THE YORKER GAZETTE

VOLUME 3

NEWSLETTER OF 2ND YORK MILITIA 1812

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Upper Canada Preserved 1817
2nd Pattern Medal,
City of Toronto Museum Services

Upper Canada Preserved 1817
2nd Pattern Medal in gold,
City of Toronto Museum Services

A Gilded Preservation: The "Upper Canada Preserved" Medals

By Omar Sherif, Private, 2nd York

Just as important to the War of 1812's history is the postwar collective culture of memory and celebration in Upper Canada. For many English-speaking Canadians, the war represented a high point of patriotic resolve. Canada, they believed, did not ask for the war, yet it successfully defended itself when aggression came, and thus preserved for itself an independent future divergent from the United States. The canon of the war did much to aid this sentiment: the heroic martyrdom of Isaac Brock, the bold march of Laura Secord, and the bravery of the Canadian citizen militia all fueled the postwar national myth. One motto, however, defined this current best and would be forever immortalized in precious metal: "Upper Canada Preserved."

Evoking a kind of divine protection, 'Upper Canada Preserved' was the motto inscribed upon a series of famous medals originally commissioned near the end of the war by the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada. Established in December of 1812, the society brought together well-to-do elements of Upper Canadian society with the aim of providing financial relief and charity to those affected by the war. This included donations to military hospitals, support for families with sons or fathers who were away on service, relief for veterans, and the recognition of contributions to the war effort. The last niche would be addressed by the society's proposed medal.

What would become known as the Upper Canada Preserved Medal was first commissioned during the war when the request for the engraving and striking of the medals was sent to the Royal Mint in Britain. The Loyal and Patriotic Society, through these medals, intended to recognize the merit of those who fought in the defense of Upper Canada. The medals served a kind of nation building function as they referenced the ties between English Canada and Britain, while celebrating something of a self-made Canadian vision of military success.

Continued on Page 10 ...

2nd YORK
THOMPSON'S COY.

HERITAGE MISSISSAUGA
Thompson's Company
2nd Regiment York Militia

"The Light of Reason Does Not Move Here"

A Veteran of the Napoleonic Wars Describes the Battlefield of His Time

By Rob Smol

There is probably no contemporary of Napoleon who has had a more lasting academic influence on the development of military strategy than the Prussian Major-General Karl Von Clausewitz (1780-1831). During his service in both the Prussian and Russian military, he took part in numerous campaigns and battles against Napoleon including Jena and Borodino. His seminal book *On War*, published after his death, challenged future generations of military leaders to look at strategy and tactics not so much as a logical sequence of events, but rather as a confluence, or dialectic of human, political, and moral factors. To this day, On War remains standard reading in western military academies and command and staff colleges.

The following is an excerpt from *On War* (Book 1-Chapter IV-Of Danger in War) where Clausewitz intimately and candidly describes how a typical battle from the early 1800s would have looked and felt like to the common soldier:

As we approach, the thunder of the cannon becoming plainer and plainer is soon followed by the howling of shot, which attracts the attention of the inexperienced. Balls begin to strike the ground close to us, before and behind. We hasten to the hill where stands the General and his numerous Staff. Here the close striking of the cannon balls and the bursting of shells is so frequent that the seriousness of life makes itself visible through the youthful picture of imagination. Suddenly some one known to us falls—a shell strikes amongst the crowd and causes some involuntary movements—we begin to feel that we are no longer perfectly at ease and collected; even the bravest is at least to some degree confused. Now, a step farther into the battle which is raging before us like a scene in a theatre, we get to the nearest General of Division; here ball follows ball, and the noise of our own guns increases the confusion. From the General of Division to the Brigadier. He, a man of acknowledged bravery, keeps carefully behind a rising ground, a house, or a tree—a sure sign of increasing danger. Grape rattles on the roofs of the houses and in the fields; cannon balls howl over us, and plough the air in all directions, and soon there is a frequent whistling of musket balls. A step farther towards the troops, to that sturdy infantry which for hours has maintained its firmness under this heavy fire; here the air is filled with the hissing of balls which announce their proximity by a short sharp noise as they pass within an inch of the ear, the head, or the breast.

To add to all this, compassion strikes the beating heart with pity at the sight of the maimed and fallen. The young soldier cannot reach any of these different strata of danger without feeling that the light of reason does not move here in the same medium, that it is not refracted in the same manner as in speculative contemplation. Indeed, he must be a very extraordinary man who, under these impressions for the first time, does not lose the power of making any instantaneous decisions …

This "camp attack" picture from the Engagement at Bradley that my wife took reflects the Fog and Confusion that Clausewitz discusses

This "moat attack" from Fort Erie in 2016 was taken by Dana Travers and illustrates the time of "mass confusion"

Answer The King's Call!

If you share our passion for history and the War of 1812 we would be happy to welcome you in our ranks.

2nd York is currently looking for women and men over 17 years of age to portray either soldiers or camp followers in a variety of settings (reenactments, programs, parades and more).

www.2ndyork.com/join-the-2nd

"Quick March to Glory"
Journal of William McCay, August 17 to September 5, 1812 (Part 2)

By Fred Blair

Fort Detroit was captured on August 16, 1812 and William McKay continued his diary entries there the following day.

