

50 FACES OF WAR

50 KEY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD A PART IN DEFENDING CANADA AGAINST AMERICAN INVASION

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50 FACES OF WAR

BY DONALD E. GRAVES
PORTRAITS BY SHARIF TARABAY



INTRODUCTION: THE CAUSES OF THE WAR OF 1812

Two centuries ago, there was no nation of Canada.

The term “Canada” was generally used to mean the six colonies of British North America: Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Lower Canada (modern Quebec) and Upper Canada (modern Ontario).

Between 1812 and 1815 these colonies, with a population of just over 600,000 people, engaged in a fight for survival against the neighbouring United States. For nearly three years English- and French-speaking Canadians, and their aboriginal allies, fought alongside the British army and navy to preserve their freedom in the face of invasion.

The story of the War of 1812 is an epic of national survival and it is important to commemorate the sacrifices made by the men and women of the time. In a sense, they were the real fathers and mothers of Confederation because if they had not fought and won the war, our country would not exist today.

With that in mind, Legion Magazine is pleased to highlight dozens of well- and not-so-well-known historic figures who had a role in winning the war. Their names and contributions are woven into a narrative on the war’s history and are also recognized on the magazine’s **Fifty Faces of War** collector’s poster.

The origins of the War of 1812 are found in the greater struggle Britain had been waging against France since 1793. Faced with British naval superiority, Napoleon, the French emperor, resorted to economic warfare and prohibited ships that traded with Britain to trade with France or its allies. Britain countered by forbidding ships that traded with France from trading with Britain, and the powerful Royal Navy could enforce this prohibition. The neutral U.S. was caught in the middle of this conflict and American frustration was increased by the British naval captains who boarded American ships and impressed or conscripted any British seamen they found. The result was that many innocent Americans found themselves in the British navy.

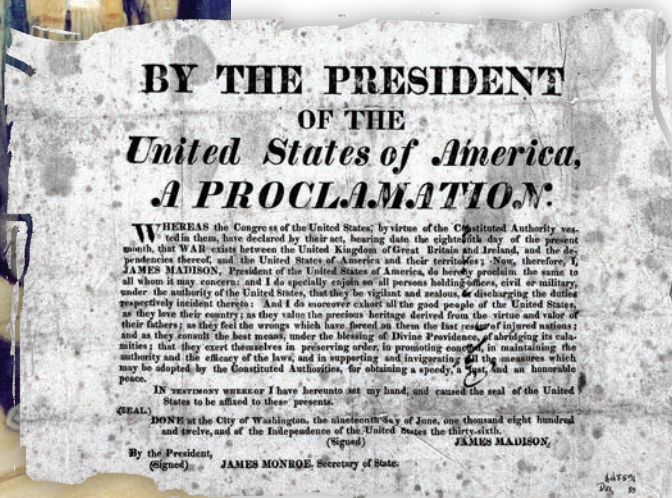


Another source of tension between the two nations was unrest on the U.S. northwest frontier, where an aboriginal confederacy under the Shawnee leader **Tecumseh** had been resisting the tide of white settlement. Americans believed Britain was behind the problems and, by the spring of 1812, the American government was actively preparing for war. Although Britain offered to repeal the regulations that were damaging American maritime trade, on June 18, the U.S. declared war on Great Britain.



Left: An artist's depiction of the first meeting between Brock and Tecumseh. Below: the United States declaration of war against the Great Britain was signed by U.S. President James Madison on June 18, 1812.

CHARLES WILLIAM JEFFERYS



WIKIPEDIA

American leaders had reason to be confident as the U.S. had 10 times the population of Canada. But in its rush to war, President James Madison's government had ignored some major obstacles to their success. An offensive against Canada would require a tremendous effort to supply military forces in an area of primitive communications. The small regular American army was greatly expanded, but the U.S. would be fighting a war in a distant and difficult area with untrained and poorly-supplied troops.



PREVOST

Ironically, Canada was better prepared. It was defended by professional soldiers and sailors who had competent leadership. **Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost**, the 45-year-old governor general and commander-in-chief, was a veteran soldier who planned to give up no Canadian territory easily but only to fight fiercely for Montreal. Prevost, who had fought in the Revolutionary War and in the West Indies, was also a bilingual and skilled administrator. His subordinate in Upper Canada, the 43-year-old **Major-General Isaac Brock**, favoured an aggressive strategy and put it into effect as soon as war broke out. Brock, of course, became one of the best known heroes of the war, recognized for the work he did while preparing Upper Canada for the war, and for thwarting American invasions at Detroit and Queenston Heights.



