The American Invasion of the Niagara Peninsula – 1814

Daniel K. R. Crosswell
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses
Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/1965

This Masters Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
THE AMERICAN INVASION
OF THE NIAGARA
PENINSULA - 1814

by

Daniel K. R. Crosswell

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 1979
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A vote of thanks is extended to Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Grigoroff, Myroslaw Prystansky, and Karen Kaylor for their aid and support. The author is indebted to Mrs. Judith Massie for many long hours spent typing. Special thanks is offered to Professors Albert Castel and Sherwood Cordier whose guidance and assistance were invaluable and much appreciated.

Daniel K. R. Crosswell
INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in “sectioning” the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University Microfilms International
300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106
18 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON WC1R 4EJ, ENGLAND

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
CROSSWELL, DANIEL KENNETH RICHARD
THE AMERICAN INVASION OF THE NIAGARA PENINSULA - 1814.
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, M.A., 1979

University Microfilms International
300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106
PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark √.

1. Glossy photographs √
2. Colored illustrations _______
3. Photographs with dark background _______
4. Illustrations are poor copy _______
5. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page _______
6. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages _______ throughout _______
7. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine _______
8. Computer printout pages with indistinct print _______
9. Page(s) _______ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author _______
10. Page(s) _______ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows _______
11. Poor carbon copy _______
12. Not original copy, several pages with blurred type _______
13. Appendix pages are poor copy _______
14. Original copy with light type _______
15. Curling and wrinkled pages _______
16. Other ____________________________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>CANADA INVADED .................................. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>THE BATTLE OF CHIPPEWA ............................ 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>THE BATTLE OF LUNDY'S LANE ........................ 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>THE SIEGE OF FORT ERIE ............................ 137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>THE NIAGARA CAMPAIGN RECONSIDERED ................ 200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I initially embarked upon this paper for personal reasons. The matrilineal branch of my family being the Lundys, I sought to celebrate the role played by Catherine Lundy in the events of 1814. Family myth did not, unfortunately, stand the acid test of scholarly research. Reluctantly, my ancestor's part in the drama has been, by necessity, relegated to the status of a footnote citation. Nevertheless, I continued my task and soon discovered that my efforts might have a utility far greater than ancestral glorification.

Once a contentious issue between American and Anglo-Canadian historians, the Battle of Lundy's Lane has subsequently been reduced to near-oblivion. In the decades before the First World War, historians endeavored to illustrate the glory of their respective pasts. Anglophobia gave vent to highly colored and chauvinistic American accounts of the War of 1812. The Niagara Campaign of 1814, more than any other episode in the war save perhaps the Battle of New Orleans, won for American arms a measure of glory, conspicuously absent in the other campaigns. Based upon the highly questionable official reports of the senior American officers, American histories lack somewhat in substance. Although some excellent, but often superficial, accounts of the battles along the Niagara have
emerged, in large part many histories retain their misconceptions and errors. Even an historian as venerated as Henry Adams fell prey to his prejudices.

At the same time, Canadians were eager to claim their place in the sun in conjunction with the glories of the British Empire. Many military histories appeared in the years before the First World War, the most thorough being Brigadier General Ernest Cruikshank’s series. These histories were just as guilty of excessive nationalism clouding their account of these events as their American counterparts.

In my paper, I have attempted to reach a synthesis of these contradictory interpretations. I must confess my own nationalist predispositions yet I endeavored not to have them influence my analytical dealing with the subject. Thanks to the archivists of the University of Toronto, I had access to several vital primary sources from which a clearer picture of events could be gleaned. I am equally indebted to the Buffalo Historical Society as well as the smaller, but no less helpful, societies in St. Catherines, Ontario, Niagara Falls, Ontario, and Niagara Falls, New York.
I. CANADA INVADED

The United States embarked upon the War of 1812 to preserve the freedom of the seas against British depredations and impressment. The Orders in Council were viewed as the source of American commercial distress. Many of the ambitious young politicians, eager to exhibit American power, saw in British maritime actions a slap in the face. In a speech of December 31, 1811, Representative Henry Clay of Kentucky stated: "What are we not to lose by peace? - commerce, character, a nation's best treasure, honor!"¹ Thus, the fundamental cause of the War of 1812 was the British maritime policies which hampered American commerce and injured national pride.