August 17th, *"Most of us have been on guard in and around the Fort. Being relieved this morning my Comrade (John Ireland) & me took a ramble through the town and Garrison. It is a matter of surprise to us to obtain such a strong fortification defended by double our numbers without the loss of a man, there being only one sargent of the Royal artillery wounded. I saw only 7 men killed in the fort but I understand there was several more. It was a disagreeable sight to behold them. One was shot through the middle, anothers head was dashed to pieces. In the afternoon we crossed over to Sandwich to get our knapsacks which we had left behind, and went in a boat down to one of the vessels loaded with prisoners."*

John Ireland, like William, served as a private in a 2nd York Militia Flank Company who also served at the Battle of Queenston Heights. After 1812, he served as an issuer and storekeeper with the Commissariat Department and was in charge of maintaining the supply line on Dundas Street.

August 18th, *"I spent last night the most uncomfortable of any since I left home, for we lay in the boat alongside of the vessels. The boat was full of us and leaked very fast. I lay on a wheel of the Carriage of the Artillery wet and cold and very much fatigued. We then went on board the NANCY, a merchant brig which was full of prisoners before we came. We lay opposite Sandwich waiting til the other vessels were ready to sail."*

August 19th, *"We droped down the river to Fort Walden where we left one of our Company (Thos. Cornir) in the Hospital who has been sick several days."*

Private Thomas Corner served over 100 days in the 2nd York Militia. He was also a veteran of the Battle of Queenston Heights and Lundy's Lane in 1814.

August 20th, *"It rained most of this day very fast. We were obliged to stay on deck without any shelter through it all. In the afternoon some of our men were ordered on where as we still lay opposite Amherstburgh, to procure provisions and wood for our voyage."*

August 21st, *"We drafted down the river a short distance but the wind being contrary we were obliged to cast anchor. Several of the prisoners were taken out of our vessel and put on board the QUEEN CHARLOTTE who was to sail in company with us."*

August 22nd, *"Very early this morning a gun was fired from the CHARLOTTE, the signal for sailing. We immediately weighed anchor and set sail. We ... lively till noon when the wind failing, we lay beating on the Lake til night, & then cast anchor among several small islands."*

August 23rd, *"This was a very pleasant day. We purchased some ground corn and young potatos of an old French man who lived on one of the Islands which was a great rarity to us all. The wind raising about 10 o'clock we again set sail, a matter of joy to us all for we were heartily tired of our present mode of living."*

August 24th, *"The wind keeping up, we sailed on very well, but the other vessels that we were to company with, not being able to keep up with us, we were frequently oblidged to lower our sail."*

August 25th, *"This morning we perceived we have passed long point which was almost out of sight. I was very unwell to day owing to our way of living, being up at night (for we mounted 20 guards every night who must all be awake continually) and then sleeping in the hot sun. Likewise our provisions were very bad having got wet, the bread especially. In the evening as we drew near Fort Erie we were informed that an armistice was concluded between the contending powers and that 4 days notice was to be given before hostilities would be commenced. This news pleased us much, as we were in hopes of getting home to see our friends."*

August 26th, *"We lay at anchor in sight of Fort Erie all night & in the morning, about 9 o'clock came alongside of the wharf. The prisoners were landed under a strong guard. Here I had the first sight of General Hall. After some time we got in order for marching. Captain Hatt's Company was the advance guard, while the York volunteers guarded the prisoners. We marched on pretty briskly at first, but laying still so long, we soon became tired. We came to Chippaway about sunset. Most of us got our suppers at a tavern and our camps lodged in a barn, the best place we have had the some time."*

August 27th, *"An alarm was made about 2 o'clock last night & all that was able was under arms. We were marched up the river about a mile while it rained pretty fast. It was expected the Americans were attempting to cross the river by their movements, but it all proved to be nothing. We tarried the remainder of the night in a stone house a mile and a half about Chippaway, but being wet and cold we slept but little. My Comrade, Ireland, has been very unwell for several days & this morning I made some tea which we brought from Detroit, and we had a comfortable breakfast. It took us a long time to get in order for marching and we came but slowly sot that it was 12 oclock ere we reached Queenston. We were not allowed to stop at the camp, except those who were not able to go on.*

Continued on Page 5 ...

Mindset Makeover (Part 1) "Wet Tissue Paper"

From Bert "Johnson" Jagoda, Sergeant, 2nd York

In a perfect world, our perception of history would be crystal clear and untainted by bias or popular myth. If you are reading this, then you probably know that is not the case. Within our own sphere of Canadian history, there is perhaps no better example than the Upper-Canadian Militiaman.

Before I dig in, I'd like to make one thing clear. This is less of a research paper and more of a mental exercise. It is designed to scrub away the layers of casual misunderstanding that we all can have about this subject as a consequence of 21st century living.

Let's begin.

Militia begins as a technical distinction that includes fighting-age land owning men of status and means, who are not full time soldiers but can be summoned to arms in times of emergency. This places your average militia private in a socially and economically superior position to his average regular army counterpart.

"The Myth"

Thanks to badly-made films, TV shows and video games, there exists a notion that all fighting men in all time periods and places who are not career soldiers were the human equivalent to wet tissue paper. Drooling imbeciles wearing rags and holding upside-down rusty farm tools who would perish and rout in the face of an angry pigeon. Meanwhile, the gallant, sparkly clean regulars would stride ahead and carry the day.

Unfortunately, reality has a habit of being a bit more boring. The fact of the matter is, people are people. North America at the time didn't have very many of them either. Without exagerration, the highway from York to the Niagara Penninsula would barely pass for a bush trail in Europe, and the earth-shattering Battle of Queenston Heights saw a total of roughly four thousand men fight.

Compare that to some of the skirmishing and rear-guard actions at Waterloo, which could see ten times that number engaging one another miles from the action.

It would be an unwise assumption to make then, that the war between Great Britain and the United States of America could be resolved by simply pitting the comparatively small forces of regulars in the area against one another. Both sides would rely heavily on volunteer forces and men raised by law from the civilian population. As the war years would go on, the gulf in ability between the professional army and those who started as civilians would also shrink due to the volume of engagements fought, and time spent on campaign and training between actions.