BROCK



McKAY



DICKSON



BLACK HAWK



MERRITT



WARREN



PETER RINDLISBACHER

1812: THE OPENING ROUNDS

In July 1812 American General William Hull crossed the Detroit River to commence an invasion of Upper Canada. Brock, meanwhile, had already struck the Americans in the Upper Great Lakes. On his orders, a small British force under **Major William McKay**—a former fur trader with the North West Company—landed on Mackinac Island and forced the surrender of the American post. This victory permitted **Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Dickson**, another fur trader, to rally many of the western aboriginal nations to join the British side. **Makataimeshekiakiak** or **Black Hawk**, war chief of the Sauk nation who left a valuable memoir of his life, remembered Dickson telling him that “Your English father has found out that the Americans want to take your country from you” and that Black Hawk was to command the aboriginal forces that would move to Detroit where Hull had withdrawn his army.

Black Hawk and his warriors joined Brock who had gathered every regular soldier and militiaman he could find to confront Hull. **William Merritt**, a 19-year-old Canadian cavalry officer the son of a Loyalist who had settled at Twelve Mile Creek (St. Catharines), remembered that Brock promised the Canadian militia that he would drive the invaders “out of the Country.” He also recalled that Brock requested “all those who were willing to defend their Country at the risk of their lives” to volunteer, which most did. Brock called on Hull to surrender and, to Brock’s utter amazement, the American general did so on Aug. 16, giving up not only the town but the Michigan Territory to a much weaker force half his strength. The victory at Detroit did much to encourage the people of Upper Canada who, at the outbreak of war, were uncertain whether their province would remain British.

These early victories were unfortunately balanced by defeats at sea where American warships won an impressive series of single-ship encounters. **Admiral John Warren**, the British naval commander in North America, did not have enough ships to mount a full blockade of the American coast. Consequently, the U.S. Navy scored an impressive series of victories which restored morale.

In the autumn, the U.S. attempted a second invasion. On the night of Oct. 12, an American army crossed the Niagara River and seized the village of Queenston. Brock, who was at nearby Fort George, proceeded to Queenston with all available troops. Realizing the key to the battle was the possession of the high ground behind the village, the tall and colourfully-dressed general led an assault against it but was killed, in the act of “Cheering his men” to attack, as Merritt remembered. Merritt, who married an American, is credited with conceiving the idea for the Welland Canal which allows ships to ascend and descend the Niagara Escarpment. Its construction began in 1824.

Below: The Battle of Queenston Heights by J.D. Kelly depicts the fighting and final moments of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock. Opposite page: Artist Peter Rindlisbacher's Bombardment of Fort Detroit.



CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM, BEAVERBROOK COLLECTION—19970051-001

During the battle at Queenston, the British and Canadians fell back and waited for reinforcements while a force of aboriginal warriors led by Mohawk war **Chief John Norton** (the **Snipe**) kept the enemy off balance. Norton's warriors "returned the Fire of the Enemy with coolness & Spirit" and although the Americans "certainly made the greatest noise," the warriors "did the most Execution." When more regular troops arrived, the invaders, now surrounded, were pushed back to the river bank and surrendered. Canadians of many different backgrounds took part in this engagement, including Norton the aboriginal chief, **Richard Pierpoint**, a free black, and **John Beverley Robinson**, the descendant of a prominent Loyalist family.

By the end of 1812, two enemy invasions of British North America had been repulsed and Canadian morale was high. But Queenston Heights had been a costly victory because, as Norton commented, "the Loss of General Brock threw a gloom over the sensations which this Brilliant Success might have raised."

1813: THE MOST PERILOUS YEAR

Almost all the war materiel and provisions for the troops in Upper Canada had to be brought up the St. Lawrence River from Lower Canada. Two Canadian businessmen, **John Molson** and **William McGillivray** were instrumental in ensuring this lifeline functioned smoothly. Molson, a brewery owner, operated a steamboat that ran from Quebec City to Montreal, and McGillivray, one of the partners of the North West Company, organized a corps of voyageurs recruited from his employees, who manned a boat service that ran from Montreal to Kingston.