Why was American military strategy aimed toward Canada's conquest? Firstly, there was no doubt in American minds that British agents provoked Indian frontier depredations. Secondly, and more importantly, an invasion of Canada was the only means available to carry the war to the British. The British, victors at Trafalgar, could not be seriously threatened upon the seas by an American fleet which had only a handful of frigates. The conquest of Canada was the obvious, indeed, the only method of injur-

ing Great Britain.

It was thought that little more was required than a mere declaration of war followed by a friendly occupation of Canada. Canadians, Americans believed, would welcome the lifting of the yoke of British tyranny and monarchism. A three-pronged invasion was launched by the Americans in the summer and autumn of 1812: Brigadier-General William Hull advanced from Detroit with his army of 2,500; Major General Stephen Van Rensselaer of the New York Militia, commanding 3,170 men (900 regulars), invaded the Niagara frontier; and Major General Henry Dearborn moved against Montreal with 5,000 men in the main American effort.

The British, mobilizing their scant garrisons of regulars, were hopelessly outnumbered yet the population of Upper Canada, the hardy sons of loyalists, eagerly took up arms against those who expelled their fathers. Also the French-Canadians of Lower Canada, long aware of American hostility toward Roman Catholicism, felt secure within the British regime which, in the Quebec Act of 1774, guaranteed religious toleration. The British, first to draw blood, seized Forts Dearborn and Mackinac. These successes in the west were crowned by Hull's ignominious surrender of his army to General Sir Isaac Brock's tiny

---


force, without resistance, on August 16, 1812. Marching
the 250 miles from the Detroit frontier to the Niagara,
the British succeeded in replusing a second attempt at
invasion. The victory at Queenstown, which cost the
Americans 950 men, was won at the price of Brock's life.¹
These early achievements against heavy odds were due both
to the brilliant leadership of Brock and the incredible
incompetence of his adversaries. The third invasion
ended as ingloriously as the preceding two: Dearborn's
militia, standing upon their constitutional rights, refused
to cross the border into Lower Canada. Without so much as
firing a shot in anger, Dearborn's army retreated into
winter quarters.

The initiative now fell to the British who responded
by launching an invasion of Ohio. Major General Thomas
Procter, with a force of regulars, Canadian militia, and
Tecumseh's Indians, routed a portion of Major General
William Harrison's army at Frenchtown, Michigan, on
January 22, 1813. In the action the Americans lost 934;
many of the American prisoners were massacred by the
Indians as Procter passively looked on.² The British
then began unsuccessful siege operations against Fort

¹John Richardson, The War of 1812 (Toronto: His-

²Brigadier General James Winchester to Secretary of
War Armstrong, 23 January 1813, as cited in Richardson,
The War of 1812, pp. 145-146.
Meigs on the Maumee River and Fort Stephenson on the Sandusky. British hopes of inflicting a decisive defeat upon the Americans in the west were dashed when Commodore Oliver H. Perry destroyed the British flotilla at the Battle of Lake Erie (September 10, 1813). Perry's success prompted Harrison to renew a drive against Detroit. Commanding 7,000 troops, Harrison compelled Procter first to quit siege operations before Forts Meigs and Stephenson; then to withdraw from Detroit into the Canadian interior. Harrison pursued Procter to the vicinity of present-day Chatham, Ontario. Here, at the Battle of the Thames, the Americans overwhelmed Procter's force of 800 regulars and 1,000 Indians. The victory, the first success achieved by American arms, signaled the collapse of the Indian Confederation (Tecumseh was one of the forty-seven Anglo-Indian battlefield deaths) and marked the end of British power in the west. Eventually, Harrison's successes would take "Old Tippecanoe" to the White House but at the moment his victory was diminished. The War Department disbanded the militia and ordered Harrison's regulars to join the concentration along the Niagara frontier. Disgusted, Harrison resigned his commission and returned to civilian life.