Now let's draw our focus to more recent history, starting post Second World War and continuing to the current day. From former Yugoslavia, through South America and more recently in the Russo-Ukrainian war, the world has become witness to an overwhelmingly popular use of civilians-turned-soldiers by short-term requirement. Technically, many of these units count as 'militia'. Should the earlier assumptions about the danger they pose in combat, their usefulness on a campaign map or their status as individuals be made simply because they were not professional soldiers when their respective wars began?

For more information on 1812 events and other organizations please visit: http://crownforces.ca/

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Continued from Page 3 "Quick March to Glory"

By the middle of the afternoon we arrived at Fort Niagara. It appeared the whole town moved towards us. Several of our friends met us there who was much rejoiced to see us return safe. We were much fatigued and covered with dust but our Officers treated us very liberally & we got in the baggage waggons and returned to Queenston in high spirits. The Americans have built a great number of tents opposite Queenston but it is said there is not many troops arrived. Some deserters having come over lately brought the intellingence."

William, or the transcriber, mistook Fort George for Fort Niagara.

August 28th, *"Slept very well last night in the Officer's tent and after getting a good breakfast feel much refreshed. We are told that we shall be dismissed in a few days and return home which pleases us very well. I received two letters this evening from my Brother Nages, the other from my wife. Our friends are all well and express much satisfaction on the account of the success of the expedition we were engaged in."*

August 29th, *"I have caught a cold and do not feel well & my comrade Ireland was put in the hospital in Queenston."*

August 30th, *"We were paraded and our arms examined this morning. They still give us encouragement of our going home. The afternoon was cool and rainy. I went to the Hospital and tarried all night."*

August 31st, *"We were paraded at 9 o'clock, & again at 11, all in marching order, having our knapsacks & blankets on our backs. Several of our company have taken sick since we returned from Detroit."*

William had added an extra day to the month of August. A few days later, he appeared to have realized his mistake as there was no entry for September 2nd.

September 1st, *"Some of our Company were put on duty for the first time since we returned. Our stated times of Parade are at sunrise, at 9 oclock & at 3. We learn that Major Chambers marched from Detroit to Fort Miami which place he found evacuated. He found between 20 and 80 barrels of pork and the same quantity of flour. He destroyed the place and was going on to Fort Wayne but was recalled and is now returned to camp. We understood Capt. Durand is come to the camp who is to receive our arms & clothing before which we could not be dismissed. I was in evidence today in trial of James Bycraft, who deserted from Pattersons Creek. The Court Martial was held at the camp but they did not finish his sentence."*

Captain James Durand was a commander of one of the 5th Lincoln Militia Flank Companies in which James Bycraft served as a private. In Part 1, I noted that 2 men from the 2nd York had also deserted but that record did not indicate when or where.

September 3rd, *"I arose very unwell and the day was very disagreeable raining most part of the time, and our tents will not keep it out being covered with boards. We expect every day to be dismissed, and we wait very impatiently for the time."*

September 4th, "*The rain still continues and as I felt still unwell, I took up my abode in the Hospital, a more comfortable situation. This evening news came that the Americans have given the 4 days notice and they are now ready for war again, so that our hopes of going home are now at an end."*

September 5th, *"All is in a bustle again. It is reported that all the Militia are sent for. I continue in the Hospital, but do not get hearty, having but indifferent attendants."*

William's journal was about the size of a pocket note book and the transcript ended here. The transcript was not signed nor dated. His journal was published by the Toronto Globe on April 15, 1911 but I have not seen that copy. The original journal may be in an archive somewhere in the Chatham area. William received the General Service Medal for Detroit in 1847. It was in a private collection several years ago.

The Battle of Queenston Heights began before daylight on October 13, 1812 and William's name was on that payroll. If a man was absent or in the hospital there was usually a Remark beside his name. William appeared to have been present.

William served for brief periods of time in 1813 and 1814 but was also on the payroll as a sergeant for the Battle of Lundy's Lane on July 25, 1814, with my ancestor. The 2nd York Militia engaged the Americans briefly on their left flank during the afternoon. Later they had to give their powder and balls to the Regulars where it was thought it would be better used. During the night they probably assisted by taking water and supplies to the front line and by recovering the wounded from the field.

William McCay/McKay was about 28 years old in 1812. After the war, he and his wife Martha continued farming in Nelson Township, now Burlington, where he died in 1857. There was another William McKay living nearby in Ancaster Township who was also a War of 1812 veteran.

If you are interested in reading more stories about life during the War of 1812, there is a book of short stories and trivia on my blog at:

http://warof1812cdnstories.blogspot.ca/

Weapons of the Era: The Sabre

From Vlad Adamec, Ensign, 2nd York

So, what actually is a sabre? Well, depends on who you ask. Generally, a sabre is described as a single-edge, curved, cutting sword. Except that there were also straight sabres, sabres that have also a partial false edge (edge on the back of the blade, that normally points toward the fencer holding it), and that sabres could also be used for thrusting. So much for clarity!

By origin, the sabre is not a native European weapon. There are curved blade cutting types of weapons recorded in the European medieval martial tradition - e.g. falchion and messer, but these are not considered to be direct precursors of the early modern style of sabres. Instead, the sabre originates from the lands east of Europe where sabre-like weapons were used by Mongol mounted warriors of the Tartar and Persian empires, among many others.