NORTON



PIERPOINT



ROBINSON



MOLSON



McGILLIVRAY

Right: The Battle of Fort George is captured in a painting by Peter Rindlisbacher. Opposite page: Lorne K. Smith's painting depicts the June 1813 meeting between Laura Secord and Lieutenant James Fitzgibbon.



PEARSON



MacDONNELL



STRACHAN



HARVEY



PETER RINDLISBACHER

Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Pearson, a veteran soldier who had fought in Egypt and Europe, was responsible for the defence of the St. Lawrence River. Annoyed by a number of American raids on Canadian border communities, Pearson planned an attack across the St. Lawrence against Ogdensburg, N.Y., the raiders' base. It was successfully carried out in February 1813 by **Major George MacDonnell** of the Glengarry Light Infantry, a Canadian unit. On a cold winter morning, British and Canadian soldiers moved across the frozen river, under fire from Ogdensburg, to capture that town and put an end to the border raids.

In April 1813, the U.S. renewed its offensive against Canada. An intensive building program during the winter gave the U.S. Navy superiority on Lake Ontario and in late April American ships landed an army near York (now Toronto), the capital of Upper Canada. Pushing a far weaker defending force before them, the invaders were approaching the town when the ammunition magazine at York was ignited to prevent its contents from being captured. A young boy who witnessed the explosion remembered that he "felt a tremulous motion in the earth resembling the shock of an earthquake; and looking towards the spot I saw an immense cloud ascend into the air" which was "a great confused mass of smoke, timber, men, earth."

When the British troops evacuated the town a deputation of citizens headed by **Dr. John Strachan**, the Anglican primate of Upper Canada who had moved to Kingston to tutor immigrant children, negotiated its surrender. York was occupied for several days during which the invaders accidentally burned the provincial parliament buildings.

On May 27, an American army crossed the Niagara River and captured Fort George. Badly outnumbered, British and Canadian troops withdrew to the area of the modern city of Hamilton, but were pursued by an American force. **Lieutenant-Colonel John Harvey**, who would later serve as lieutenant-governor of all four Maritime provinces, formulated a plan for a night attack on the enemy. It was mounted on June 6, 1813. A British force attacked the Americans camped at Stoney Creek and a hard-fought battle ensued.



LORNE K. SMITH, LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA — C-011053

The invaders retreated, but a few weeks later another enemy force was sent to capture supplies known to be at a house near modern St. Catharines. This expedition came to an inglorious end on June 24 when, forewarned by a 37-year-old Canadian housewife named **Laura Secord**, a few British troops, led by **Lieutenant James Fitzgibbon** and several large parties of warriors from different aboriginal nations, ambushed the Americans near Beaver Dams. Secord became well known after the war, and remains one of the most celebrated personalities of the conflict for her 20-mile journey through enemy-occupied territory.

Captain Dominique Ducharme, who was leading warriors from Lower Canada, remembered that the warriors “fought savagely, and finally their horrible yells” terrified the enemy so much that they retired into a hollow where they were surrounded and forced to surrender. The warriors, particularly those from American territory whose families had suffered grievously at the hands of the “long knives,” as they called the enemy, had many scores to settle.

Lieutenant-Colonel William Claus, the superintendent of the Indian Department in Upper Canada, admonished **Jean-Baptiste Assinack** or **Blackbird**, a chief of the Ottawa nation, about killing prisoners and, instead, offered money for live captives. Blackbird’s response was blunt, he informed Claus that it “is the Indian custom when engaged to be very angry, but when we take prisoners to treat them kindly” and, since his people did “not know the value of money; all I wish is that our people receive clothing for our prisoners.” After the war, Blackbird worked as a missionary and an interpreter for the Indian Department.



SECORD



FITZGIBBON



DUCHARME



CLAUS



BLACKBIRD



JOHN CHRISTIAN SCHETKY, LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA, W.H. CLOVERDALE COLLECTION —1970-188-1937



YEO

While the Niagara campaign was underway, Prevost counterattacked at the eastern end of Lake Ontario. With the assistance of **Commodore James Yeo**, Royal Navy, who had assumed command of the naval forces on the Great Lakes, Prevost mounted an assault on the American naval base at Sackets Harbor on May 29. **Captain Jacques Viger**, a former newspaper editor and future mayor of Montreal, remembered that as the boats neared the shore, “a thousand hurrahs rose from the boats and the landing was effected at the same time” but the men “did not wait for the boats to ground before disembarking...we took to the water to reach land while running.”



