

# The Fife and Drum

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## The New Fort and the origins of hockey in Toronto

by Victor Russell

Hockey in Canada has always had a military component. From the earliest accounts of the sport, through the late nineteenth-century origins of the modern game, there have always been military teams. Their involvement grew during the world wars of the twentieth century when hundreds of army, navy and air force teams were in action across the country.

Many of these teams, like the Toronto Daggers, the Nanaimo Clippers, the Currie Army team from Calgary and the powerful Halifax Navy squad had some of the best players in Canada on their rosters, many from the NHL. There were national champions like the 61<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Winnipeg), the RCAF Flyers (Ottawa) and the Army Commandos (also Ottawa), winners of the once-prestigious Allan Cup for 1916, 1942 and 1943. And there was especially the 1948 RCAF Flyers, who thrilled the nation by winning Olympic Gold in 1948.

In Ontario, organized hockey as we know it today is thought to have begun with the cadets of the Royal Military College, Kingston, in the mid 1880s. Hockey games with a set of rules had been introduced at McGill University in Montreal in the mid 1870s but a decade later had still only spread to Ottawa and Kingston. To be sure, informal shinny with few or no rules was being played all across the province. But few formal teams and no organized league existed here before the formation of the Ontario Hockey Association.

In the years immediately before the OHA's first season in 1891, affluent members of various private clubs in Toronto had formed hockey teams and played "friendlies" or exhibition games on a challenge basis. One of the teams active in that brief period was the "C School" hockey team, aka the New Forts.

The formation of the army team in 1889 came shortly after the arrival in Toronto of two promising junior officers: Lieutenant Thomas D. B. Evans and Lieutenant John Haliburton Laurie. Both men had come to take up

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**There were traitors and renegades** along the Niagara during the second half of 1813. Recruited by a man made bitter by failure and named the Canadian Volunteers, they scouted for the American invaders and in December burned the town of Newark – the modern Niagara-on-the-Lake – to the ground. This particular reprobate, imagined by the artist Gregg Legge, has just stolen his supper. A new account of this period of the War of 1812 begins on page 7.

appointments in the Infantry School Corps, whose C Company was stationed at Toronto under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel William Dillon Otter. Evans was from Ottawa and Laurie was a graduate of RMC in Kingston, so it is likely that both men had been involved in hockey before.

Lt.-Col. Otter encouraged a range of sports at the fort. A committed athlete, Otter had been a champion rower as a youth; he was the founding president and a former star of the Toronto Lacrosse Club; and he had served as an executive of the Toronto Gymnasium Association. The barracks had its own gymnasium.

In the case of hockey, Lt. Evans took the lead and acted as the team's captain, arranging a number of "friendly matches" with other recently formed teams in the city. Evans and Laurie also oversaw the construction of a rink on the grounds of the New Fort for the team's practices and exhibition games.

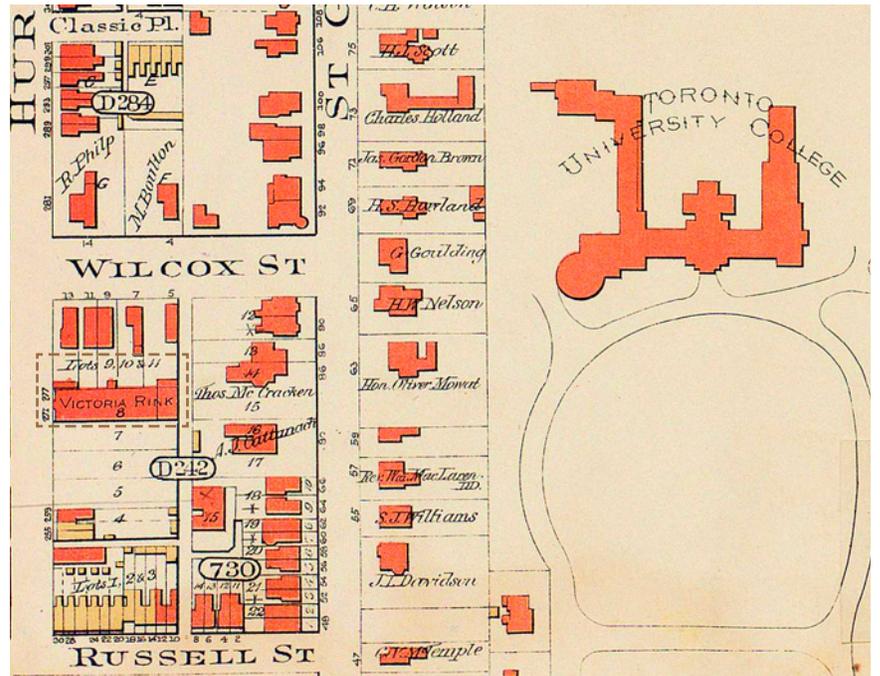
The move to formalize hockey competition in the province gained momentum in February 1890 when the Rideau Hall Rebels Hockey Club of Ottawa came to Toronto. Rebel players included several MPs, one well-known athlete and the two sons of the Governor General himself, Lord Stanley of Preston. Arriving in the Governor General's private railway car, the Rideau Rebels were received and entertained by Toronto society with all the deference, pomp, and formality thought to be due a Vice Regal party.

While in the city the Rebels played two games against Toronto teams that attracted a great deal of attention. As one observer noted, the rinks were "crowded with the elite of Toronto society," including no doubt our lieutenants Evans and Laurie.

Following the Vice Regal tour of the province, one of Lord Stanley's sons, the Hon. Arthur Stanley, concluded that what was needed was a provincial organization to govern the sport and to establish a framework to produce a provincial champion. Lacrosse and football associations were already in place. Subsequently, Arthur convinced his father to be the Patron and then proposed a meeting to discuss formalizing the 1891 season.



**Alfred Morgan Cosby (1837-1900)** was the first president of the OHA and the second Commanding Officer of the 48th Highlanders of Canada. A wealthy banker, he was a director of Gooderham & Worts and – of great value to the new league – much involved with the Victoria skating club. This portrait is oil on canvas, 33" x 42", signed BARNES; photo by the F&D, courtesy 48th Highlanders Officers' Mess.



**The Victoria Skating and Curling Association** drew a fashionable crowd, and organized hockey would soon join the attractions of a season ticket. This profitable undertaking was privately owned by a small group led by Alfred Cosby and W. B. McMurrich. The rink on Huron Street (outlined, just below Wilcox) was in an upscale neighbourhood – its back wall could be seen from the south lawn of Oliver Mowat's elegant home at 63 St. George, when Mowat was Ontario's prime minister. Map is a detail of Goad's 1893 atlas, Plate 26, courtesy University of Toronto Map Library; ticket courtesy Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection



*The Ottawa Hockey Club poses with the new Cosby Cup. Formed in 1885, the Ottawas were affiliated with the Ottawa Amateur Athletic Club and wore the OAAC triskelion logo (legs in constant motion) on their sweaters. The Club evolved into an early version of the Ottawa Senators and soon captured several Stanley Cups. This studio photo shows the style and limited nature of early hockey equipment and how small the teams were. Photo by J.W. Topley, March 1891; LAC original colourized by www.hockeygods.com*



*The silver Cosby Cup was donated by its namesake and first awarded in the spring of 1891. It was made by J.E. Ellis & Company, a Toronto firm begun by the English silversmith James Ellis sometime after 1848. It was later acquired by Birks. Replaced in 1899 by the more elaborate J. Ross Robertson Cup – which is still awarded today – the Cosby was last won by Queen’s and is preserved in the university’s archives. Photos by Deirdre Brydon, Queen’s University Archives QART-69*

The meeting that Stanley proposed was held on Nov. 27, 1890, at the Queen’s Hotel in Toronto. It led to the formation of OHA. More than a dozen eminent men from various locales attended, with Arthur Stanley representing Ottawa. The largest delegation was from Toronto and included seven local athletes.

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### a provincial organization to govern the sport

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There was James Garvin, barrister, all-star lacrosse player and member of the Granite Club; Henry Green, also from the Toronto Lacrosse and the Granite Club; John Thompson, a law student representing Osgoode Hall; William Robinson, from the Athletics Lacrosse Club and the Victoria Club; Frank Jackson, from the St. George’s Club; Charles Hamilton from the Victoria Club; and Lt. Evans for the New Forts. During the meeting, Evans agreed to act on the first Executive Committee of the OHA.

The first order of business was the naming of a president. The group unanimously agreed to appoint Alfred Morgan Cosby. An investment banker and member of the city’s business elite – he had married Clara Worts, of Gooderam & Worts – Cosby would become Commanding Officer of the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders in 1898. He and Clara had hosted the Rideau Rebels (who were clearly



anything but) at his stately home on College Street.

Perhaps more importantly, Cosby was the majority owner of one of the two covered rinks in Toronto: the Victoria Rink on Huron Street, not far from Spadina Circle. The other natural-ice rink with a roof was the Granite Club’s building at Church and Wellesley. Most of the OHA games for 1891 were played in these two arenas. Cosby’s appointment was primarily honorary but he did donate a beautiful trophy to be awarded to the winner of the series.

By the start of the OHA’s inaugural season, the New Forts and eleven other club teams had submitted their fees. As a result, the league for 1891 included three teams from Ottawa (Rebels, Rideaus, Ottawas), two from Kingston (Queen’s and RMC), one from Lindsay (where Sam Hughes was then the owner of



*An original hot stove lounge was the Canteen of the New Fort, where a ginger ale or a beer could be had after practice. Operated separately from any government accounts – as messes and canteens still do – the profits from sales were put toward boats for the mens' rowing club. Courtesy Library & Archives Canada, Otter Collection, C-031462*

*The Victoria Warder*, the local paper) and six from Toronto. The six teams from the city were the New Forts, the Granite, the Victoria, the Athletics, the St. George's and Osgoode Hall.

While the teams waited for the OHA executive to announce the schedule, cold weather arrived and the ice became ready for play. Local teams soon organized exhibition games among themselves. The soldiers began their season on Jan. 9, 1891, playing a practice game against the Granites and then, on Jan. 17, against the Victorias.

When the schedule came out the soldiers found themselves grouped with the Granites and the Victorias – but learned that their first Association match would be against Lindsay. On Jan. 22 Evans loaded his team onto the afternoon train to Lindsay, where they lost “a hotly contested match” by a score of 3 to 2.

The infantry school team would defeat the Victorias in Association play on Feb. 12, 1891, by a score of 3 to 0, only to lose to the Granite Club a week later. That game all but eliminated the New Forts from the OHA championship series; two losses were enough. The New Forts nevertheless played two more friendlies: another against the Granites and a return game against the visiting squad from Lindsay.