---

1 Adjutant-General Edward Baynes' General Order, 24 November 1813, as cited in Richardson, The War of 1812, p. 215.
General John Armstrong, who replaced William Eustis as Secretary of War early in 1813, shifted American attention to the Niagara. He envisioned an ambitious two-pronged invasion of Upper Canada. The first operation was directed against the colonial capital, York (present-day Toronto). On April 24, an amphibious assault captured the town. The powder magazine mysteriously exploded and General Zebulon Pike's 1,600 troops sustained 320 casualties, the famed explorer among the dead. Angered, the Americans burnt the public buildings of York. The expedition returned to Sackets Harbor having accomplished nothing save to harden Canadian hatred. The American's second operation was as abortive as the first. With Dearborn ill, Colonel Winfield Scott, his adjutant, in co-operation with Perry (then under Commodore Isaac Chauncey's Lake Ontario command), succeeded in taking Fort George by an amphibious operation, completed on May 8. The British evacuated the Niagara peninsula and retreated toward the head of the lake.

Dearborn contented himself with holding his position. On June 6, an American pursuit finally began which was met by Major General John Vincent at Stoney Creek where 700 British regulars inflicted a humiliating rout upon a mixed force of regulars and militia three times their

\[1\]
Generals William Winder and John Chandler, political appointees, were cashiered for their parts in the disaster.

The Americans by no means had the corner on incompetency. The British governor-general, Sir George Prevost, decided to exploit the absence of Dearborn and Chauncey, then assaulting Fort George, by himself launching an amphibious assault upon Sacket's Harbor. The operation would have been successful except for Prevost's bumbling. The garrison, under Brigadier-General Jacob J. Brown, counter-attacked and eventually repulsed the British attack (May 28-29).

Stalemated along the Niagara, Armstrong decided upon a renewal of operations against Montreal. Brigadier-General James Wilkinson, replacing Dearborn, intended to move against Montreal via the St. Lawrence River with an army of 8,000 men. In conjunction with Wilkinson, Brigadier-General Wade Hampton, with a force of 4,000, would advance down the Champlain Valley. Hampton established himself along the Chateaugay River (October 22). A much smaller British force assaulted Hampton, throwing the Americans into confusion. The British brigade, too small

---

1 Coles, The War of 1812, p. 141.
2 Caffrey, The Twilight's Last Gleaming, p. 209.
to execute an envelopment, simulated one by surrounding the American position and beating drums and blowing bugles.\textsuperscript{1} Bluffed, the Americans fled. Wilkinson, whom Hampton detested, was left to fend for himself.

After many delays, Wilkinson advanced from Ogdensburg, New York down the St. Lawrence where a reinforced detachment of 2,000 men engaged a diminutive British force at Chrysler's Farm (November 11). The British, under Colonel J. W. Morrison, repulsed repeated piecemeal American frontal assaults, routing Wilkinson, who suffered 439 casualties.\textsuperscript{2} The invasion was a disaster from start to finish; Wilkinson retreated to French Mills where no preparations were made for winter quarters.

The year 1813, like the previous one, had been marked by the dismal showing of the American army. The assaults against Montreal ended once again in another set of \textit{d\textasciitilde{e}b\textasciitilde{e}c\textasciitilde{e}s}. Obstensibly, the defeat at Stoney Creek blunted the Niagara offensive. The actual cause of the stalemate was the abject incompetency of the American senior officers. In the west, Harrison's and Perry's victories were not exploited since Armstrong's attention was fixed on the Niagara frontier and Montreal. Had the Secretary of War permitted Harrison to advance against the shattered British

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 211.