VIGER

Lieutenant John Le Couteur, a young officer who that same year had marched with his unit—the 104th Regiment of Foot—on the frigid trek from Fredericton to Kingston, remembered that some of his men were about to bayonet an American soldier who was imploring for his life. Angered, Le Couteur struck the bayonets aside with his sword and shouted, “For shame men, never kill an unarmed man who begs for quarter” and sent the prisoner to the rear. The attack was, at first, successful, but becoming concerned about possible American reinforcements arriving, Prevost re-embarked his troops and returned to Canadian soil.

The same Sunday, June 6, 1813, which witnessed the American defeat at Stoney Creek, was also the occasion of a glorious event in Halifax.



LE COUTEUR

The evening service at St. Paul’s Church was disrupted when someone brought the exciting news that a British warship was leading a captured American frigate up the harbour. In a few minutes, the congregation had abandoned worship to run down to the docks and watch as HMS *Shannon* and her prize, the frigate USS *Chesapeake*, slowly moved toward the naval dockyard.

Every “housetop and every wharf was crowded with groups of excited people,” an eyewitness recalled, who greeted the arrivals “with vociferous cheers” and Halifax, he believed “was never in such a state of excitement before or since.” The *Shannon’s* triumph over the *Chesapeake* in a bloody engagement fought off Boston ended the series of American



PETER RINDLISBACHER

Left: John Christian Schetky's *The Battle of Lake Erie*. Opposite page: HMS *Shannon* leads her prize, the USS *Chesapeake*, into Halifax Harbour, June 1813.

single-ship victories over the Royal Navy. And it is notable that **Lieutenant Provo Wallis**, a 22-year-old native from Halifax who joined the navy as a boy, played a major role when he assumed command of the *Shannon* after **Captain Philip Broke** was wounded. Broke, who had joined the RN in 1788 and had drilled his crew rigorously in gunnery, was later knighted and rose to the rank of rear-admiral.

In the west the war became very active that fall. On Sept. 10, **Captain Robert H. Barclay's** outgunned British squadron engaged an American squadron at the battle of Put-in-Bay. The Scottish-born Barclay was a seasoned naval warrior; he had even lost an arm while serving under Admiral Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805. The battle on Lake Erie was a very hard-fought and close action with heavy losses. A seaman serving on the flagship of Commander Oliver Perry, the American squadron commander, recalled that his "comrades fell on both sides of me. One man, who stood next to me, was most shockingly wounded—having both his legs shot off—and a number of spikes from the bulwark drove into his body." In the end, superior American firepower prevailed and Barclay was forced to surrender his vessels.

With the loss of naval support, British General Henry Procter decided he could no longer maintain his position on the Detroit River and ordered his army to retreat to the east. Disgusted, his aboriginal ally, Tecumseh, called Procter "a fat animal that carries its tail upon its back; but when affrighted...drops it between its legs and runs off."

The retreat commenced, however, and Tecumseh had no choice but to accompany the British and Canadians with his warriors and their families. The rearguard was formed by a small troop of volunteer cavalry from Lower Canada under the command of **Captain Thomas Coleman**, a Montreal businessman and militia officer who helped raise the Canadian Light Dragoons.

On Oct. 5, a larger American force caught up with the allied army at the Thames River not far from the modern-day city of London, Ont., and scattered it with a massive cavalry charge. An American officer who participated in this charge recalled that "the Indian yell was raised and we rushed upon them like a storm and received a heavy fire by the whole British line when at the distance of twenty steps, but it only inspired us with fresh courage and before they could reload we broke their lines."



Right: American soldiers land at Crysler's farm, November 1813.
Centre page: A brass plate from a soldier's cross belt. The "49" on the oval plate signifies the 49th Regiment of Foot.