The hockey matches of this period bear only the slightest resemblance to the game today. In 1890 a hockey team consisted of seven men: a goalie and six skaters. Goalies protected a line marked by two small flags placed on the ice six feet apart. They

had to remain standing at all times. Two of the skaters were designated defencemen who, unlike today, did not position themselves side-by-side but rather one behind the other. The remaining four skaters were a centre, two wingers and a rover.

Few rules existed or were enforced around rough play, even while players wore little if any protective equipment. Hockey, then and now, is a fast game with considerable body contact producing the inevitable injuries. In those days, when a player was forced to retire by an injury, the opposing team would take a man out of competition to even the sides. Substitutions were not allowed. The same seven players were expected to be on the ice for the entire one-hour game.

Several Toronto teams developed a reputation for toughness. For example, following the games against

the Rideau Rebels, an observer from Ottawa mildly admonished the Granites by suggesting that “the strength of the Granite team would in no way be detracted from by the avoidance of the rougher methods of lacrosse when playing hockey.” Another case in point: in their third OHA game against the Granites, the New Forts were put at a distinct disadvantage when Henry Green, a member of the Granites, hit Tom Evans – the Forts' star player – so hard that he was forced to retire from the game. The Granites scored a final goal to win 4 to 3.

As for the rinks, ice conditions in the natural-ice era were obviously dependent on the weather. Games were often played both indoors and outdoors on soft slushy ice. As well, the actual

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### few rules existed or were enforced around rough play

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size of a hockey rink was not standardized until the early twentieth century. There were no lines or zones on the ice and forward passes were not allowed.

Game officials included a referee, a timekeeper and a goal judge. The referee had to be accepted by both teams and was usually a player from a third team. The referee used a hand-held bell, not a whistle, but there were few stoppages during the game; continuous play was preferred. In fact, there was no stop time and the designated timekeeper kept track of the time elapsed in each of the two half-hour periods, adding ten-minute overtimes if a game was tied.

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**“their sportsmanship was their true value”**

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The New Forts were entered in the 1892 and the 1893 OHA senior series with results similar to those of their first year. The team was competitive but not able to advance to the championship series. To some degree, the team’s mediocre performance in these years was the result of permanently losing its best player. Lt. Tom Evans was transferred in 1892 from C Company to Fort Osbourne, Winnipeg, where he became instrumental in the development of hockey in Manitoba.

Back in Toronto, Lt. Laurie replaced Evans as a member of the OHA Executive and also served as the association’s secretary. The C Company team was led in 1893 by Lt. Stephen Baldwin.

An early-season assessment in the *Globe* noted that “the New Fort Team have no chance in the OHA senior series, but will fulfill all their engagements.” W.A.H. Kerr, an RMC grad and former Sergeant Major of Cadets, agreed but argued in a magazine article that “their worth is not to be judged by their wins. They are at a disadvantage in having but a few players to draw from in the infantry school.” Kerr, in fine Victorian fashion, added that “their sportsmanship was their true value.”

As a result, for 1894 and 1895 the New Forts were placed in the junior division. The soldiers did not enter the OHA for the 1896 and 1897 seasons. However, there is evidence that hockey was still played by the soldiers at the fort. In 1898, a team called the Garrison Hockey Club was entered in the OHA’s intermediate division. This team was entirely enlisted men from the Permanent Force company and it suffered the same fate as its predecessors. There were no teams in the early league from Toronto’s thriving Militia regiments, whose members were spread throughout the city’s athletic clubs.

The New Forts hockey team was never a contender for the Cosby Cup but many of the players went on to substantial military careers. Tom Evans would become one of the most significant Canadian officers of the Victorian era, commanding the Yukon Field Force in 1898 and later a battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles in South Africa.

John Laurie, who was born in Canada and graduated from RMC, was the son of General John Wimburn Laurie of the British Army. In 1895, Lt. Laurie returned to the British unit he had joined after graduation, the King’s Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, and was promoted to captain. He was killed in action in South Africa during the relief of Ladysmith, coming to the aid of one of his wounded soldiers.

Another member of the C Company team was Sergeant George Galloway. A private in the King’s Own Scottish Borderers of the British Army before coming to Canada, Galloway would rise to adjutant-sergeant in the Royal Canadian Regiment (what the Infantry School Corps had become by 1901) and serve in the war in South Africa. Retiring after the Boer campaigns, Sergeant Galloway re-enlisted at the age of 50 at the outbreak of the First World War.

As for hockey, the game’s popularity exploded in the late Victorian era as hundreds of teams were formed across the province. Spectators attended games in larger and larger numbers. The OHA quickly became the largest and most influential hockey association in the country, promoting what was broadly known as “the amateur ideal.” But within a decade the professional brand would begin its rise to supremacy, leading eventually to the formation of the National Hockey League.

The OHA and many other sports organizations resisted professionalization in an attempt to preserve the game for those who played hockey purely for pleasure and not for profit. The New Forts – as soldiers, officers and gentlemen – were a perfect fit for the original ideals of the Ontario Hockey Association.

By the bye, it is surely just a coincidence that in 1893 the New Fort was renamed Stanley Barracks – after the popular and sports-loving Governor General – the same year as the Stanley Cup was awarded for the first time.

*Victor Russell is the former manager of Toronto Archives, a regular contributor to the F&D, and the author of a number of books and articles on the history of Toronto.*

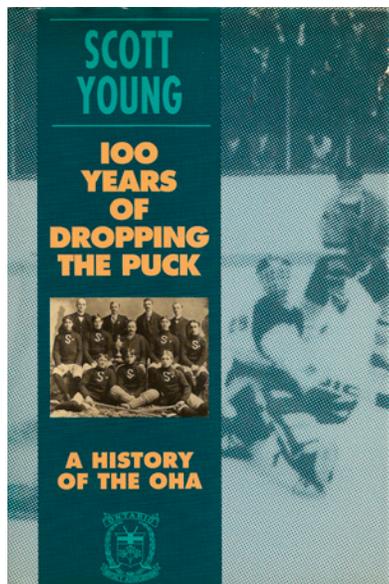


**Lieutenant Tom Evans**, 30, was one of Canada’s leading soldiers of the period. He went on to command the Yukon Field Force. (*Dominion Illustrated News*, Feb.7, 1891)



**Lieutenant John Laurie**, 26, was a graduate of RMC and the son of a British general. He was killed in action in South Africa. (*Dominion Illustrated News*, Feb.7, 1891)

## Sources & Further Reading



Books touching the history of the New Fort include Aldona Sendzikas, *Stanley Barracks: Toronto's military heritage* (Dundurn 2011); Brereton Greenhous, *Dragoon: a centennial history of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 1883-1983* (RCD 1983); R.C. Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, 1883-1933* (RCR 1936); and Desmond Morton, *The Canadian General: Sir William Otter* (Hakkert 1974). For an article on the formation of C Company at the New Fort, see *The Dominion Illustrated News* of Feb. 7, 1891.

On the early years of hockey, look for W.A.H. Kerr, "Hockey in Ontario," in the *Dominion Illustrated Monthly* (Vol.2, No.2, March 1893) and Victor Russell, "Hockey in Victorian Toronto," in *The Hockey Research Journal* (Vol. XX, 2016/17). See also *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* by Bruce Kidd (UTP 1996) and, in *Total Hockey: the official encyclopedia of the National Hockey League* (1998), an article on "The History of Hockey in Toronto" by Leonard Kotylo.

Most games were listed (if not always covered) by the *Globe* beginning in the 1890s. For a full account of the Rebel visit to Toronto, see the front page of the *Ottawa Citizen* for Feb. 11, 1890. The scores and line-ups of the games were in the *Globe* the previous day. For the early history of the Ontario Hockey Association, see *OHA Annual Reports 1891, 1892, 1893*, etc., which can be found in the Seaman Hockey Research Centre of the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto (or by appointment at the OHA head office in Cambridge) and *100 Years of Dropping the Puck: A History of the OHA* (McClelland & Stewart 1989) by Scott Young.

## They fought the pandemic

**Corporal Leo Douvinos** of the Queen's York Rangers has a chat with his commanding officer and Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, who visited Fort York on August 31 to say "thank you." As the honorary Colonel of the Regiment – a role that recalls John Graves Simcoe – she was there to recognize the soldiers who fought the pandemic.

The military's response to calls for help in Long-Term Care homes was named Operation Laser. A total of 237 soldiers of the Army Reserve from the Toronto area staged out of Borden, near Barrie, from the beginning of April to the middle of July.

Units at Fort York Armoury deployed 51 soldiers: 22 Rangers, 19 from 32 Signal Regiment and 10 more from the Royal Regiment of Canada. In the group photo are the sergeant major, the commanding officer and nine of the Queen's York Rangers who volunteered. Ms Dowdeswell's visit reminds us that the Canadian Army's active presence at Fort York National Historic Site continues up to the moment. Photos by Lt. Erica Palakovic, 32 Canadian Brigade Group



## *“At the mercy of the enemy” in 1813: A long and bloody year in the Niagara Peninsula*

*Excerpted and adapted from Donald E. Graves, Not for Self but for Country: The History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment*