\textsuperscript{2}Coles, \textit{The War of 1812}, pp. 146-147.
forces, the Americans, moving toward the head of Lake Ontario, would have compelled the British to abandon the Niagara line. Instead, the British were allowed a respite during which their forces could be reorganized and redeployed.

Armstrong, himself a general, had been an officer in the Revolutionary War. A former secretary of state and attorney-general of Pennsylvania, he was a United States senator between 1800 and 1809; then minister to France and Spain. Commissioned a brigadier-general and commander of New York, he served as Secretary of War until forced to resign in disgrace after the British capture of Washington in September, 1814.¹

The defeats had their positive results. The incapacity of the greybeard generals clearly became manifest. In 1812, the average age of the eight general officers was sixty years of age. Armstrong cashiered these old men and commissioned eight new generals who averaged thirty-six years:²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Generals</th>
<th>Brigadier Generals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Brown</td>
<td>Edmund Gaines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Jackson</td>
<td>Alexander Macolm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Izard</td>
<td>Winfield Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T. A. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. W. Ripley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Niagara peninsula, a fertile arm of Upper Canada, is sandwiched between Lakes Ontario and Erie. Drained by many rivers and creeks, its topography is generally flat. The dominating physical feature is the Niagara Escarpment, the former glacial lakeshore which rises hundreds of feet above the vineyards and orchards along the shore of Lake Ontario. The world famous falls of Niagara make navigation between the lakes impossible, however, the river is sufficiently calm below Queenstown and above Chippewa to allow for shipping. Between the falls and the escarpment at Queenstown Heights, there exists wild rapids flanked by precipitous bluffs. The invasion routes were, by necessity, either above or below this natural obstruction.

The peninsula had been settled by Empire Loyalists after the American War of Independence, many of them veterans of that conflict. The only town of note was Niagara (Newark) which served as the capital of Upper Canada in the years immediately following the Revolution. Exposed as it was to Fort Niagara, it was removed to York. Chippewa and Queenstown, on either end of the portage, were hamlets of considerable importance. The bulk of the population were engaged in agriculture upon their scattered homesteads. In the years immediately preceding the war, the district was settled by many Americans attracted by the availability of cheap lands. The war was not anticipated by the people of the region. They did not comprehend
what prompted the conflict but the residual animosities lingering from the American Revolution were sufficient to insure active Canadian support and participation. The population of Upper Canada was not monolithic. There were elements of discontent. Many recent Irish immigrants allied themselves with the numerous American settlers, forming units that fought against British regulars and their former neighbors. The most notable of these formations was the Canadian Volunteers under the leadership of Joseph Willcocks, Irish immigrant and former member of the Legislature of Upper Canada.¹

The naval balance of power was a vital consideration in the campaigns on the Niagara frontier. The brilliant victory won by Perry gave uncontested control of Lake Erie to the Americans. However, the picture on Lake Ontario was never so clear. Here the battle for naval supremacy was waged, not on the waves, but in the dockyards of Kingston and Sacket's Harbor. Neither Chauncey nor his British antagonist, Commodore Sir James Yeo, dared engage in combat. When one side won a temporary advantage, the other fled to his bases. In 1813, Chauncey enjoyed such an advantage and was able to participate in the capture of both Fort George and York. British efforts to redress this imbalance resulted in the British gaining

supremacy by the beginning of 1815. During the critical year of 1814, the fortunes of either flotilla fluctuated depending upon the relative balance of power.

The Niagara frontier, due to its geographic location, was a natural avenue of invasion. The lodgement at Fort George provided an excellent springboard for an offensive directed first against Burlington Heights, then ultimately York and Kingston. Yet, the Madison administration's prosecution of the war left a great deal to be desired, particularly when it came to co-ordinating operations between the army and the navy or the various invasion attempts. Even so, if resolutely employed, the overwhelming superiority of American arms could result only in success. But by 1814 the will to win had begun to erode in some American circles. The initial movements of the Federalists toward what was to become the Hartford Convention had gotten underway. In New York, the most populous and strategically located state in the theatre of war, the Republican governor, Daniel Tompkins, was opposed by strong anti-war Federalist factions. This decline in morale soon manifested itself as the American position on the Niagara front disintegrated.