TECUMAPEASE



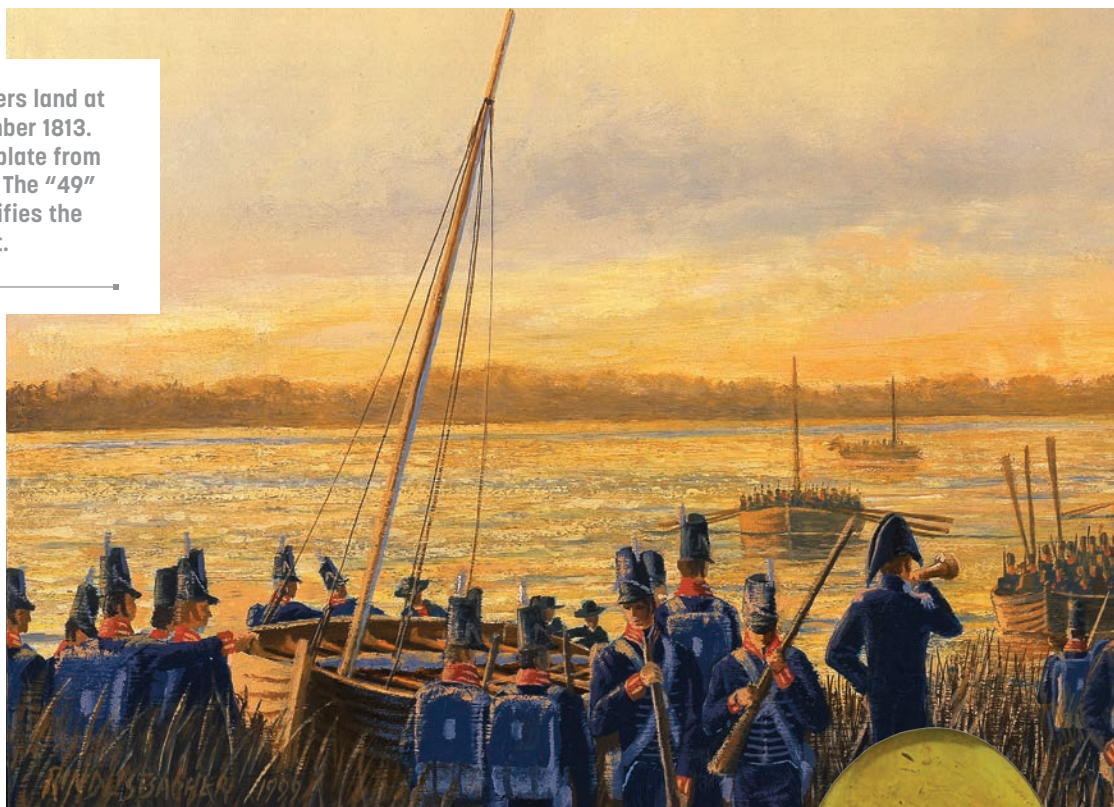
SALABERRY



MULCASTER



MORRISON



Private Shadrach Byfield, a British soldier, remembered that, "after exchanging a few shots, our men gave way" and "I was in the act of retreating when one of our sergeants commanded me to 'stand and fight!'" Byfield "stood by him and fired one shot, but the line was broken and the men were retreating" so he escaped into the woods. Tecumseh was killed while leading his men but his followers managed to spirit his body away and bury it in a secret location. Wasikegaboe, the husband of Tecumseh's sister **Tecumapease**, who had raised the great aboriginal leader, also fell in this action. Tecumapease was a very well respected and leading woman among the Shawnee people. She was born around 1763, but the year of her death is unknown.

The U.S. also launched a two-pronged offensive against Montreal with one army to move against that city from Lake Champlain, while another larger force would move down the St. Lawrence in an armada of small boats. These plans went awry when the army from Lake Champlain encountered a francophone force commanded by **Lieutenant-Colonel Charles de Salaberry** who had served in Europe and the West Indies prior to raising a new corps of volunteers known as the Canadian Voltigeurs. On Oct. 26, after setting up a defensive position beside the Châteauguay River south of Montreal, de Salaberry's troops repulsed several American attacks. During the engagement he cautioned his officers to shout only in French, "that they might not be understood by the enemy." After this defeat, the American invading force hastily withdrew over the border.

The waterborne prong of the U.S. offensive was trailed down the St. Lawrence by a force of gunboats commanded by the RN's aggressive **Captain William H. Mulcaster** and a British and Canadian force under **Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Morrison**. Mulcaster proved to be one of the most competent naval commanders on the Great Lakes, while the British-born Morrison, who had arrived in Upper Canada in 1812, also earned a great deal of respect among the men he led.



PETER RINDLISBACHER



CLARK



HERIOT



HOOPLE



BRUCE



PREVOST

It was during this time that Canada's version of Paul Revere, **Lieutenant Duncan Clark**, who had been posted along the St. Lawrence to give warning of the enemy approach, rode down the Canadian side of the river warning people that the enemy was coming. Annoyed by the irritants snapping at his heels, the American commander turned and attacked on Nov. 11, 1813.