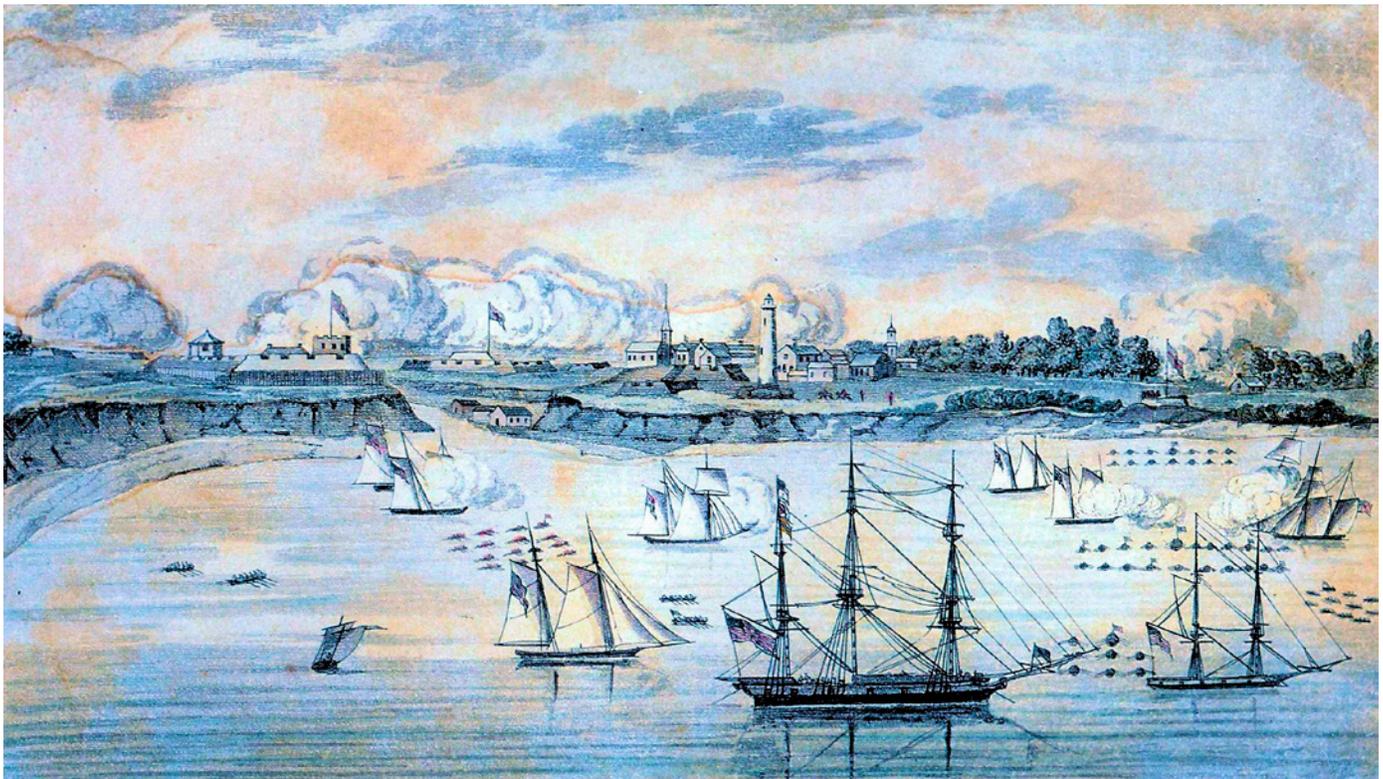
*In the spring of 1813, the United States renewed its offensive against British North America. The American campaign at first enjoyed success – the provincial capital of York was taken on April 27 and a month later, a large army under Major-General Henry Dearborn made a successful landing at Newark (modern Niagara-on-the-Lake) and captured Fort George. The local British commander, Brigadier John Vincent, withdrew his troops to Burlington Heights (modern Hamilton).*

*Dearborn sent a strong force to pursue him but on the night of June 5, Vincent mounted an attack against it at Stoney Creek. Vincent was rebuffed but a British attack on the American naval base at Sacket’s Harbor caused Commodore Isaac Chauncey, commanding the US Navy on Lake Ontario, to remove his squadron from the Niagara and return to his base to protect it. Lacking naval support, Dearborn pulled all his forces back to a fortified position around Newark and Fort George. A second American defeat at the battle of Beaver Dams on June 24 – won largely by Indigenous allies – placed the invading army squarely on the defensive. Vincent advanced toward the American position and began a blockade that was to last for three months. We take up the story in mid summer.*

The American situation in Upper Canada was not very secure. By the end of June one invader was complaining that “our pickets and foraging parties are constantly harassed by local militia and Indians. Every night there is a skirmish. They keep our troops under arms, which exhausts and wears them away very fast. Our forces has diminished very much. The enemy’s fleet plagues our troops very much. It has been making demonstrations off Niagara for near two weeks.”

The attacks on his troops hardened Dearborn’s attitude toward

the Canadian civilian population. When his army had first entered Canada, Dearborn was under orders from American Secretary of War John Armstrong that all “male inhabitants of Canada, subject to the Militia Law are to be considered as prisoners and removed as such.” Dearborn, however, reported that “a large proportion” of the Canadian population was actually “friendly to the United States and fixed in their hatred to the Government of Great Britain. If they should be made prisoners of war and taken from their families, it would have a most unfavourable



**Newark can be seen** nestled between the woods and the mouth of the Niagara River on May 27, 1813, as American troops are rowed ashore. To the left is Fort Niagara; across the river is the doomed Fort George, with Navy Hall on the shore. The two churches represent St. Mark’s Anglican (left of the lighthouse) and St. Andrew’s Presbyterian. Only the limestone of St. Mark’s – which has never had a steeple – survived the fire. The church and its Burying Ground can be seen on both maps (p.9) and are still there today. The lighthouse, more faithfully rendered, was built in 1804 and was the first on the Great Lakes. Damaged by the fighting, it was pulled down in 1814. Chauncey’s flagship, USS Madison, is in the foreground. Engraving from *The Port Folio* magazine, Philadelphia, July 1817; Archives of Ontario S1439

effect on our Military Operations in the provinces. The whole country would be driven to a state of desperation and satisfy them beyond doubt that we had no intention of holding the provinces.”

He therefore decided his best course was to make a widespread offer of paroles to Canadians. A parole was a promise by a man “not to bear arms or act in any military capacity against the United States during the present war” until officially exchanged for an American parolee. Dearborn issued a proclamation that all Canadians who came forth voluntarily to give their paroles “shall have their property and persons secured to them inviolate.” So many men took advantage of this offer that the *Buffalo Gazette* reported that Canadians “appear to be well suited in the recent change of affairs” as “nearly all the militia from Chippawa to Point Abino have come in and received their parole from Colonel Preston at Fort Erie” and from Dearborn at Fort George.

Many of those Canadians who sought paroles were not American sympathizers but loyal subjects who wished only to protect their property. It appears that requesting a parole was not always voluntary, as American detachments visited farmsteads throughout the peninsula, forcing men to take a parole; those who refused were threatened with arrest and imprisonment in the United States. The invaders cast their net very wide – Hamilton Merritt, the young Canadian cavalry commander, sarcastically remarked that they “paroled all males from 14 to 100 years of age.”

Whether voluntary or extorted, American records indicate that 1,193 men were paroled after the loss of Fort George. To counter this erosion of strength, Lieutenant-General George Prevost, the governor-general and commander of the forces, issued a proclamation on June 14 that called on all “loyal and well disposed in this Province, who are not under the immediate control or within the power of the enemy, to use every possible effort in repelling the foe and driving him from our soil.”

After his subsequent withdrawal to Fort George, Dearborn’s attitude toward Canadians again began to change. Beginning on June 19, he carried out a mass arrest of about a hundred civilians in and around Newark. Among them were the local magistrates whom Dearborn had earlier retained in their offices to oversee “due administration of the laws for the suppression of offences against Society.” Many of those arrested were militia officers who had given their paroles. Some of these prisoners were moved across the river to Fort Niagara. An American officer at Fort George noted that Dearborn had taken “some precautionary measures respecting violent British partisans,” with “the most conspicuous” being “sent over the river to be kept in the United States as hostages.”

This same witness also recalled that there was daily skirmishing but that the invaders were seldom successful because “the enemy is best acquainted with the paths, bye-roads, swamps and the country in general.” The British and Canadians also had the assistance of numbers of warriors, not only from the Grand River but also from Lower Canada and the Upper Lakes. They

ensured that the cordon around Newark was kept tight.

On July 10, the American lack of local knowledge was remedied when Joseph Willcocks – the prewar government opponent – appeared at Dearborn’s headquarters and offered to form a “corps of volunteers” to fight alongside the American army in the Niagara. Dearborn gladly accepted this offer and, within a week, the newly appointed Major Joseph Willcocks had mustered a company of 54 all ranks. They wore a white cockade and a green silk ribbon around their hats. The Canadian Volunteers, as they were called, were soon guiding enemy patrols and gathering information from American sympathizers. They also gained a reputation for acquiring the private property of loyal Canadians – one American officer described them as “cowboys” because of their propensity for thieving cattle. Willcocks’ Volunteers were not the only irregular unit in the American forces with such a reputation. Dr. Cyrenius Chapin of Buffalo led a small mounted volunteer unit whose conduct was so bad that American regulars nicknamed them “Dr. Chapin and his Forty Thieves.”

The depredations of these two groups and others were well known and many in Dearborn’s army were disgusted by their conduct. An American observer commented on the lawlessness of the occupied area:

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**“there have been the most shameful acts of rapacity committed on the innocent inhabitants”**

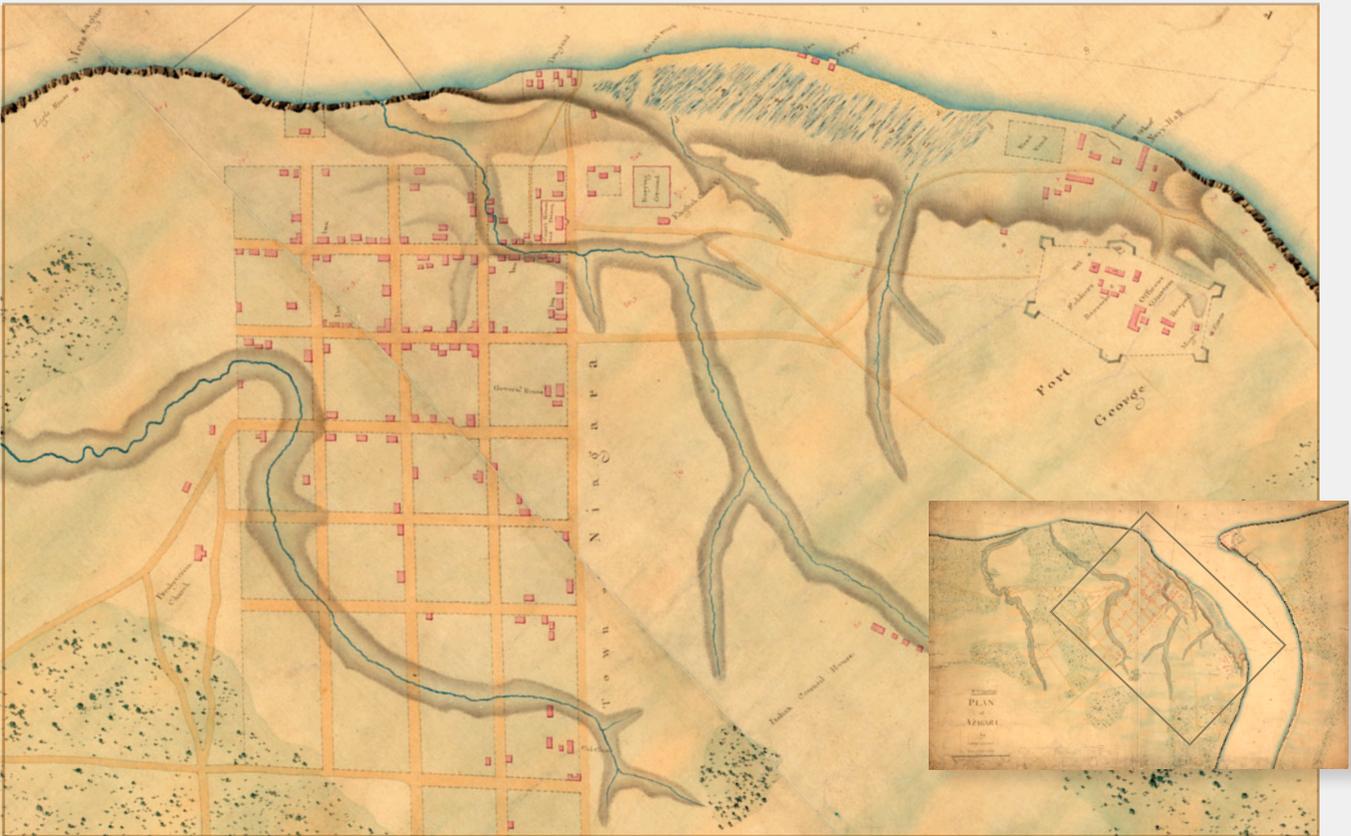
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After Fort George was taken by our troops, a system of plunder and outrage was adopted and commenced to an extent almost unequalled in the annals of French warfare. Citizens, while peaceably attending to their business, were seized and sent across the river, and almost at the same time, their property was destroyed. Those who were paroled and promised protection, on suspicion of their possessing moveable property were arrested and their property pillaged. The notorious Traitor, Willcocks, was commissioned to raise a body of marauders expressly to plunder, burn and destroy.