The month of December 1813 was marked by the retirement of the American troops from their lines at Fort George. The American garrison there had become woefully weak. Most of the American regulars, along with the better
militia units, had been drawn away to build up the armies that failed so egregiously in their campaign against Montreal. In early December the volunteers, whose term of service had elapsed, left for home leaving the fort to its fate.

Brigadier-General George McClure, in command of the Fort George garrison, became uneasy about his exposed position. His appeals for reinforcements went unanswered while the lines of a British investment began to tighten around him. Elements of the British 100th Regiment, commanded by Colonel John Murray, were brought into the line at Twelve Mile Creek from the Champlain Valley. McClure, after holding a council of war on December 9, resolved to quit Fort George and raze the town of Niagara. This, he maintained, was in accordance with a directive issued by Armstrong:

> Understanding that the defense 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 end and to invite them to remove themselves and their effects to some place of greater safety.1

On the afternoon of December 10, the inhabitants of the town received an order to evacuate all dwellings, stores, and shops preparatory to their destruction by

---

fire. Some took the warning and attempted to remove their goods and chattels but for the most part the townspeople ignored these orders. Four hours later, as evening drew on, in the midst of a raging blizzard, a platoon of militia led by Willcocks began systematically to incinerate the town. Houses, hotels, halls, stores, and churches went up in flames.

Queenstown was similarly dealt with when batteries at Lewistown bombarded the town with red-hot shot. Many farmsteads were destroyed by marauding parties of soldiers while the few remaining cattle in the region were driven away or slaughtered. On December 10 General McClure wrote from Fort Niagara to Governor Tompkins: "The village is now in flames and the enemy shut out of hope and means of wintering in Fort George. This step has not been resolved on without counsel," he added, "and is in conformity with the views of the Secretary of War, made known to me in previous communications."¹ This was strenuously denied by the latter. "My orders," asserted Secretary Armstrong, "were to burn it if necessary to the defense of Fort George, and not otherwise. But he does not defend Fort George, and then burns Niagara. My orders were given on the report of the General that the attack of Fort George

¹Ibid., p. 14.
THE NIAGARA PENINSULA

- Niagara Escarpment
- Fortified position
- Towns

Scale

10 miles

True copy from the original by Lieut. W. A. Westfield. Canadian Archives - Feb. 12, 1912.
might be covered by Newark."¹

The flames of Niagara had become the signal for the rapid advance of a small British corps of observation under Murray. Putting his men in sleighs, the British commander hurried forward through a snowstorm and fell upon the incendiaries before their work of destruction was complete. The village had been reduced to ashes but the barracks and defenses of Fort George were left comparatively uninjured. In their haste to retreat, the Americans left all of their tents standing in the works.²

McClure was correct in that the burning of Niagara robbed the British of adequate winter quarters. Fort George and Niagara now could not house a sufficiently large enough garrison to defend the frontier. The American general, confident that the British would not stage a winter offensive, sat behind the formidable walls of Fort Niagara.

The British, angered by the American actions, immediately grasped the initiative. On the night of December 18, Murray, with the 100th Regiment and detachments of the 41st, the Royals, and a few men of the Royal Artillery, some five hundred and fifty in all, crossed the Niagara River.

¹Ibid., p. 16.

²Ernest Cruikshank, The Battle of Lundy's Lane (Welland: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1891), p. 5.
They landed above Youngstown where lay a detachment of American militia from the garrison on outpost duty. The outposts were quickly seized and the sentries bayonetted to the man (in order not to alarm the garrison, Murray had taken the precaution of ordering all muskets to remain unloaded.) Arriving at the fortress, the assault party waited in the darkness at the main gate for the changing of the guard. On the opening of the gate, the relief guard was met with an attack of bayonets. Through the gate the British rushed, followed by the rest of the attacking force. The surprised Americans made what resistance they could.