From them, the sabre was adopted by central and eastern European nations, notably the Hungarian, Polish, and Lithuanian nations that often came into contact with these Eastern empires during centuries of conflict. The sabre had strong influence on the martial tradition of these European regions and resulted in emergence of a unique class of warrior - Hussars. Hungarian Hussars were originally light irregular cavalrymen mounted on small, but nimble horses who were raised for service in the Austrian Empire. Due to their successes, especially during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa, Hussar formations were promptly adopted by other armies, which often recruited Hungarian Hussars as mercenaries for service throughout Europe. By contrast, in Poland and Lithuania, Hussars were heavy cavalry units, often used as shock troops to destroy less maneuverable units. In the course of 18th Century, Hussars and similar cavalry units became an established component of most European armies, and the sabre became a widespread weapon.

The sabre's popularity was caused by its practicality in combat situations, especially in melee-type encounters, where its superior cutting ability was critical. This was in large part due to its design - the curve of the blade ensured that regardless of the exact point of contact, the momentum of the weapon caused the blade to slide along the target's surface, resulting in long, deep cuts. Unlike weapons such as the smallsword, the circular use of the sabre resulted in a much wider defensive arc, making it much more suitable for personal defense.

Use of sabres also became popular among the officers of infantry regiments. The typical infantry officer of the era was armed with a sword more suitable for dueling rather than the battlefield. In battle, these swords may have been sufficient for pointing out the targets at which the regiment should shoot, but were less than adequate for actual combat situations. This might have been less of a concern for a line infantry officer, who was protected by his unit, but was critically important for light infantry officers.

Light infantry was often operating in a dispersed formation, and an officer might find himself threatened by either an enemy private with a musket and bayonet or even a cavalry trooper. For such situations, sabres proved to be a highly suitable weapon. As a result, many officers replaced their regulation swords with privately purchased sabres.

One of the most popular patterns was the 1796 pattern light cavalry sabre designed by John Gaspar le Marchant, a famous British cavalry general who died during the battle of Salamanca in 1812. This sabre was much more practical as a battlefield weapon, but was still far from ideal. Cavalry sabres tended to be heavy and long, which suited its use on horseback - they offered longer reach and maximum effect before the opponent galloped away. But infantry officers needed weapons that were shorter, lighter, and more nimble to be used in a prolonged exchange of blows. This resulted in the appearance of infantry sabres, such as the 1803 Pattern Light Infantry sabre, which were weighty enough to defend against heavier blows, but easier to control through repeated parries and blows.

Continued on Page 7 ...

What did you just call me...?

As with any period, the Regency era had its own "language" that reflected the life and habits of the time. So what are some of the sayings you could have overheard?

"sprained her ankle" = gotten pregnant
"barking irons" = pistols
"dicked in the nob" = silly or crazed
"mawkish" = objectionably sentimental; sickening or insipid in taste
"pink of the ton" = height of fashion (for males)
"swell" = elegant person, fashionably dressed, or pompous
"upper orders" = high society
"Yorked" = married
"Adventuress" = euphemism for prostitute or wild woman
"bone-setters" = poor quality horses
"full of juice" = very wealthy
"hang on someone's sleeve" = to be supported financially
"land a facer" = to be punched in the face
"blade" = dashing younger man of fashion, may imply immaturity

Continued from Page 6

"Sabres"

In spite of the sabre's popularity, the British Army did not have a codified mode of use for sabres until the later years of the Napoleonic Wars, when Charles Roworth and Henry Angelo Jr. published their fencing treatises. If you would like to learn more about sabres and other swords and their use, please contact Vlad Adamec, editor of The Yorker, who is also a lead instructor at Signum Corvus School of Arms, an historical fencing school offering classes in the use of Napoleonic sabres, as well as medieval longswords and Renaissance rapiers: vlad@signumcorvus.com.

Top: *A British Volunteer Officer's Sabre. the curved blade decorated with floral sprays and stands of arms, with a copper gilt stirrup hilt, a lion's mask pommel and a ribbed horn grip. The spine of the blade is marked for Solingen, and the decoration is typical of blades from that region.*
Bottom: *Dutch Hussar sabre, used by the Dutch 6th Hussar Regiment at the Battle of Waterloo. This sabre is modeled based on the French Mode AN Xi Light Cavalry sabre. The difference in size between infantry and cavalry sabre is obvious.*

Dancing The Night Away!

By Tom Fournier

One of my favourite books is "This Was Montreal in 1814, 1815, 1816 & 1817" by Lawrence M. Wilson. It is simply a number of excerpts from the Montreal Herald that gives insights as to what life in Montreal might have been like during the Regency era.

I particularly like the "society pages" typed descriptions of the balls. Two of these I will share in this article.

The first comes from January 1816 and it describes a Regimental Ball. These were staged by the officers of a regiment trying to recreate some of the society that they were used to at home.

With a population of approximately 15,000 people, Montreal was one of the largest cities in Canada and one of the few cities that had the facilities and local society that made this possible.

In this description we get a sense of the appearance of the room and the atmosphere within. Very striking is the timing of the whole affair. Dancing commences in the evening, is interrupted by a very large meal at midnight and then followed by more dancing until dawn! All this on a Tuesday evening!

"The Bachelor Officers of De Meuron's Regiment, gave a most, elegant BALL & SUPPER on Tuesday last, at Ste Mary's, to which the Officers of the garrison and all the principal inhabitants of this were invited." Upon the occasion, the rooms were enlarged, brilliantly illuminated, and fitted up in a superior style of taste and elegance; the walls were hung round with grey cloth, and ornamented with mirrors, and branches of Evergreens, fancifully arranged; from the ceiling of the appartments was suspended a drapery of various colours, in festoons, which had a very pleasing and grand effect. A temporary orchestra was erected, decorated with the Regimental Colours, in which was stationed the Band of the Regiment.