Another American reported that “since the capture of Fort George there have been the most shameful acts of rapacity committed on the innocent inhabitants” of Upper Canada. He added that he was hearing “every day of quantities of plate and other valuable articles being brought from there and sold by the marauders at a small price” and officers “are ashamed to record the commission of acts which stain our national character with such foul disgrace.”

On July 15, Dearborn was removed as commander of the American army and temporarily succeeded by Brigadier-General John Boyd, who was in turn replaced in early September by Major-General James Wilkinson. Wilkinson was under orders to transfer most of the regular units at Fort George east to Sacket’s Harbor to participate in an offensive against Montreal. Although it took him time to get moving, by the first days of October the only American regulars on the Canadian side of the Niagara was Colonel Winfield Scott’s Second Artillery Regiment.

Although he had orders to remain at Fort George, Scott, a very ambitious officer, convinced himself that it would be better



**Newark before and after the war** is seen in these two maps drawn for the British Army. Above is the bustling town in 1810, drawn on two sheets and here fused together. Fort George is a large enclosure of ditch, berm and palisade anchored by six earth-and-timber bastions. The town has no other significant defences. The lighthouse is in the top left corner.

**Below is Newark in 1815**, showing the effects of two years of peace and three more of war: less forest, fewer houses and more fortification. But already some two dozen buildings (of the 80 burned) have been rebuilt. Work began early in 1814 and many homes were raised on their original stone foundations. Fort George has been reshaped into a more compact, more defensible form (today's reproduction is the earlier fort – note the magazine). The lighthouse has been torn down and Fort Mississauga built in its place, while Butler's Barracks (bottom centre) continue to grow.



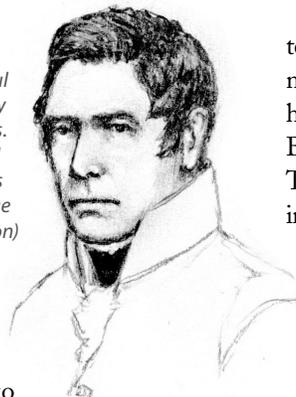
Images are details of "No.V, Upper Canada, Plan of Niagara" by A. Gray, 1810, coloured manuscript in two halves, 51½" x 33¾" fused (LAC 4135172) and "Plan of the mouth of the Niagara River ..." from an original by Lt. Philpotts, R.E., on June 3, 1815; map 28 ¾" 15 ¾" (LAC 4512345)

for him to follow the main army. He therefore turned over command at that post to Brigadier-General George McClure of the New York Militia, who led a brigade of volunteers enlisted for three months. This done, Scott and his regulars departed for the eastern end of the lake.

McClure, an indecisive man, quickly fell under the influence of Willcocks, who was appointed Police Officer for the American-occupied part of the Niagara. Armed with such powers, the Canadian renegade unleashed a miniature reign of terror during November, arresting several prominent Loyalists, including Hamilton Merritt's father, and also obtaining valuable intelligence from American sympathizers.

It was Merritt's opinion that Willcocks "had the whole management of civil and, I may say, military affairs" in the occupied area. The young cavalry officer was determined that he and his men "should not be idle until the traitor ... was kidnapped or out of the way."

*Captain Hamilton Merritt was the youthful commander (at 21) of a troop of Militia cavalry and an insightful observer of human affairs. Merritt later became a driving force behind the Welland Canal and in 1863 published his memories of the war. Pencil drawing by Greg Legge (author's collection)*



Willcocks was able to move freely throughout much of the peninsula because of British troop movements. Many of Vincent's men were sent to Kingston to match the movement of Wilkinson's army to Sacket's Harbor. Matters took a bad turn in early October when Vincent learned of the disastrous British defeat at the battle of the Thames on the 5th of that month. Reports that the victorious American army was advancing concerned him so much that he decided to withdraw from the cordon around Fort George and pull back to Burlington Bay.

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### the Canadian renegade unleashed a miniature reign of terror

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The withdrawal was conducted with unseemly haste and large quantities of provisions were abandoned. Many civilians had to be left behind and Merritt recalled that there "was not a dry cheek to be seen in parting with the good people, as they were all confident" that they "must be at the Mercy of the Enemy, this being the second time" they had been abandoned. By this time Merritt's opinion of British generals was at a low ebb. He said of Major-General Francis de Rottenburg, then commanding in Upper Canada, that "We expected he would have performed wonders, in fact he had done nothing but eat, drink, snuff and snuffle."

The Americans took advantage of the British withdrawal to freely plunder the helpless civilians and McClure proved unable to discipline his troops, who looted as they pleased. In desperation, he issued an address to the "Inhabitants of the Upper Province



*Brigadier-General George McClure of the New York Militia fell under the influence of the traitorous Joseph Willcocks and ordered Newark to be burned. He published his excuses in 1817. Pencil drawing by Greg Legge (Graves collection)*

of Canada" in which he admitted that "illegal, unauthorized and forbidden pillage had been committed by a few who are lost to all honour and insensible of the obligations of a soldier."

Nonetheless, McClure urged Canadians to "abstain from communications with the British army" under threat of the "penalties of rigorous martial law." He beseeched Secretary of

War John Armstrong for reinforcements, confessing that the violence his men had directed against the Canadians might induce the British to retaliate and "visit upon our defence-less inhabitants the whole force of their indignation."

By December 1813, McClure was desperate. The enlistment terms of his brigade had expired and he only had about a hundred men under command. On December 10 Willcocks informed him that a British force had moved forward from Burlington Bay to the Twenty-Mile Creek and its advance guard was at the Twelve-Mile Creek (modern St. Catharines). Knowing it was impossible to hold Fort George with the few men he had, McClure convened a meeting of his senior officers. He showed them orders from Secretary of War John Armstrong, which read:

Understanding that the defence of the post committed to your charge may render it proper to destroy the town of Newark, You are hereby directed to apprise its inhabitants of this circumstance and invite them to remove themselves and their effects to some place of greater safety.

McClure asked his subordinates' opinion. They told him that Newark ought to be destroyed because, even if this destruction was not necessary for the defence of Fort George, it would become necessary for the defence of Fort Niagara opposite if Fort George were abandoned. They reasoned it would deprive the British of winter quarters in the area, forcing them to stay away from the Niagara River. This seems to have been the answer McClure was looking for and he decided both to withdraw from Fort George and burn Newark.

The destruction was carried out during the evening of December 10, 1813, in the middle of a heavy snowstorm. The inhabitants were given twelve hours' notice to take themselves and their property away and then Newark was put to the torch by Willcocks and his Canadian Volunteers, some of whom were former residents of the village. An appalled witness to the conflagration was Cyrenius Chapin, the irregular unit leader, who had strongly opposed the destruction, knowing that it would result in retaliation against the American side of the river. Chapin described what Willcocks and his men did on that snowy December evening in 1813:

Women and children were turned out of doors in a cold and stormy night; the cries of the infants, the decrepitude of age, the debility of sickness, had no impression on this monster in human shape; they were consigned to that house whose canopy was the heavens and whose walls

were as boundless as the wide world. In the destruction of this town he [McClure] was aided by the most active exertions of Joseph Wilcox [sic] who had for a number of years resided in this pleasant village and ... actually led a banditti through the town, setting fire to his neighbours' dwellings and applying the epithet of tory to everyone who disapproved of this flagrant act of barbarity.

McClure complained that Chapin "drew his pistol" at Willcocks, "swearing he would dispatch the first man who dared put this order into execution." But Willcocks

did not stop and when a British and Canadian force entered Newark on the following morning, Merritt recalled that nothing remained of the town "but heaps of coal and heaps of furniture that the Inhabitants were fortunate enough to get out of their houses." Except for two structures, the little community of 80 buildings, valued at £30,250 (about \$8,530,000 in modern Canadian dollars), had been completely destroyed.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Drummond, who had just replaced De Rottenburg as commander in Upper Canada, was infuriated by the destruction. He immediately queried McClure "whether this atrocious act had been committed by the authority of the American government, or is the unauthorized act of any individual." McClure replied that he was "only accountable to his own government for any act or procedure of his while commanding." But both Secretary of War Armstrong and New York Governor Daniel D. Tompkins were appalled by McClure's deed and Armstrong ordered Wilkinson, the senior American commander on the northern frontier, to publicly disavow the burning of Newark.

Writing to Prevost, Wilkinson referred not only to the destruction of private property at Newark but throughout the Canadian side of the Niagara, which presented "the aspect rather of vindictive fury than just retribution; yet they are reputed more to personal feelings, than any settled form of policy deliberately weighed and adopted." This did not mollify Drummond, who coldly considered that "retributive justice demanded of me a speedy retaliation on the opposite shore of America."

That retribution was not long in coming. Drummond ordered Colonel John Murray to cross the river and attack Fort Niagara. It took a few days to assemble enough boats but after dark on December 18, the assault force, about 500 all ranks, crossed the Niagara. They landed a few miles south of the fort and moved quickly and stealthily in three columns toward it. The American sentries were overpowered at about 4:30, permitting

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**"retributive justice demanded of me  
a speedy retaliation on the  
opposite shore of America"**

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the attackers to gain entry to the fort.

