the crossroads near 2pm. The French pushed up the roads assaulting the Anglo lines. The British troops held against the onslaught of Frenchmen charging at them. As the late noon was approaching the Anglo lines looked weak. They had been battered and beaten. Then reinforcements arrived from Hannover and other German states. They pushed the French back by dusk, securing the crossroad in British hands.

What happened at this point in history?

Two days they camped, and two days they waited. The two armies approached the town of Waterloo. They would camp in the mud and rain. By the 18th the ground is mud. The two leaders, the two men would wake up to a field of battle that would lead to each other's severe disadvantage. The British occupied three nearby hamlets, La Haye Saint, Hougomont, and Pappalotte. As the sun rose the two batteries opened up upon the other. The French started to move up the fields to assault the three hamlets. The Anglo forces didn't know what hell was approaching them.

The Pappalotte hamlet was occupied by 2 regiments from Orange-Nassau. The French opened the assault on the farmstead by early noon. The Nassau defenders hid behind the wooden walls as they were shot at by a massive French barrage of fire. The French assaulted the farmstead for hours until 6:15 pm they would make a breakthrough. Through the mud they would push into the farm buildings pushing the two regiments out, although the victory was short lived.

Moving down the line was Hougomont farmstead. It was merely 500 yards in front of the Anglo lines, if the French captured it it would be sure doom of the British force. It was occupied by elite British regiments like the Scots & Coldstream guards along with regiments from British Hannover & Nassau. It had many buildings including a church and its walls were high, a great stronghold. As the battle started, the Duke of Wellington gave the order to his generals staff, "Keep Hougomont". The French lead by Jerome Bonaparte started to the farmstead as the battle started around them. They would begin to march up to a treeline in front of the Chateau. The men in the farmstead took aim and shot, this became the "killing fields". The French were slaughtered approaching the farmstead, bodies lined the treeline as they were shredded to pieces. The French through sometime were able to approach the farmstead. A French Sapper Lieutenant Legros, known as "The Smasher" approached the gate. With his axe in hand he smashed down the door, cutting it down. 30 Frenchmen entered the plaza of the stronghold as the Coldstream guards were ordered to push them back. A brutal hand to hand combat started with the doors being closed behind the French. The 30 Frenchmen were slaughtered besides a young Drummer. The French fell back and Napoleon ordered an artillery barrage on the farmhouse. For 9 hours it was a war of attrition and the stronghold never fell.

La Haye Sainte was on the crucial Brussels-Charleroi road. It was occupied by the 2nd light Kings German Legion (KGL). It had high stone walls, a barn, and orchard. French skirmishers started the attack in the morning. By 2pm D'Erlon had ordered an assault on the building. The French made an advance to the Chateau over the course of a few hours. The KGL had taken casualties and had run out of ammo. The French burned down the gates of the building and the KGL ensued to hand to hand combat. Marshall Ney personally commanded the Regiments and Engineers as they entered. They used the Butts of their rifles to smash French heads in before they had to retreat and give up the Chateau by 6.

The Prussian led by Gebard von Blucher had lost the battle of Ligny days earlier. Napoleon's Marshal Grouchy had been sent to chase after them and not let them join with Wellington's, but it would be in vain. Bulow's IV korp, Blucher's vanguard appeared from the trees. The French right flank was threatened and Napoleon sent troops to face them. They met at the town of Placenoit. Napoleon realized that he had been flanked and set his 8 Battalions of his Young Guard to slow them down. Despite this, they were outnumbered, and the Prussians had artillery support. The French would blockade themselves in houses and the Prussians would move their cannons down. They would fire point-blank canister shots at the houses and charge them with bayonets. The French fell and their flank was open.

The Prussians moved to assault Napoleon's force and relieve Wellington's men. The lines of the French started to fall into shambles. In a last ditch effort Napoleon charged his Imperial Guard to Wellington's centre. They charged up but they were outnumbered. They wouldn't surrender. They were killed and Wellington ordered a full advance on the collapsing French lines. The French retreated in full confusion without a clear objective. Napoleon's France would be conquered and the coalition forces would dismantle it as soon as they got to Paris.