Dancing commenced at 8 o'clock, and was kept up with great spirit until 12 when the company retired to an excellent supper, consisting of every delicacy that taste and liberality could procure. Dancing was resumed after supper, and continued until the dawn of morning peeped forth, when the company begun departing not more gratified with their entertainment, than pleased with the attention they experienced."

And then we get this, from January 1816, first there is this notice:

"On Wednesday evening, the most Noble the Marquis of Tweedale gave a Grand Ball and Supper at Holme's Hotel to about one hundred of his friends; nearly half of them were citizens of Montreal."

And then follows this more substantial description. I have done my best to identify who I believe some of the individuals are in footnotes. Please do read through the footnotes, it is a fascinating mix of people that combined prominent military figures with some of the very best elements of Montreal society.

It was not just a "Grand Ball", it was in fact a "Masquerade".

The evening for the Masquerade followed much the same flow, this time with supper at 1:00 a.m. to be followed by dancing until the sun rose.

Note: Space does not allow for full biographical details for participants of the costume ball. For additional details, please visit:

www.fortyfirst.org/blog/dancing-the-night-away

"To the Nearest Point on the Frontier"

The wartime service of Major Titus Geer Simons, 2nd York Militia (Part 1)

By Robert Smol

He was aptly described by historian Sylvia Gray in The Hamiltonians as "often controversial in his actions, and rarely apologetic." But by the end of the war of 1812, Major Titus Geer Simons, of the 2nd Regiment of York Militia, had earned the trust and respect of the British army in Canada for his leadership and audacity under fire.

A former newspaper editor and entrepreneur, Simons was to serve with distinction in both the 2nd Regiment of York Militia as well as the Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada. Most notably, in the late evening of July 25, 1814 he found himself as de-facto commander of the 2nd Regiment of York Militia during the Battle of Lundy's Lane, the largest and most costly battle of the War of 1812. His service is a testament to the commitment to the defence of Canada shown by many residents of Upper Canada that is often ignored or downgraded by historians as secondary and inconsequential.

Titus Geer Simons was born in Connecticut on January 30, 1765. He first experienced military life during the American Revolution where, at age 12, he served alongside his father who was a Quartermaster in the British Army. With the defeat of the British army, the family fled to Montreal and eventually settled in Upper Canada. Simons' service in the Upper Canadian militia began in 1804 as Adjutant with the Lincoln militia. With the outbreak of war in 1812 he joined the newly formed 2nd Regiment of York Militia. This regiment drew its officers and men from the residents of Toronto Township (present-day Mississauga) along the shore of Lake Ontario up to Burlington Bay (Hamilton). Today the regiment is perpetuated by the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry.

To better comprehend the challenges faced by Simons during the war we must first understand the type of military he operated in. In order to maximize its reliability and compatibility with the regular British Army, the militia network in Upper and Lower Canada was organized in three basic levels. At the bottom was the embodied (sedentary) militia made up of all fit males of military age. While service in the embodied militia was compulsory, actual training was quite negligible. Mainly it was from the embodied militia base that, during the war with the United States, the British authorized the formation of militia "flank companies" which trained and served on the frontier for short-periods of time on a full-time basis. This allowed militia to train to a higher standard while still maintaining some balance between their military commitment and their obligations to their civilian occupation and family.

Yet for those militia willing and able to take on a full-time commitment during the war there was the Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada, essentially a permanent regiment of militia. In addition to the Incorporated Militia, there were permanent provincial regiments raised in both Upper and Lower Canada such as the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles, the Voltigeurs, and the Canadian Fencibles. It was primarily within the network of Flank Companies and Incorporated Militia that Simons was to serve during the war.

Whatever their level of service, militia regiments were almost universally saddled with the twin problems of lack of equipment and time to train. In spite of these challenges the 2nd York, as well as the Incorporated Militia, were to play an active role in most of the major campaigns.

In June of 1812 Simons was commissioned as a Major in the 2nd York. As with other militia regiments the focus of their service was in the Niagara region. During this time, Major Simons' duties would have been taken up primarily in recruiting, equipping and preparing his men for the task ahead. Stationed along the Niagara River in 1812 the 2nd York was present at the Battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812 where they took their first fatality, Private Henry Cope.

Titus Geer Simons
Courtesy Toronto Branch UEL

By 1813 Simons had transferred to the Incorporated Militia and remained in the Niagara region as detachment commander. Meanwhile the 2nd York, in March of 1813, was tasked to provide three company-sized detachments for service on the Niagara and to "use every exertion for the assembling and march of these detachments to the nearest point on the frontier." By a General Order dated July 14, 1813 Major Simons was given overall responsibility for all the militia in the area.

During the 1813 campaign, when not engaged in fighting or patrolling, units of the militia were frequently tasked with the movement of supplies for the forward units either overland, or, more often by bateaux which ferried provisions back and forth along the shores of Lake Ontario, the St Lawrence, and Lake Huron. Likewise when Simons was placed in charge of the militia in the Niagara region he was also given responsibility for the requisitioning and organizing of militia boat crews.

Continued on Page 9 ...

Continued from Page 8

"Titus Geer Simons"

To better understand the importance of the militia boat service one needs to be aware of the strategic situation at the time. For much of the war the American Navy dominated the Great Lakes, severely limiting the Royal Navy's capability to operate in support of the British army. Furthermore, the roads at the time were often unreliable when it came to moving large quantities of supplies. In this situation, small open boats, operated by militia, served as the major lifeline between the army at the front and its supply base further east in York and Kingston.