Drummond had advised Murray that the bayonet "is the weapon on which the success of the attack must depend" and, in the bloody and confusing fight that followed, it was clear that the assault troops took this advice to heart. The British, one American eyewitness recalled, "bayoneted the Americans

notwithstanding their crying out for quarter." That this statement is no exaggeration is borne out by the American casualty figures of 65 killed and 14 wounded – a reverse of the usual proportion of killed to wounded. At the cost of six dead and

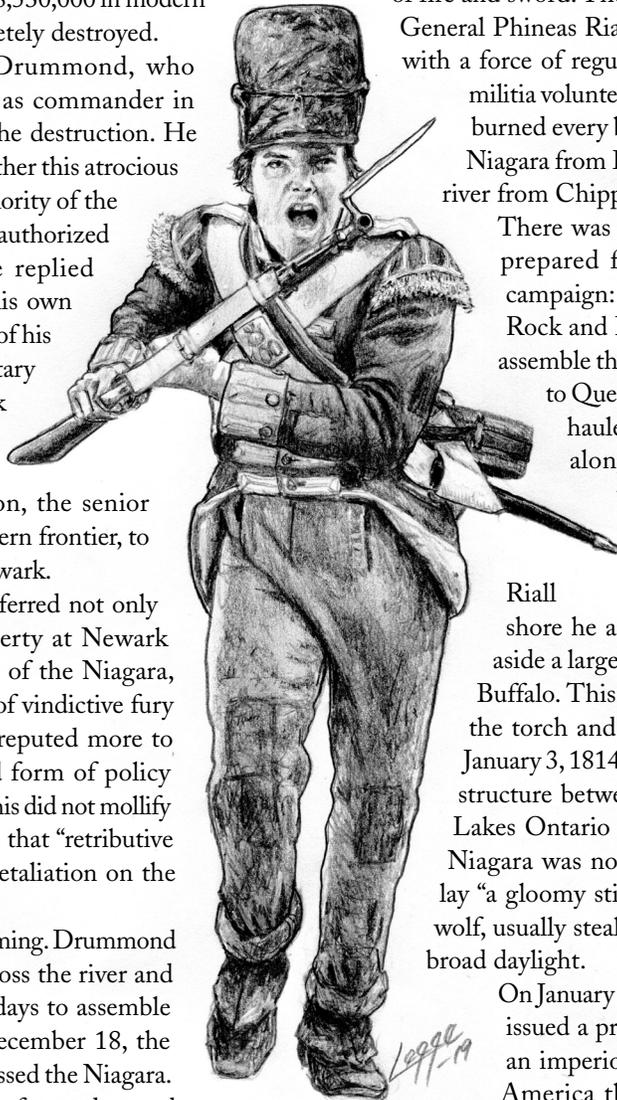
five wounded, Murray's men captured the fort, 344 prisoners, 27 pieces of artillery, 4,000 muskets and vast quantities of military equipment. The large American garrison flag was hauled down and presented to Drummond as a trophy of the victory.

This triumph was only the beginning of Drummond's campaign of fire and sword. The same day Fort Niagara fell, Major-General Phineas Riall, his subordinate, crossed the river with a force of regulars embarked on boats manned by militia volunteers and, over the following three days, burned every building on the American side of the Niagara from Lake Ontario to Schlosser, across the river from Chippawa.

There was now a few days' respite while Riall prepared for the next stage of his punitive campaign: the capture and destruction of Black Rock and Buffalo. Again, it took some time to assemble the necessary boats. They were brought to Queenston and then placed on sleighs and hauled up the escarpment and then south along the Portage Road to Chippawa, where they were refloated.

During the night of December 29 and the following morning, Riall crossed the Niagara. Once on shore he advanced rapidly and, after brushing aside a large force of New York Militia, occupied Buffalo. This village and Black Rock were put to the torch and, before he withdrew to Canada on January 3, 1814, Riall sent detachments to burn every structure between Buffalo and Schlosser. Between Lakes Ontario and Erie, the American side of the Niagara was now a desolate wasteland over which lay "a gloomy stillness" so profound that "the gaunt wolf, usually stealthy and prowling," roamed about in broad daylight.

On January 12, 1814, Lieutenant-General Prevost issued a proclamation stating that "it had been an imperious duty" for Britain "to retaliate on America the miseries which the unfortunate inhabitants of Newark had been made to suffer." This being the case, he stressed that British troops would refrain from



*A young private of the 100th Regiment of Foot during the attack on Fort Niagara, as imagined by Greg Legge (author's collection).*

such acts in the future unless “measures of the enemy should compel him again to resort to it.” If so, Prevost threatened that “prompt and signal vengeance will be taken for every fresh departure of the enemy from that system of warfare which ought to subsist between enlightened and civilized nations.”

And so ended 1813, the hardest year of war for the people of the Niagara – on both sides of the rivert.

*Donald Graves is a frequent contributor to the F&D and the author of many works in military history on the Second World War and especially the War of 1812. His new history of The Lincoln and Welland Regiment (of which this is an excerpt) will be published next year.*

## Sources & Further Reading

Many volumes of original documents from the War of 1812 have been published and most of these collections are now online. Endlessly entertaining to read, they are the most accessible of the necessary primary sources.

The Library of Congress has the enemy’s side of the story in its American State Papers series; scroll down to *Military Affairs*, Vol.1, 1789-1819, for a searchable text database. E.A. Cruikshank comprehensively edited the massive (and slightly chaotic) nine-volume *Documentary History of the Campaigns on the Niagara Frontier* more than 100 years ago and it remains the definitive collection. With a good library card they can be found in Canadiana Online (which also provides searchable text). The Champlain Society’s four-volume selection of similar documents, edited by William Wood in the 1920s, provides the helpful introduction that Cruikshank does not. Also helpful are the “Proceedings and Reports of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada” – the committee concerned with post-war pensions for widows and orphans – which are in the Archives of Ontario and available online as well as on microform at the Toronto Public Library.

General McClure published his excuses for the burning of Newark as *Causes of the Destruction of the American Towns on the Niagara Frontier, and Failure of the Campaign of the Fall of 1813*, printed by his friend Benjamin Smead at Bath, NY, in 1817. A

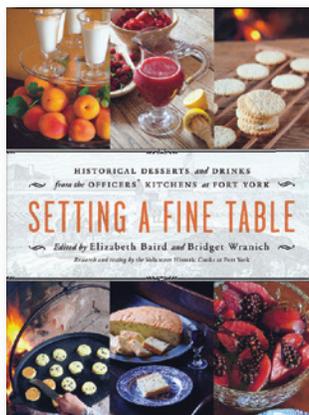
more moderate but still candid account by a Canadian militiaman is “*A desire of serving and defending my country*”— *The War of 1812 Journals of William Hamilton Merritt*, recently edited by Stuart Sutherland. An account by a personable junior officer of the British Army is *Merry Hearts Make Light Days: The War of 1812 Journal of Lieutenant John Le Couteur, 104<sup>th</sup> Foot*, edited by Donald E. Graves for Robin Brass Studio. Le Couteur, however, left Niagara for Kingston at the end of September.

An equivalent American account is *First Campaign of an ADC: The War of 1812 Memoir of Lieutenant William Jenkins Worth, United States Army* (Old Fort Niagara, 2012), also edited by Graves. Worth left Niagara for Sacket’s Harbor at the same time as Le Couteur. Many other first-person accounts are sampled in “Reminiscences of the American Occupation of the Niagara,” in *Niagara Historical Society Publications*, Vol.11 (1904).

The most important unpublished documents on the campaigns in Niagara are found in Library & Archives Canada, Colonial Office 42, “Correspondence of the Governor-General” and Record Group 81, “British Military Records.” In the United States National Archives, find Record Group 107, “Correspondence of the Secretary of War.”

The few secondary accounts that focus on the nastier events of the campaign are rather obscure. Look for Paul Couture, “A Study of the Non-Regular Forces on the Niagara Frontier, 1812-1814” (1985) Parks Canada, Microfiche Report Series 193, or Graves, “Lawless Banditti: Joseph Willcocks, his Canadian Volunteers and the Mutual Destruction on the Niagara during the Winter of 1813” (Old Fort Niagara, 2007). Cruikshank wrote “Blockade of Fort George, 1813” for the *Niagara Historical Society Records*, Vol. 3 (1897).

For a thorough discussion of the consequences of burning and looting in the War of 1812, see Graves, “Why the White House Was Burned: An Investigation into the British Destruction of Public Buildings at Washington in August 1814,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol.76 (Oct 2012), or a summary in *The Fife and Drum*, April 2020. Insights into how the irregular campaigning especially affected women are scattered throughout Dianne Graves, *In the Midst of Alarms: The untold story of women and the War of 1812* (Robin Brass, 2007).



## Feel like something special for the table this Christmas?

*This collection of historical desserts and drinks from the Officers’ Mess at Fort York has delectable recipes your friends have never seen. There are the expected Mackeroons, Peppermint Drops and Lemon Puffs. There are three varieties of gingerbread and seven kinds of cakes. There is burnt cream, chocolate cream and the award-winning Ginger Ice Cream. And there are Pears (Portugese Fashion) with Currants. So, order this book now and you’ll be ready by December.*

**Setting A Fine Table**, edited by Elizabeth Baird and Bridget Wranich (Whitecap Books 2013)  
exemplifies the rich culinary history program at Fort York National Historic Site.

## Battle of York left out of Master Plan for Exhibition Place

The new draft Master Plan for Exhibition Place leaves out the Battle of York, which was fought from the shoreline of what's now Marilyn Bell Park all the way to Fort York itself. The battlefield, in short, encompasses all of Exhibition Place.

The Friends of Fort York & Garrison Common have submitted comments that support the draft as a whole but note the need for “a plan to interpret the Battle of York and individual events and sites associated with the battle.”