The British and Canadian troops were deployed on good defensive ground near the farm of John Crysler. After more than two hours of costly fighting the Americans were beaten and hastily withdrew to their own territory. The Canadian Voltigeurs, led by **Major Frederick G. Heriot**, were very prominent in this action as were aboriginal warriors from the Mohawk and Mississauga peoples. Heriot, who had arrived in North America in 1802, would survive the war and become a landowner and administrator in Lower Canada.

At one point in the battle at Crysler's Farm, American cavalry charged the right flank of the British line. Lieutenant John Sewell, a Canadian serving in the 49th Regiment of Foot, remembered the American cavalry commander "leapt over the fence and was riding toward our right but alone; some of the men rushed out to attack him with their bayonets fixed" but, observing that he was unaccompanied, the American wheeled his horse and "took the fence again in good hunting style."

During this campaign two women provided valuable medical assistance to those who needed it, regardless of nationality. **Mary Whitmore Hoople** nursed a seriously wounded American soldier until his death and was afterward compensated by the American government for doing so. In Cornwall, **Peggy Bruce**, a hotel owner, not only assisted the people of the village with home medicine, but fed the hungry. The victory at Crysler's Farm ended the largest and most serious American offensive against British North America during the war and it was celebrated at a large ball held in Quebec in January 1814. **Anne Elinor Prevost**, the daughter of the governor general, recorded that she was very pleased to dance with Morrison, the victor of Crysler's Farm.



RIVERBRINK ART MUSEUM

1814: THE BLOODIEST YEAR

There was reason for optimism in Canada when the campaign season of 1814 opened. In April, Britain and her allies managed to topple Napoleon and send him into exile. Reinforcements, nearly 28,000 men, were then available to be sent to North America. On orders from London, General Prevost drew up plans for an offensive across the border.

The first major move of 1814, however, was made by the U.S. On July 3, an American army under General Jacob Brown crossed the Niagara River near Fort Erie and forced the surrender of that post. In contrast to previous years, Brown's army was well trained and commanded by officers who were combat veterans. Two days later at the battle of Chippawa, Brown defeated a British army in open combat in a major action.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Drummond, British commander in Upper Canada, shifted his headquarters to the Niagara peninsula and reinforced the forces there. Brown, meanwhile, advanced to Lake Ontario, expecting to find the American naval squadron on that body of water. Instead, the Royal Navy had gained momentary superiority on the lake and, in frustration, Brown withdrew to Chippawa.



GORDON DRUMMOND

He was followed by Drummond who took up a defensive position on a hill not far from the falls of Niagara and near a sunken road called Lundy's Lane. His men were cooking dinner in the early evening of July 25 when they were attacked by American troops and thus began the bloodiest battle of the war to be fought on Canadian soil. It went on for five hours into the night and, since both armies spoke the same language and wore similar uniforms, mistakes were frequent and often fatal.

At one point, young John Le Couteur of the 104th Regiment of Foot remembered his comrades saw "a black line rising over the hill in our front" and they "poured in a rattling



C.W. JEFFERYS

Left: A painting by C.W. Jefferys depicts the Battle of Lundy's Lane in the summer of 1814. Opposite page: Smoke, dust and death fill the air during the Battle of Lundy's Lane.

volley on them.” Unfortunately, the targets were the Glengarry Light Infantry, commanded by **Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Battersby**, who shouted “We’re British!” The battle of Lundy’s Lane, one participant remembered, was “a conflict obstinate beyond description” and when it was over, more than 1,600 men lay dead or wounded. Brown’s army had good cause to claim a victory as it was in possession of the hill, the high ground, and the British artillery. Battersby survived the battle and the war, living to the age of 70.



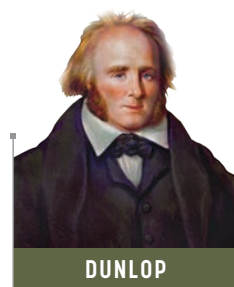
The American victory was thrown away when the general, who had taken over command after Brown was wounded, ordered a withdrawal to Fort Erie, where he began to construct a fortified camp. A week later, Drummond arrived to find his enemy in a well-entrenched position. The British general commenced a siege, but was hampered by supply problems as the British squadron on Lake Ontario had withdrawn into Kingston after the American naval commander had commissioned a new and larger warship.