Therefore, it should not come as much of a surprise that, in the summer of 1813, an attempt was made by the Americans to drive a wedge in the British/Canadian lines of communication to and from Niagara. On July 29, 1813 Simons received the order to move his troops, and any additional ones he may come across, and take up positions at Burlington heights (now Hamilton). Part of the order read that "there are strong reasons to apprehend that the enemy means to attack our depot at Burlington, which we must not lose."

Leading his troops, which included members of the York Militia, on an overnight forced march of over fifty kilometers, they took up defensive positions in Burlington Bay. There Simons' contingent was joined by another permanent Canadian unit (Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles) as well as native warriors.

Meanwhile, as the American force landed and prepared to advance on the Heights, its Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott, realized that the high ground was being defended by a much larger force than he had planned for. Not wanting to risk an attack on a well-defended position, Scott withdrew.

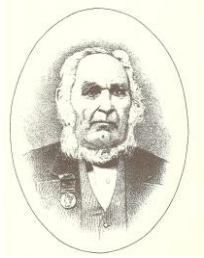
A military victory does not necessarily imply that shots have to be fired. Although no blood was shed with Simons' bold maneuver to Burlington Heights, the importance of his move lies in what strategic scenario his actions avoided. Had Simons and the other Canadian units hesitated or faltered in their move to Burlington, the Americans would have established a strategic wedge between the British Forces in the Niagara and their command and logistics base in York and Kingston. More importantly, had the Americans been allowed to consolidate their position at Burlington, the already restricted flow of supplies to Niagara might have been completely cut off forcing the British/Canadian army to withdraw.

In December of 1813 the British began to close in on the American garrison that was still occupying Fort George outside of Newark (present day Niagara-on-the-lake). It was here that the worst single atrocity against Canadian non-combatants took place on December 10, 1813 when, just prior to retreating back across the Niagara River, the American army burned most of the homes in Newark.

It was at this point that the recently appointed Commander of Forces in Upper Canada, Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond, approved of plans to capture the American Fort Niagara as well as all other enemy military assets across the Niagara. However, no retaliatory attack was possible without transport. It was here that Simons and other militia soldiers were called upon to muster all accessible boats on the lake and secretly haul them overland to a designated launching site upriver from Fort Niagara. When the nighttime raid on Fort Niagara took place on December 18, 1813 the militia contingent transported and guided the main attack force to its destination and various select members took part in the raid itself.

In the days following the attack on Fort Niagara, Simons and his militia troops were called upon to paddle, pull and carry their boats in secret more than thirty kilometers upstream to the American strongpoint at Black Rock near Buffalo. As with the attack on Fort Niagara Simons executed the transport of the British attack force to their objective.

In a letter to the Governor General dated January 2, 1814, General Drummond stated that Major Simons was "was useful and indefatigable in embarking the troops" and that he and the other militia rendered a "service of considerable difficulty and importance , owing to the great rapidity of the current".



A Veteran of 1812: Amos Willcox (1793-1886)

Born in 1793 in New York, Amos Willcox was the son of a Loyalist, Isaac Willcox. The family came to Canada in 1796, and first settled near Chippawa, in Niagara, before moving to the Fifty Mile Creek (near Stoney Creek). Amos, the eldest son, lived with his family in Canada until 1808, when his father and family left Canada and resettled in Indiana.

Amos took an active part in the War of 1812, volunteering with the 1st Flank Company of the 2nd York militia. He was present at four engagements during the war: the capture of Fort Detroit, the Battle of Queenston Heights, the Battle of Stoney Creek, and at Black Rock. Amos received a General Service Medal for the capture of Fort Detroit.

In 1819 Amos purchased his own farm in Toronto Township (Mississauga), at what is today the southwest corner of Eglinton Avenue and Hurontario Street. Amos again volunteered his services to the Crown during the 1837 Rebellion and served as a captain with the local militia.

In 1820, Amos married Annie Papst, and the couple had ten children, including: Amos Jr., John William, Isaac, Charles, Urias, Thomas and Lucinda. Amos' second house, built in 1850, survives today as The Willcox Gastropub in Mississauga. Amos passed away in 1886 and is buried in Dixie Union Cemetery.

Continued from Page 1 "Medals"

The early Canadian nationalism which the medal embodied was further reflected in its iconography. The first pattern of the medal, sculpted by Chief Engraver Thomas Wyon Jr., depicted a beaver and a lion standing guard on the west side of the Niagara River, representing a firm Canadian attachment to the British imperial identity, and celebrating Anglo-Canadian unity in the defense of Upper Canada. An American eagle lay on the eastern bank, kept at bay by the sentinel lion and beaver. On the margins the medal reads "Upper Canada Preserved," commemorating the successful defense of Canada. The reverse reads "Presented by a Grateful Country," with the text "For Merit" enclosed within the laurels at the center. Fifty medals would be ordered in 1814, all of them in silver.

The Society, oddly enough, did not like the design despite its elegant reliefs and artistry. They protested on the grounds of the depiction: the beaver and lion lay west, while the eagle lay east meaning that the viewer would be looking downstream of the Niagara River, not upstream. This pedantic technicality prompted a redesign, resulting in a second pattern that was ordered in larger numbers by the society, yet was markedly less aesthetically pleasing. It was crowded with text which marked the locations of areas on the banks of the Niagara River, while being less intuitive in cardinal directions through depicting the eagle on the left side, and the beaver and lion on the right (positioning the perspective to be looking upstream). Still, more medals were ordered of this kind than the first pattern, including ones in gold.