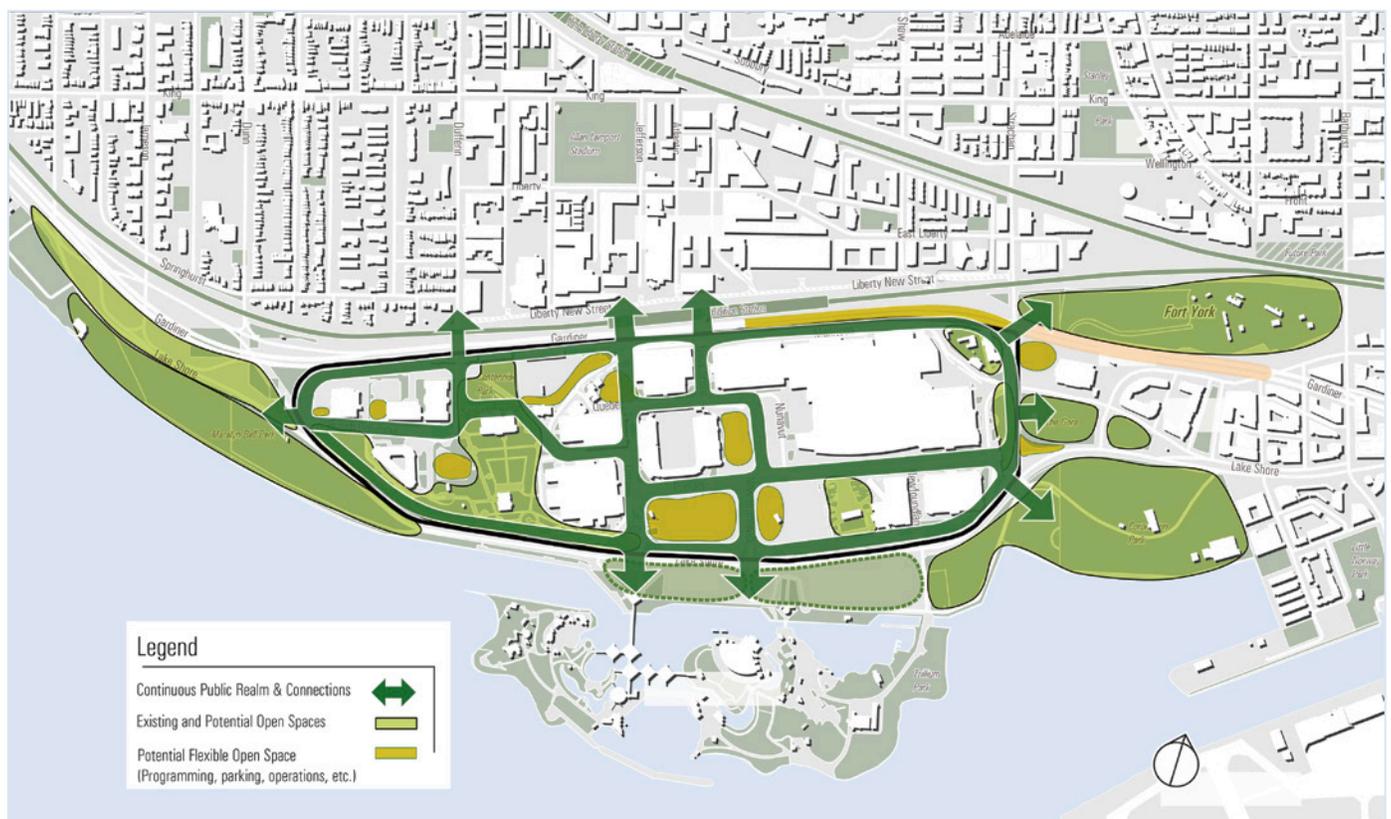
City Planning staff began work on a new Master Plan in June 2019 and had completed its Phase 1 Proposals Report by the end of March this year (you can find all the relevant documents [here](#)). This Proposals Report embodies the advice of planners after an urban design analysis, a planning policy review and (according to the City) “robust” consultation with stakeholders, Exhibition Place staff and the public at large.

These initial proposals – including a Vision and Guiding Principles – were endorsed by the Exhibition Place board on June 24 and subsequently accepted by City Council on September 30, 2020. Calling Exhibition Place “Toronto’s preeminent gathering place,” Council directed the planning department to hold further public consultations.

The interim plan identifies the biggest remaining issues as parking, integration with Ontario Place and the surrounding neighbourhoods, and transit connections. These links are fully in flux with the unfolding of the Ontario Line subway – which will terminate at Exhibition Place – and work already begun to implement the Waterfront Transit Network Plan, finished in January, 2018, and projecting a new streetcar loop at Exhibition Place. Go Transit is also planning a new Liberty Village station adjacent to this. On top of it all, the province has invited proposals from private developers to re-imagine Ontario Place itself, and the results of this invitation are yet to be seen.

“We support the view that Fort York and Exhibition Place should be considered part of a single physical framework,” says the submission from the Friends, “as we work to support economic recovery, the restoration of publicly accessible open spaces and resilience in the use of civic assets.” That physical framework includes the proximity of Exhibition Place to Fort York National Historic Site; the Battle of York, which happened on both sites; and the historical connection between the Old Fort (Fort York) and the New Fort (Stanley Barracks and its associated archaeological remains).

*The draft Master Plan* imagines better walking connections to surrounding parks and neighbourhoods, including to Fort York (top right) through the Bentway’s soaring Strachan Gate. Garrison Crossing now spans the Ordnance Triangle to Stanley Park, passing the old abattoir site – being redeveloped by TAS – on its right. In April of 1813, Ojibwa warriors fought on the shoreline to the left (in Marilyn Bell Park) while British and Canadian regulars with local militiamen were engaged around the old French fort (behind the Bandshell). It’s unlikely that all of the remains of the fallen, including Americans, were accounted for. Map courtesy City of Toronto



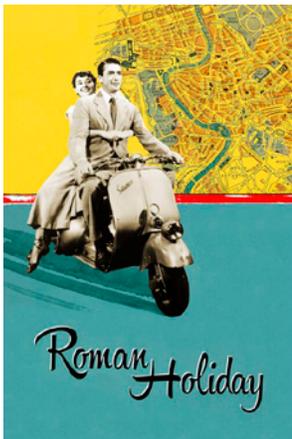
The submission from the Friends is focused on the report's Cultural Heritage Landscape Assessment, which lacks any plan to interpret the battle. It's also missing a plan to preserve and interpret Stanley Barracks "within a fully accessible public-realm setting" (the site is now within the area leased by Hotel X). Interpretation should include the former Garrison Road, which connected the two forts in the nineteenth century. A suggestion that parking could be built below grade needs to be re-considered (adds the submission) in light of the importance of the battlefield and the possibility of encountering archaeological remains below ground.

Another part of the interim plan is intended to "enhance and create new gateways linking the grounds to surrounding parks and open spaces." About this, the Friends are suggesting improvements "to the public realm ... immediately outside Exhibition Place along Strachan Avenue between Exhibition Place and Fort York National Historic Site." Improvements here

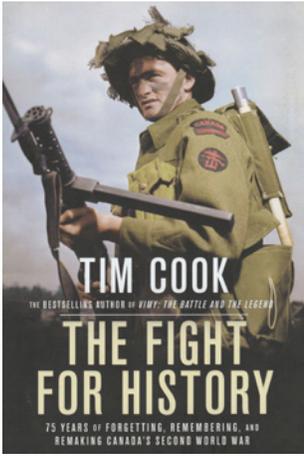
should enable easier pedestrian movement between the two sites as well as an interpretation of Garrison Road.

"The existence and ongoing development of The Bentway," notes the submission, "has made this connection (between the east and west sides of Strachan Avenue) much more logical and easier to envision." For its part, Fort York has already begun this with substantial upgrades to the parking lot at the corner of Fleet and Strachan; these include an interpretive wayfinding post near the site of the Western Battery and an earthen berm with perennial plantings to soften the edge of the parking. Two of the "quick start" initiatives proposed by the draft plan and supported by the Friends are at the Princes' Gates and under the Gardiner Expressway.

Finally, the Friends support further work on related economic opportunities and hope to be involved in the "cost/benefit analysis of implementing the heritage, parks and public realm strategies" proposed in the draft Exhibition Place Master Plan.



**Toronto Outdoor Picture Show** brought small, carefully distanced crowds into the fort during the last ten days of August. They were attracted by a program built to mark the tenth anniversary of TOPS: it paired the most intriguing short films to a line-up that ranged from *Nosferatu* and *Roman Holiday* to Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* and Wanuri Kahiu's *Rifiki*. The giant screen was set up to face the towers of the Fort York neighbourhood while the audio of each film could be accessed online (and the program even included Hitchcock's *Rear Window*). Next year, films are expected to resume at Christie Pits and in parks across the city as well as in the great space of Fort York. The curators of TOPS are the stylish Emily Reid, Felan Parker and Nikin Nagewadia. Photo by Gabriel Li of [studiogabe.com](http://studiogabe.com).



# REVIEW

Tim Cook, *The Fight for History: 75 Years of Forgetting, Remembering, and Remaking Canada's Second World War* (Allen Lane 2020) illustrations, notes, index, 502 pages; hardcover, ebook, audiobook download

## *Leaving honourable victories behind*

by Patrice Dutil

This book recounts a sad, profoundly Canadian story. It is, for me – despite its title – mostly the story of forgetting, of purposely neglecting what has happened because our national institutions are too careless to make the effort.

Cook's treatment commands attention. He is surely one of the best-known military historians in Canada, having distinguished himself with accounts of war in the trenches and at the decision-making tables. He has been at his best when conveying the horror and stupidity of war as it is experienced by the grunts who slog through the mud, shoulder arms and swear like there is no tomorrow, because there may not be a tomorrow. He is an artful rememberer.

In this volume, however, he dedicates himself to documenting how we forgot that Canada fought a second war against Germany because Europe desperately needed the help, again, just twenty years after 66,000 of her youth had left their lives on French and Belgian battlefields. Stepping forward again was selfless, necessary, bold, massively enterprising, and deadly.

Knowing that much of his audience would have only the vaguest idea of the history of the war, Cook begins this book with a generous summary of the breadth and scale of Canada's

contribution. More than 1.1 million men and women served between 1939 and 1945, he reminds us, and more than 45,000 paid the ultimate price.

How were Canadians rewarded? The government, unlike in 1919, greeted returning soldiers with all sorts of compensations: housing, employment, bonuses for all the babies born at record levels, happiness for most.

And then it forgot about it all. Now caught in the politics of a Cold War, government leaders feared alienating the new German ally. Cook tells the story of how Kurt Meyer, a gruesome Nazi commander and assassin who took the lives of 156 Canadian prisoners of war, was caught, tried, found guilty, imprisoned in New Brunswick, and then released. Few protested. Cook also recounts how the idea of how raising a dignified memorial in Ottawa to honour the victims of the war was abandoned. Instead, more dates were added to the beautiful National War

Memorial (finished only in the spring of 1939) as they were added to countless cenotaphs across the country.