Drummond’s supplies now had to come by land and he shortly began to suffer shortages of food and ammunition. On the night of Aug. 12, two small American warships, which had been annoying the besiegers, were captured after a daring nighttime boarding action carried out by British **Commander Alexander Dobbs** and a select force of seaman and marines. Quietly approaching their targets, they came alongside and swarmed the decks of an American schooner whose captain “maintained the Quarter Deck until my sword fell in consequence of a Shot in the shoulder and nearly all on deck wounded or surrounded” by British sailors.



Drummond decided to wager everything on a single attack and, during the night of Aug. 14-15, his troops made an assault on the fort. **Lieutenant-Colonel William Drummond**, commanding the 104th Foot recruited in New Brunswick and one of the most admired soldiers in the army, had a premonition of death, although his officers tried to reassure him. Unfortunately, the assault was disastrous and the only penetration into the American enemy position was brought to a swift end by the accidental explosion of a powder magazine under the feet of the attackers. **Surgeon William Dunlop**, who participated in the assault, could not remember getting out of the fort but did remember “scouring along the road” away from the fort “at the top of my speed, with a running accompaniment of grape, canister and musketry whistling about my ears, and tearing the ground at my feet.” The cost was more than 900 British soldiers killed or wounded.



Dobbs, meanwhile, who had led a force of marines and sailors in the night assault, was badly wounded. During the war, this seasoned naval officer met and married a Canadian girl.



Elsewhere during that bloody summer, British arms met with more success. An American attempt to retake Mackinac Island was rebuffed in August by the Scottish-born **Lieutenant-Colonel Robert McDouall** of the Canadian Glengarry Light Infantry, who in 1817 would be made a Companion of the Bath for his wartime services. As part of this operation, **Lieutenant Miller Worsley**, RN, captured two American schooners blockading the island in two separate surprise attacks. Also in August, **Lieutenant-General John Coape Sherbrooke**, the lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia, launched an expedition against the border ports of Maine, capturing Bangor, Castine and Machias. During their possession of these places, British commanders continued to collect the customs and excise duties on cargoes being landed and, after the war, £10,000 of this money was put to good use to establish Dalhousie University in Halifax.

To the south, a major British expedition entered Chesapeake Bay in an effort to draw off American troops from the northern theatre. In late August a small British army under **Major-General Robert Ross** accompanied by **Rear-Admiral George Cockburn** moved on Washington and, at Bladensburg near the American capital, defeated a stronger American force. That night, the British occupied Washington. Ross, who prior to the war had served with distinction in Spain and France, burned several public buildings in the city, including the presidential mansion (not called the White House then) which were legitimate military targets under the rules of war as they were understood at the time.

Ross, who had joined the army in 1789, was killed during an unsuccessful attempt to take Baltimore on Sept. 12. As the city was too strong to be directly attacked, the British contented themselves with a naval bombardment of nearby Fort McHenry using artillery and rockets. A British naval officer remembered that “the hissing of rockets and the fiery shells glittered in the air, threatening destruction as they fell.”

Alfred Jacob Miller's
Bombardment of
Fort McHenry.



MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Despite all the fireworks, however, the British attack was rebuffed. Ross's body was taken to Halifax where it was interred in an impressive ceremony which, according to **Lady Katherine Sherbrooke**, wife of the lieutenant-governor whose diary provides an insight into wartime life in Halifax, drew an "amazing crowd."