In half an hour the deed was accomplished. The fort, strongly built of stone with twenty-seven mounted guns and a garrison of over three hundred, was captured at the expense of six British killed and five wounded. An enormous quantity of arms, equipment, and stores, to the value of nearly one million dollars, was secured. The fort, a post of immense strategic value, was held by the British until the end of the war.

The same day, some miles up river, British Major-General Phineas Riall landed a force of fourteen hundred

---

1Ernest Cruikshank, Drummond’s Winter Campaign, 1813 (Welland: Lundy’s Lane Historical Society, 1897), pp. 17-23.
at Lewistown. Advancing along the left bank of the Niagara, Riall carried Lewistown and Fort Schlosser. The American force at Black Rock, however, presented the British with a formidable task. Riall, commanding four companies of the 8th Regiment of Foot, the light companies of the 89th Regiment of Foot, 250 men of the 41st Regiment, the grenadiers of the 100th Regiment, together with fifty militia and a body of Indians, landed below Black Rock at 2:00 A.M. on December 20.\footnote{Gilbert Auckinlech, A History of the War between Great Britain and the United States (Toronto: McLear, 1855), p. 258.} The light companies of the 89th surprised and overwhelmed a militia picket, thereby securing the bridge over Conquickity Creek. The 41st and grenadiers stormed the approaches of the bridge, then threw back a weak counter-attack. Riall’s intention was to force a fight over control of this vital bridge thus creating a diversion. While the fire-fight raged around the bridge, an amphibious assault by the Royal Scots, under Lieutenant-Colonel John Gordon, landed up-river. The American militia responded by pouring heavy cannon and musket fire into the landing parties inflicting much damage. Meanwhile, Riall pushed through his opponents taking the town of Black Rock. The militia, reported by Riall as "in great force and very strongly posted," maintained its position with obstinance. However the British
veterans soon prevailed. The Americans fell back upon Buffalo, their retreat guarded by a fieldpiece supported by large numbers of infantry and cavalry. Nonetheless, the cohesion of the militia began to erode under constant British pressure and more American positions soon fell to the red coats.

Black Rock offered rich booty but Riall did not possess means for transporting it. Thus the war materials were put to the torch as were the private dwellings of the town. With Black Rock securely in Riall's hands, Gordon was dispatched to discover and destroy all defensive positions in the vicinity. The advance continued and Buffalo suffered the fate of Black Rock and Newark before it.

This series of actions ended in the British commanding the entire length of the Niagara River. The Americans fielded 2,500 militia against Riall's 739 and sustained a loss of 477, mostly prisoners. The British lost thirty-one killed, seventy-two wounded, and two missing. Summing up the action for Armstrong, Major General Amos Hall wrote:

They (the British) were met by the militia under my command with spirit but were overpowered by the numbers and discipline of the enemy, the militia gave way and fled on every side; every attempt to rally

1Cruikshank, Drummond's Winter Campaign, p. 41.
them proved ineffectual. . . . The flourishing village of Buffalo was laid in ruins. The Niagara frontier now lies open and naked to our enemies.¹

Both banks of the Niagara were now in blackened desolation. Ironically this destruction was needless. McClure's burning of Niagara was not in response to Armstrong's directive nor the desires of the Madison administration. Following as it did upon the burning of York in April, the sacking of Niagara could not be ignored by the British. In regard to that act, Colonel John Harvey, adjutant to the commanding general in Upper Canada, dispatched a letter to the American government calling upon them to justify the actions of McClure:

Having just received a report from the officer in command of the British troops on the Niagara frontier that the whole of the town of Niagara was destroyed by fire previous to its being evacuated by the American troops, I am directed to call upon you immediately and distinctly to state whether this atrocious act has been committed by the authority of the American government or is the unauthorized act of any individual. It is essential that not a moment should be lost in returning a specific answer to this communication.²

The British capture of Fort Niagara, Lewistown, Manchester (Niagara Falls, N.Y.), Fort Schlosser, and Buffalo was in response both to military necessity and