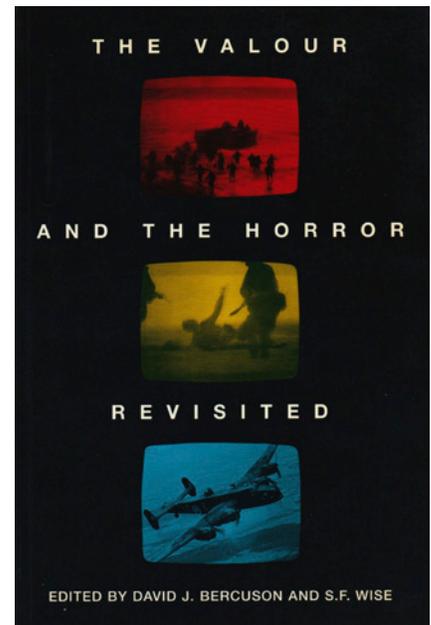
While Americans and the British wrote of their war, and encouraged discussion through movies and documentaries, the Second World War was buried in Canada for 25 years. The war's memories here were kept alive almost exclusively by the veterans and their families and especially by those who had lost someone dear in the fighting.

With the 1970s, new stirrings showed signs that the memory had not entirely disappeared. But what emerged was not honour or glory, but rather recriminations. Campaigns were mounted to honour and bring repair to Japanese Canadians and others who had lost homes, livelihoods and dignity in the Second World War.

Cook analyses the various "apology campaigns" not to show that they were intrinsically wrong, but because they somehow obfuscated the memory of the soldiers who had volunteered, fought and



John Wayne leads the men ashore in the epic 1962 production of *The Longest Day*, Cornelius Ryan's account of the landings in Normandy. Canadians were absent from the story, reinforcing the blank canvas of national memory – a blank canvas that in time enabled a revisionist narrative of failure and shame.



The uproar caused by the 1992 series *The Valour and the Horror* has had a lasting effect. An early result was this scholarly demolition from MQUP of the failures of the filmmakers.

died for a just cause, and with ultimate success. No equivalent compensation was sought from Japan for the tortured lives of Canadians who pained in its wartime death camps.

The broadcast in early 1992 on the CBC of *The Valour and the Horror*, a private production, marked the low point in this saga of self-flagellation, shame and denigration. Its three episodes focused on the disaster at

Hong Kong, the bombing of Germany and the single worst day of the Normandy campaign. Cook devotes a chapter to the controversy the series engendered and then examines the campaign to restore nothing less than honour to an entire generation. It was led by a handful of politicians, historians, and concerned members of the veterans community.

The coda is the story of a new Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, an impressive undertaking that married artifact and scholarship and prompted a new wave of research and publication. There were also other signs of hope, but not every hope was realized. The government of Canada still could not be convinced to build and operate a museum near Juno Beach – where thousands of Canadians had stormed ashore – so a group of activists and entrepreneurs took on the task of rectifying the Canadian absence from D-Day.

In the end a non-profit organization managed to secure funds and build a museum, with the government ultimately providing substantial funding. Cook is sparing in his judgments of this centre, but I won't be. I was there in 2018, expecting something dignified, educative and as sobering as the American museum at Omaha Beach. What I found was a museum "celebrating" Canadian multi-culturalism, a notion hardly present in the minds of the kids who fought their way ashore on June 6, 1944.

Canadian veterans, in Cook's work, are shown as constantly having to argue in favour of a suitable recognition of the sacrifices of the 1939-1945 war. The Juno Beach Centre tells me that their campaign must not end. Canadians everywhere need to take up this fight for history.

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## the Canadian government failed its duty to remember

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The Canadian government failed its duty to remember but society has hardly done better. It is striking to recognize how the Canadian effort of the Second World War has not penetrated the Canadian psyche, as did the Great War so deeply. In English Canada, there are no great novels, plays or

movies of the second war with Germany. A few very good, privately produced documentaries have been shown, and also there are some

excellent memoirs.

Ironically, there is nothing of the cultural importance of René Delacroix and Gratien Gélinas's film *Tit-Cog*, Marcel Dubé's play *Un Simple Soldat* or Roch Carrier's novel *La guerre, Yes Sir!*, all products of Quebec artists. Their works are hardly supportive of war, but their treatments of soldiers are sympathetic and tender. At least they have not forgotten what happened between 1939 and 1945, and their works have been taught in schools for generations.

The Second World War appears only in some secondary-school history curricula, and most provinces do not even require a Canadian History credit. A Canadian must travel to France and especially the Netherlands to be reminded of what the "greatest generation" accomplished – liberating literally millions of people from Nazi rule – and what it cost.

*The Fight for History*, making creative use of a broad range of literary and popular accounts, adds a stellar volume to the growing literature on how Canadians have remembered war. It's one that surely ranks as a stinging critique of a nation hopelessly gripped by amnesia. There might be some solace in the fact that even in the United States, a country that routinely celebrates the effort and impact of the Second World War, a national memorial was built on Washington's Mall only in 2004. Can Canada be that far behind?

*Dr. Patrice Dutil is a Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University, a prolific author in Canadian political history, and co-host of the Champlain Society's lively podcast Witness to Yesterday.*

## On the Canadian experience of war

*An historian at the Canadian War Museum, Tim Cook has written eleven books that range over the tactics, operations, leaders and society of Canadians at war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*



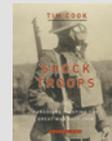
**Clio's Warriors**  
Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars  
UBC 2006



**No Place To Run**  
The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War  
UBC 1999



**At the Sharp End**  
Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916, Vol.1  
Viking 2007



**Shock Troops**  
Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918, Vol.2  
Viking 2008



**The Madman and the Butcher**  
The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie  
Allen Lane 2010



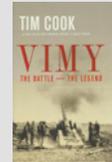
**Warlords**  
Borden, Mackenzie King, and Canada's World Wars  
Allen Lane 2012



**The Necessary War**  
Canadians Fighting the Second World War, 1939-1943, Vol.1  
Allen Lane 2014



**Fight to the Finish**  
Canadians in the Second World War, 1944-1945, Vol.2  
Allen Lane 2015



**Vimy**  
The Battle and the Legend  
Allen Lane 2017



**The Secret History of Soldiers**  
How Canadians Survived the Great War  
Allen Lane 2018

# *At the Birthplace of Toronto* **Notes from the Staff**

## **Editor's Desk**

Visitors are being welcomed back to the fort. While the musicians and infantry of the Fort York Guard have turned in their fifes, drums and muskets for the season, the full-time staff at the fort is now conducting hour-long tours of the grounds and historic buildings. Groups are limited to four people each and tours are normally available Wednesday to Sunday from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. The tours need to be booked beforehand on the City's web site (click [here](#)).

These tours do not include the award-winning Visitor Centre and its stunning multi-media experience of the Battle of York. The building's static displays are already five years old and include, for example, the discredited Beaver Wars narrative of Indigenous warfare in Ontario (see this summer's *F&D*). Toronto Museums staff are hoping to create fresh displays that will give people a new reason to visit when full operations resume. There's no budget for this, however, and the Friends of Fort York (my publisher and many subscribers) will no doubt be involved in the fund-raising.

Only those with tour tickets are allowed inside the walls of the fort. The Canteen – with its rich stock of books, wooden toys, quills & ink, Blue Willow china, First Nations crafts and local souvenirs – remains closed. Plans are building for an online shop for all of Toronto Museums, but (apart from a “Coming Soon” promise on a web page) we've seen nothing about it. We're hoping it's running by Christmas.

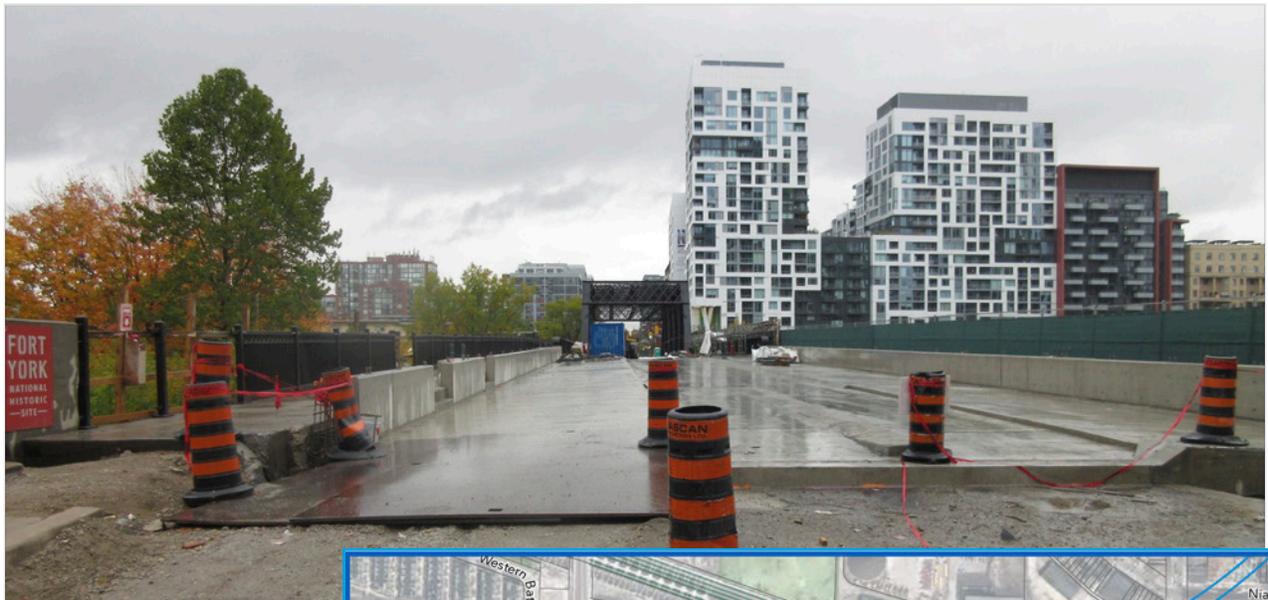
The benefits normally enjoyed by members of the Friends, meanwhile, are being extended throughout this period so that no one is paying for advantages that, for the time being, don't exist. Simple donations are more welcome than ever; see [www.fortyork.ca](http://www.fortyork.ca).