The medals were intended to recognize Canadian and British soldiers and officers who displayed meritorious behavior in the defense of Canada. A small hierarchy underscored the receipt order: most were silver for militia and soldiers, and there were two varieties of gold medal – one larger variant for field officers, and a smaller one for company officers. Therein the issue emerged, however. The criteria for awarding the medals was in dispute, and there were fears that the limited supply of medals would create an imbalance that would leave many veterans without receiving the honor. This issue of distribution created a public controversy.

A deadlock of indecision left the society with the unfortunate choice of having to melt down all the medals and sell their bullion to fund other charitable enterprises. The decision was arrived at in 1820, but the medals remained in storage at the Bank of Upper Canada until a new resolution was finally passed in 1840 to finalize the defacing and melting of the medals.

Originally, not a single medal was believed to have survived, and an 1894 article in the *American Journal of Numismatics* records no extant examples at the time. The medal remained well-known throughout the 19th and early 20th century, however, as a number of restrikes and reproductions were produced. Almost every known restrike is of the first pattern, rather than the unpopular second pattern. As a result, the first pattern is far more prolific in documentation and popular culture, despite less original medals having existed than those of the later pattern and all surviving medals being of the second pattern. Many of these restrikes were produced in the 1870s, with a number also having been made in 1912 for the centenary of the war. Restrikes often came in silver, though a number were produced in copper and bronze – a metal in which no original medals were ever struck. The Toronto General Hospital also issues its own restrikes as internal awards, due largely to their history in connection to the Loyal and Patriotic Society.

Currently, only three original medals are known to have survived, all of them of the less known second pattern. One (in silver) is in a private collection, while two others (one in gold and another of silver) are part of the City of Toronto's History Museum Artifacts and can be viewed through their digital collection. Late 19th and early 20th century restrikes still circulate on the market, and often demand relatively high premiums among collectors. Despite the ill fate suffered by the medal, its wide social circulation and recognition allows it to retain an important status within the Canadian canon of the War of 1812.

Upper Canada Preserved Medal Restrike, Jacob Lipson Rare Coins

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Battles of the Old World: Battle of Borodino

From Vlad Adamec, Ensign, 2nd York

It was 10 weeks since Napoleon's army crossed the river Niemen into Russia on June 24, 1812, but he still did not achieve his decisive battle. He has driven his French and allied troops hard, but the Russian Army proved to be an elusive foe. Under the command of Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, Tsar Alexander's Minister of War, Russian soldiers executed skillful and brutal scorched-earth fighting retreats, and justifiably so. Outnumbered 3-to-1 at the outset of the campaign, de Tolly was fully aware that Russia was not yet ready to take on the best European army of the time, so he retreated, again and again, dragging his opponent deeper into Russia.

The strategy was effective, but unpopular. One after another, Russian cities fell to the hated invader and with each one, the public unpopularity of the Russian High Command and the frustration in the ranks of the Russian army grew stronger. Finally, after the lost Battle of Smolensk, Tsar Alexander was forced to find a scapegoat and sacked de Tolly, replacing him with Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov. Kutuzov fully agreed with the war strategy pursued by de Tolly, but was painfully aware that to avoid collapse of the Russian morale, his army had to stand and fight.

Given the strategic situation, Kutuzov did not have much choice in terms of the battlefield: he had to prevent Napoleon's army from marching along the main road from Smolensk to Moscow and he decided to take a stand near the village of Borodino, about 72 miles west of Moscow.

Kutuzov chose to build a strong defensive position on his northern right wing, which defended the New Smolensk Road to Moscow, leaving him with a weaker southern left wing. The terrain here did not offer any particular advantages for defenders, so the Russian army constructed a series of disconnected redoubts.

These redoubts were faced by an army that had diminished dramatically over the previous weeks. Since the beginning of the campaign Napoleon's Grande Armée was significantly reduced through starvation and disease. It is estimated that out of the original 286,000 men that had entered Russia, only about 130,000 were battle-ready at Borodino.

As was expected by the Russian commanders, the first target for the attackers was the defensive redoubts on the Russian left flank. The first of these, the Shevardino redoubt, was lost in a prelude to the battle on September 6 to the French forces under Marshal Murat and the Polish infantry led by Prince Józef Poniatowski. Russian defenders only retreated when Kutuzov personally ordered them to do so, but the loss of the redoubt threw the Russian left flank into disarray. So when the battle for Borodino commenced on September 7, French generals urged Napoleon to outflank the weaker Russian left.

Napoleon, deploying his forces inefficiently and failing to exploit the weaknesses in the Russian line, nevertheless decided to concentrate his frontal attack directly into the teeth of the defense. The initial attack was aimed at three 'flèches' – redoubts defended by the Russian Second Army under Prince Bagration. The battle for these flèches raged from 6 am until 11:30 am, it is estimated that during this time the French made at least 7 assaults against them, only to be beaten back each time in fierce close combat. The fighting was extremely confused. Infantry and cavalrymen had difficulty maneuvering over the heaps of corpses and masses of wounded. It was only when Bagration, personally leading one of the counter attacks, was wounded in the leg by cannonball, that defenders gave way. Fortunately for the Russians the smoke and confusion prevented French commanders from seeing the extent of the Russian collapse.

A similar battle was raging to the north, where de Tolly's First Army was defending the Raevsky redoubt. Both sides continued to feed more and more reinforcements into the fight, resulting in the redoubt changing hands multiple times during the morning. One of the significant Russian losses in this fight was the death of General Kutaisov, a young and enterprising Chief of Artillery. After his death most of the Russian cannons sat useless on the heights to the rear and were never ordered into battle, while the French artillery wreaked havoc on the Russians. The Raevsky redoubt finally fell around 3:30 pm, after the final French attack was critically delayed by a Cossack raid that penetrated to the rear of the French IV Corps, just as it was readying for the assault.