¹Auckinleck, A History of the War, p. 258.
the desire for retribution. In an attempt to gloss over the British retaliation, Governor-General Prevost issued a proclamation stating:

Lamenting as His Excellency does the necessity imposed upon him of retaliating upon the subjects of America the miseries inflicted upon the inhabitants of Newark, it is not his intention to pursue further a system of warfare so revolting to his own feelings and so little congenial to the British character unless the future measures of the enemy compel him again to resort to it.¹

On January 28, 1814, Lieutenant-General Sir Gordon Drummond, commanding general in Upper Canada, received his reply from General Wilkinson by direction of President Madison:

I am commanded by the Executive of the United States to disavow the conduct of the Brigadier-General McClure of the militia of the State of New York in burning the town of Newark and, in irrefragable testimony that this act was unlicensed, to transmit to Your Excellency a copy of the order, under color of which that officer perpetrated a deed abhorrent to every American feeling. . . . no system of retaliation which has for its object the devastation of private property will ever be resorted to by the American government but in the last extremity, and this will depend on the conduct of your royal master's troops in this country.²

Despite these courtly assurances, similar acts were committed. On May 14, a detachment of 800 American regulars, militia, and seamen under the command of Colonel J. B. Campbell of the Eleventh United States Infantry, deliberately destroyed the village of Port Dover on the shores

¹Auckinleck, ibid., p. 252.
²Cruikshank, Documents, p. 19.
of Lake Erie. General Riall demanded an explanation from Campbell but received no reply. Colonel Duncan McArthur, in command of a detachment of cavalry dispatched from Detroit, swept through the western districts of Upper Canada. While passions ran high, there was little chance that Washington could properly restrain its officers in the field from engaging in these acts.¹

Its successes along the Niagara put the small British army in possession of ample and sorely needed supplies of provisions, ammunition, and military stores besides furnishing them with winter quarters. Previously, British troops lacked winter clothing of any description, being without a field-train or any organized commissariat. The British army in Upper Canada were without wagons with the unhappy result that much of the ammunition was rendered useless by inclement weather.²

While short of artificiers, engineers, and logistical support, the British Army was blessed with an energetic commander in the person of Drummond. Born in Canada, at Quebec, in 1771, his father, Colin Drummond, was paymaster-general for the British forces in Lower Canada. At age seventeen, Drummond entered the British army and five years later rose to the lieutenant-colonelcy of the 8th

¹Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 6.
²Cruikshank, ibid., p. 5.
Regiment (King's Regiment of Foot). Seeing action in the Netherlands, Egypt, and the West Indies during the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, Drummond was posted to Canada in 1808. He served on the staff at Quebec until 1811 when, at the age of thirty-three, he was promoted to lieutenant-general. After a short tour of duty in Ireland, Drummond returned to Canada in 1813 as second-in-command to Prevost. Following his successes along the Niagara, Drummond projected a movement against Detroit and the destruction of the American squadron on Lake Erie, then laying at Put-in-Bay. He pushed his vanguard elements toward the fork of the Thames with scouts penetrating as far as Lake St. Clair and beyond. One such party ventured into Michigan where they routed a surprised company of militia, capturing their arms. Due to the unusual mildness of the weather, the roads were impassible until March. By then, Detroit was heavily reinforced while several thousand militia were collected in the vicinity of present-day Sandusky, Ohio for the defense of Perry's ships.

1 Grey, Lundy's Lane, pp. 28-29.
2 Drummond to Prevost, 17 February 1814, Archives, C. 682, p. 28.
3 Drummond to Prevost, 7 March 1814, Archives, C. 682, p. 104.
4 Drummond to Captain Freer, 13 March 1814, Archives, C. 788, p. 67.
At the same time, Drummond was obliged to proceed to York to open the Legislature of Upper Canada. Since December, 1813, the British general combined the functions of civil administrator with those of commander of the forces. During his absence, American plans to recover Fort Niagara began to evolve.