But there's great news on the capital works side: the travesty of the cheap siding on the Bentway's addition to the Visitor Centre, and the eroding escarpment behind it (a separate issue) has been resolved. Led by the Waterfront Secretariat of the City's planning department, funding has been assembled mainly from development charges to install the necessary 15 Corten steel panels. This will complete the façade of the Zamboni garage and extend the dramatic steel escarpment eastward. Design work over

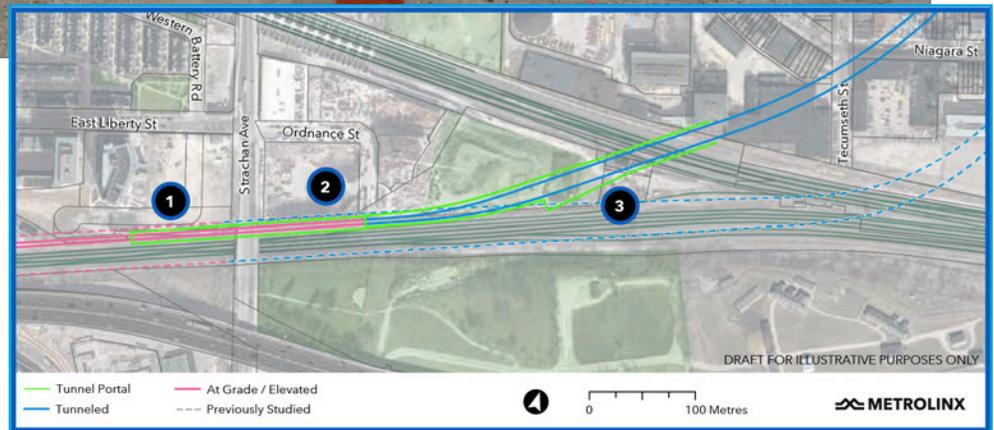
**The Corten steel panels** that characterize the Fort York Visitor Centre will be extended eastward across the face of the Bentway's skating addition. The eroded small escarpment, behind the vegetation at the extreme right, will also be repaired. The original centre was awarded a Governor General's Medal in Architecture. Photo by the F&D



**The new context** of Douglas Coupland's audacious “Monument to the War of 1812” is finished, to the delight of nearby neighbourhoods. The 1928 Art Deco warehouse of Loblaw Groceries – built on recent lakefill right over the buried Queen's Wharf – has been recreated as an upscale grocery store. In work overseen by ERA Architects, each brick and stone of three facades was marked and stored while a new structure was built on the footprint of the old. Added were offices above and two condominium towers (by Architects Alliance) mere metres from the Gardiner Expressway. The integrated space under the highway is a plaza defined by sharply angular retail pavilions, including one for the LCBO. Photo by the F&D



**Where the Brock Bridge** touches the ground at the south-east corner of Fort York. Shrouds are off the steel trusses in the distance, the roadbed has been poured and streetcar tracks are being stockpiled nearby. In the curb at left can be seen the outline of a stop for the Bathurst 511. Despite the progress, another month has been added to the project: the City is now promising completion by the end of January. Photo by the F&D



**Metrolinx says** the bedrock here in the old Garrison Creek ravine is at the surface and therefore convenient to the boring machines. Although the new Garrison Crossing (at 3) will remain open, it says, this project will take over the green space on Garrison Point for years to come. Map by Metrolinx

the winter will be done by the brilliant Public Work landscaping firm and Kearns Mancini, the Visitor Centre’s original architects.

Included in the project package is the associated concrete retaining wall, completion of the washrooms at Strachan Gate, and various landscape improvements. Among these are works to anticipate the Bentway’s future bridge over Fort York Blvd and to improve connections from the unhappy June Callwood Park (a vivid example of high design but low maintenance: many stone pavers are broken, the plantings are dying and scruffy and its audio sculpture has never worked).

There are still some termites lurking around the hydro bunker on the west side of the ramparts but they seem to be contained. A permanent solution is likely to involve temporary generators, but the little munchers have stayed away from the fort’s historic buildings. Ordinary rot has been noticed in some of the gun platforms, meanwhile, but a solution is unlikely to fit into the coming year’s capital budget. More pedestrian items like masonry, roofing and painting – whitewash is flaking off the blockhouses – will be the necessary focus.

There’s plenty happening in the precinct around the 43 acres of Fort York National Historic Site. The prospect of a subway line tunnelling under the old fort has thankfully been averted. On the map is the latest iteration of the Ontario Line route, projected to dive under the Ordnance Triangle on the north side of the GO rail corridor. The bad news for the thousands of people now moving into the towers of what the developers call Garrison Point is that the park they’ve been promised will instead be a subway construction site.

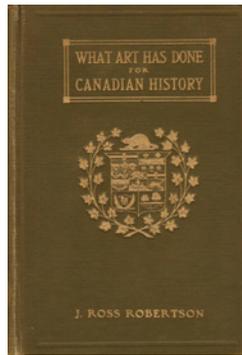
Finally, another group has sprung up to argue in favour of preserving the glorious mid-century architecture of Ontario Place, a mere cannon shot from the fort’s walls. The World Monuments Fund, the architecture faculty at the University of Toronto and the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario have joined to highlight the benefits of preserving and improving (rather than privately developing) this grand waterfront asset. Check their website [here](#).

## Two illustrations of the Officers' Barracks and Mess

These two watercolours were painted about 1912 by the Toronto illustrator Owen Staples (1866-1949), a close friend and contemporary of fellow artist C.W. Jeffreys (1869-1951). Both men are well known for their prodigious output of Canadian historical illustration.

In the larger picture we see the looming Rebellion Barracks, built in 1838 as part of the wide-ranging military response to the uprising of William Lyon Mackenzie. Large enough to house 330 soldiers, the old frame building was torn down in 1934 as the fort was restored to its War of 1812 character. In the foreground are the sunny quarters for single officers, built in 1815 and enlarged in 1826. The building is divided into three sections: two contained bedrooms and the third (closest to the viewer) was a dining room – the Officers' Mess. The kitchen and its garden are at the back.

The other view shows the two soldiers' brick barracks in the distance, on either side of Garrison Road. Staples has made the north building (on the right, where the Canteen is now) seem smaller than the other – they're essentially the same – and left off its chimney. Originally with only three big rooms, each building in 1815 housed as many as 35 soldiers, wives and children. At the extreme left is the fenced-in stone magazine, built in 1815 to provide bomb-proof storage for 900 barrels of gunpowder.



Owen Staples was long at the centre of Toronto's arts scene. An enthusiast of the Arts & Letters Club and for decades a member of the Mendelssohn Choir, his home and studio in the comfortable Arts & Crafts style often welcomed artists of the Group of Seven, as well as architects (notably Eden Smith) and countless musicians. From 1888 until 1908 he was a reporter, cartoonist and illustrator for the *Toronto Telegram* and its towering owner John Ross Robertson.

These two watercolours are among the thousands of pictures that Robertson donated to the Toronto Public Library and which are now a central part of the magnificent Baldwin Collection. Robertson's own catalogue descriptions, in no order at all in the charming book *What Art Has Done For Canadian History*, are – in these two cases – largely inaccurate. They describe, for example, the smaller picture as a view of the 1860s. He also fails to credit the artist, his own long-term employee.

*The watercolour with the Rebellion Barracks is 5" x 9" (JRR 663); the other is 5" x 10" (JRR 667). For a modernist approach to the same buildings, painted the same year, see the F&D of April 2020.*



## Skirmish at the fort

“Section will fire advancing!” is the command from Corporal Holly Benison, standing, that got these soldiers moving. The front rank has just fired and the rear rank, with muskets loaded, is about to trot one more bound forward. They will stop five paces ahead of the front rank, drop to one knee, and fire – while their comrades reload. When Cpl. Benison orders “Cease fire!” the new rear rank will move up to join them, forming now a single thin red line.

This was the demonstration of skirmishing by light infantry that the soldiers, fifes and drums of the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry gave on August 30, 2020. Although smaller this year (14 in all) the Fort York Guard was the only such unit to stand up this pandemic summer at historic sites across Ontario.

Muskets held at the high port – Cpl. Benison has just ordered “Port Arms” in the smaller image – not only challenge the observer but conveniently display their flints and pans for inspection by a superior. They’ve learned this from the 1764 Manual of Arms of the British Army (with some help and advice from Anton Degiusti and Kevin Hebib).

Drum Major Sally O’Keeffe (second from left) knows all of this also, and programs accordingly. With fifes down and the drums in action, we see her corps playing “The Rudimenter,” a thrilling piece of battlefield drumming. Also heard that day were the “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” “Carlen, is Your Daughter Ready?” and “The Humours of Listivain.” These fifes and drums at the top of their game are as satisfying a sound as a well timed black-powder volley.



Photos by Sid Calzavara





## *Mrs. Traill's Advice* ON PUMPKIN PIE

**A**mong the old-fashioned settlers, the pumpkin is much esteemed for pies, and a sort of molasses, which they prepare from the fruit by long boiling. When properly made, there is not a better dish eaten than a good pumpkin-pie. Now I must tell you, that an English pumpkin-pie, and a Canadian one, are very differently made, and I must give the preference, most decidedly, to the North American dish; which is something between a custard and a cheese-cake, in taste and appearance.

### PUMPKIN-PIE

Select a good, sweet pumpkin, fully ripe; to ascertain if it be a sweet one, for there is a great difference in this respect, cut a piece of the rind and taste it, or cut several, and then you can judge which is best. The sweetest pumpkins require less sugar, and are much richer.

➤ Pare and cut the fruit into slices, removing the seeds and also the fibrous, spongy part, next to the seeds. Cut it into small pieces, and put it on the fire with about a pint of water, covering the pot close; you are not to bruise or stir it. Should the water boil away so as to endanger the pumpkin burning to the bottom of the pot, a small quantity more of water may be added.

➤ It will take three or four hours to boil quite soft, and of a fine brownish yellow. Some improve the colour and richness by setting the pot on a few embers, near the fire, and keeping the pot turned as the pulp browns at the sides: but this requires to be carefully attended to.

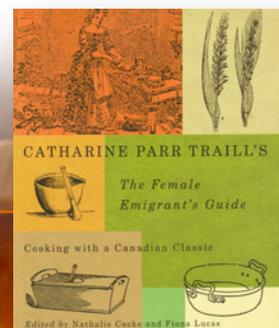
➤ When the pumpkin is as soft as mashed turnips, pass it through a hair-sieve or a colander; then add new milk and two or three eggs well beaten, with grated ginger; as much sugar as will make it sweet enough to be pleasant. Pounded and sifted cinnamon is frequently used as spice or nutmeg; but ginger and cinnamon are preferable to any other spice for pumpkin-pies.

➤ The milk must not be sufficient to thin the pumpkin too much: it should be about the consistence, when ready for the oven, of finely mashed turnips: if too thin you will need more eggs to set it; but it absorbs a great deal of milk, and is better to stand some little time after the milk is added, before being baked.

➤ Make a nice light paste; line your dishes or plates, and then put in your mixture. These pies are always open; not with a cover of paste over them. A very rich pumpkin-pie may be made by adding cream, lemon-peel, the juice of a lemon, and more eggs.

A finer dish, than a good pumpkin-pie, can hardly be eaten: and it is within the power of any poor man's family to enjoy this luxury. If you do not grow this fruit, any neighbour will give you one for the asking.

From Catherine Parr Traill's *The Female Emigrant's Guide* originally published in 1855 by a printer in Toronto. "Mrs. Traill's Advice" appears regularly in *The Fife and Drum*, sampling from this attractive and comprehensive new edition of an indispensable Canadian reference.



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