Continued on Page 12 ...

Continued from Page 11

"Borodino"

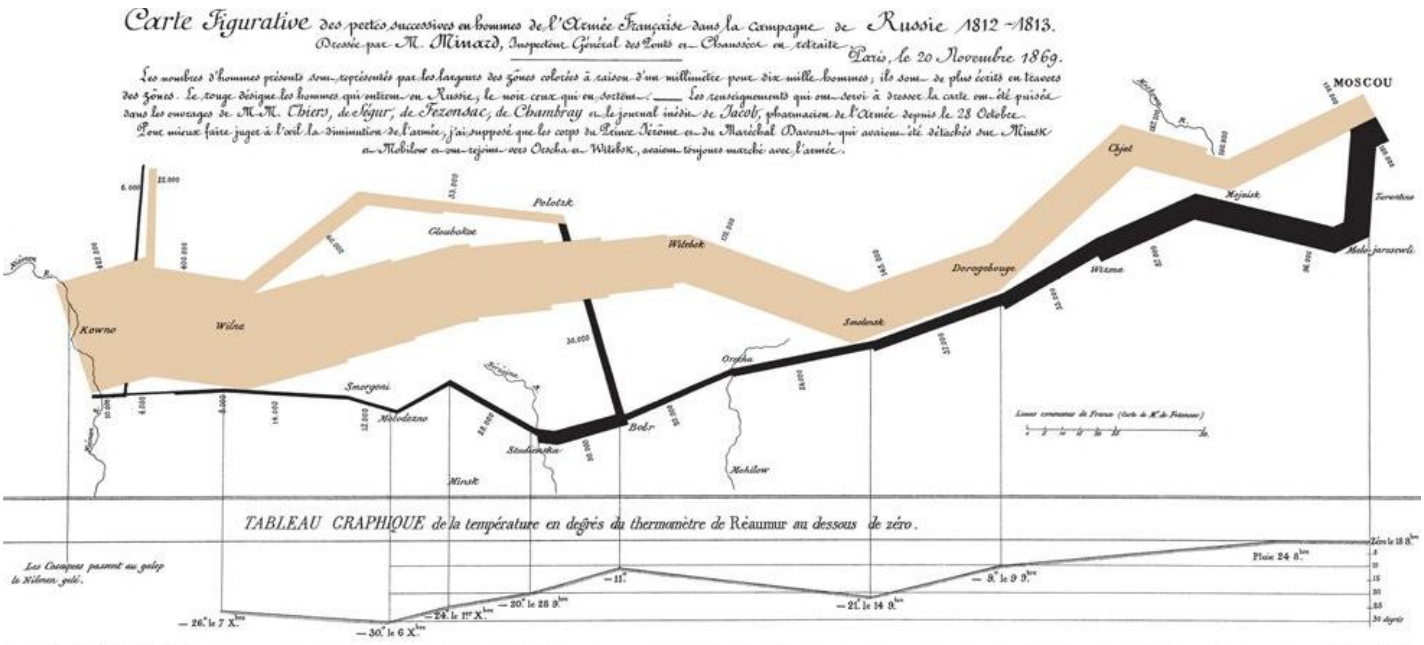
By this time, the situation was desperate for the Russians, but the French were equally exhausted and neither side had sufficient strength to carry on. At this moment, the French generals and marshals urged Napoleon to commit the Guard, the elite of the French Army, and destroy the retreating Russian forces. Napoleon refused. He was not prepared to commit his most valuable reserve to battle so far away from France.

The Russian Army was thus allowed another fighting retreat. Kutuzov ordered his Guard Regiments to hold the line and cover the retreat of the rest of the army. For two hours the Guards stood in packed compact squares and faced cannonade by 400 French guns that were brought forward, a feat for which they paid with huge losses. But this allowed the bulk of the remaining Russian forces to retreat intact and, in time, recover.

Borodino was the Russian last stand in front of Moscow. After a heated council of war on September 13 Kutuzov ordered retreat and Moscow was occupied by the French.

The Battle of Borodino was one of the largest during the Napoleonic wars. It involved about 250,000 troops, of which at least 68,000 were killed or wounded, making Borodino the deadliest day of the Napoleonic Wars and the bloodiest single day in the history of warfare until the First Battle of the Marne in 1914.

If any at all, Borodino was a Pyrrhic victory for Napoleon. His Grande Armée lost 28,000 experienced soldiers, dead or wounded, including 1,928 officers (49 of them generals). Napoleon entered Moscow on September 14 expecting Tsar Alexander to sue for peace. Instead, after 5 weeks of waiting he was finally forced to turn around and retreat, losing almost all of his Army by the time he reached Poland again.



Napoleon's 1812 Campaign Chart

This famous chart was drawn by Charles Joseph Minard and depicts the story of Napoleon's army. Beginning at the left on the Polish-Russian border, the thick band represents the size of the army as it invaded Russia. The width of the band indicates the army strength at different stages. In September the army reached Moscow with 100,000 men. Their retreat is depicted by the black lower band, which is tied to the temperature and time scale at the bottom of the chart. Minard's picture tells a rich story, showing multiple variables: the size of the army, its location, direction of the army's movement, and temperatures on various dates during the retreat from Moscow.

Engagement at Bradley 2021Update

The 2021 Engagement at Bradley War of 1812 weekend, scheduled for October 2-3 at the Bradley Museum in Mississauga, has been cancelled for 2021 due to concerns around the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to returning in 2022 and hope to see you there!