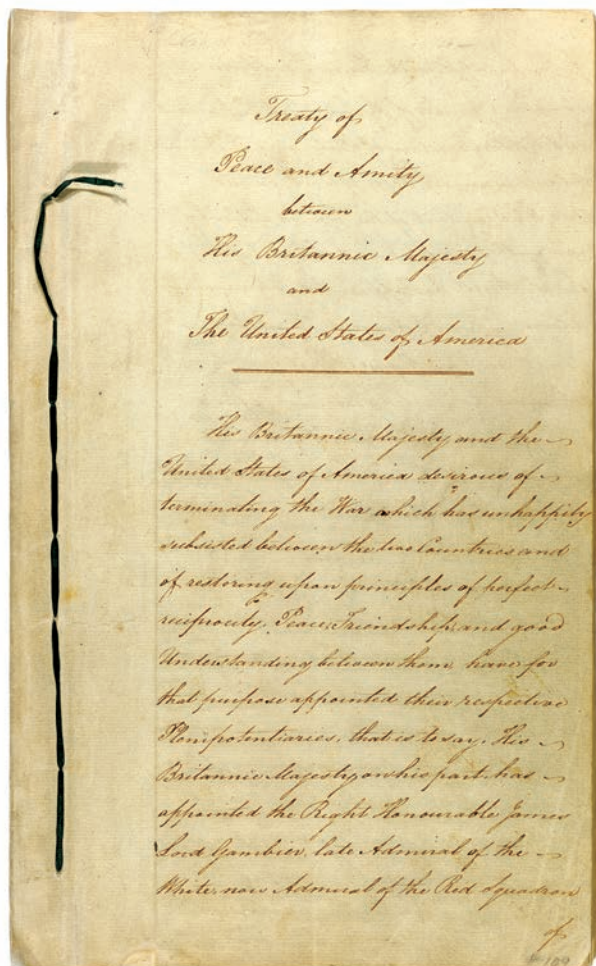
The major British offensive of the war, however, took place on Lake Champlain. In the first days of September, a British and Canadian army numbering just over 10,000 men and led by Prevost crossed into northern New York and advanced on the American naval base at Plattsburgh. Brushing aside enemy rearguards, Prevost reached Plattsburgh on Sept. 6 and settled down to wait for the British Lake Champlain squadron, whose assistance was needed for him to take the enemy base.

The navy showed up on Sept. 11 and immediately engaged the American squadron anchored in Plattsburgh Bay. It was a furious action and a spectator recalled that the cannon fire "was terrific, fairly shaking the ground, and so rapid that it seemed to be one continuous roar, intermingled with spiteful flashing from the mouths of the guns, and dense clouds of smoke hung over the two fleets." After a hard-fought battle that killed or wounded nearly 250 men in both squadrons, the British surrendered. Unable to take the town without naval assistance, Prevost withdrew to Canada.

In the Niagara, meanwhile, Lieutenant-General Gordon Drummond had continued his siege of Fort Erie, but a shortage of supplies forced him to order a withdrawal. His troops were preparing for this on Sept. 17 when the Americans boiled out of the fort and attacked. They were repulsed after a vicious battle, in which aboriginal warriors took a prominent part. "I had an opportunity of seeing bush-fighting," remembered the surgeon Dunlop, and "it seemed to me to be a point" with the warriors "at every discharge to shift



SHERBROOKE



Left: The Treaty of Ghent was signed in December 1814 and ratified in February 1815.



KERBY

their position” and “whenever they knocked a fellow over, their yelling was horrible.”

Two Canadian regiments, the Glengarry Light Infantry under Battersby and the Incorporated Militia Battalion under **Major James Kerby**, took a prominent part in this battle. Kerby was a man of many talents: a militia officer, businessman, justice of the peace and politician.

After the battle, Drummond, who later served as governor general of British North America, withdrew to a good defensive position on the north bank of the Chippawa River. Ironically, at almost the same time, the British squadron on Lake Ontario regained naval superiority after it commissioned the *St. Lawrence*, a ship of the line with over 100 guns and the largest warship to sail on the Great Lakes. After that, there were a few minor skirmishes but, in the north, the war was substantially at an end.

The see-saw nature of the fighting over the summer and autumn of 1814 had been followed closely by the diplomats both nations had sent to the city of Ghent to negotiate a peace settlement. As autumn

turned to winter, they gradually hammered out an agreement based on the pre-war *status quo* meaning that both Britain and the U.S. would return to the situation as it was before the war began. While a treaty was signed on Christmas Eve 1814, news of that event did not reach North America until Jan. 8, 1815, when the final major battle took place. This occurred when a British army attacked New Orleans only to be repulsed with heavy casualties. On Feb. 16, the U.S. Congress ratified the Treaty of Ghent and the war was over.

FROM HOSTILITY TO FRIENDSHIP: TWO CENTURIES OF PEACE

Although there would be tensions along the border for nearly half a century after the war, never again did the U.S. and Canada engage each other in armed conflict. As a result of the war, however, Britain did undertake a massive program of constructing defences at Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Kingston, Niagara-on-the-Lake and other points. One of the largest of this type was the Rideau Canal, built to connect the Ottawa River to Lake Ontario, thus bypassing the vulnerable St. Lawrence lifeline, which was close to the border.

By 1912, the centennial of the war, Canada and the U.S. were on the best of terms and their relationship became stronger throughout the 20th century as they fought as allies in two world wars and the Korean War. Today, two centuries after the War of 1812, both nations have evolved from enemies to friends.

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