As early as February 28, the American Secretary of War ordered the army at Sacket's Harbor to cross frozen Lake Ontario and capture Kingston, base of the British naval squadrons and key to the lines of communications between Upper and Lower Canada. Considering this highly impracticable, Major General Brown marched his army to the Niagara frontier.

Time was beginning to run short for the Americans. Thinly populated and weakly defended, Canada was supposed to have been easy prey. Begun in 1812, the war aimed at the removal of Britain from the continent. After Leipzig and Vittoria, Bonaparte's downfall was assured, allowing Great Britain to devote more of her energies and resources to guaranteeing the security of her North American provinces. During 1812 and 1813, four inept American invasions had been humiliatingly repulsed by a handful of regular troops supported by Canadian militia. Instead of being welcomed as liberators, the Americans were met by resolute resistance. Sixteen thousand troops, mostly veterans of Wellington's victorious Peninsula Army, were
beginning to find their way to Canada. In view of this, the Americans had time to launch one more attempt at conquest.\(^1\)

Despite their December victories, the British troops along the Niagara frontier were in a deplorable state. The British garrison at Fort Niagara, composed of a battalion of Drummond's old command, the 8th Regiment, was plagued with disease and desertion. News of this had been obtained by the Americans from deserters. In addition, Drummond weakened his command by sending a detachment of the Newfoundland Regiment and artillery to relieve Mackinac, Michigan. The number of desertions from the Niagara garrison had become so great, and discontent so pronounced, that Drummond was forced to withdraw the battalion, replacing it with elements of the 100th Regiment of Foot. Scarcely had this been accomplished than they too began to desert in such numbers that Riall recommended the abandonment of "that cursed fort."\(^2\) The high rate of desertions largely resulted from the fact that the British army was recruited from the pauper and agrarian classes both in England and Ireland. Besides being imperfectly clothed and subjected to traditionally harsh discipline, they had

\(^1\)Randal Grey, "Lundy's Lane," _War Monthly_ (May, 1975): 27.

\(^2\)Riall to Drummond, 15 March 1814, _Archives, C. 388_, p. 44.
received no pay for upwards of six months. Duty at Fort Niagara was monotonous, having a deleterious effect on discipline and morale. General Drummond resolutely refused to evacuate a post so important and, as fine weather returned, desertions diminished.¹

Drummond was unremitting in the execution of his duty. Through the worst of weather and execrable roads, he travelled the length of the colony making inquiries into the conditions of the people and the resources of the country. Ascertaining that the wheat crop near the frontier was likely to prove deficient, he promptly prohibited the distillation of grain and issued orders demanding the construction of magazines. Writing to Prevost, he pointed out that "the crop in the Niagara District is short, but I think there will be enough for the Right Division if that at Long Point is collected in time."² The Niagara frontier between Chippewa and Fort Erie was already a burnt-over district while Long Point had escaped the ravages of the American invaders. In addition to his troops, Drummond also had the burdensome responsibility of feeding several thousand non-combatants.

¹Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 14.
²Drummond to Prevost, 25 January 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 7.
With no organized and functioning commissariat, Drummond was forced to make do from a country already bordering on destitution. Most of the western Indians fled their homes upon news of Procter's defeat at the hands of Harrison at the Battle of the Thames. These, as well as the whole of the Six Nations from the Grand River, three thousand persons in all, sought refuge near the British cantonment on Burlington Heights, at the head of Lake Ontario.¹ This concentration of Indians so frightened the inhabitants of the area that they too abandoned their farms and took shelter amidst the troops. Added to this were the homeless fugitives along the Niagara frontier. While Drummond's armed forces numbered less than 2,000 between 7,000 and 8,000 rations were issued daily. So serious were the food shortages, the British command feared that the whole of the province west of Kingston might be abandoned. The situation at Kingston was scarcely any better: Each day 5,000 rations were consumed and on April 5, there remained but sixteen barrels of flour in store.² Drummond was so preoccupied by these vital questions of food and supply that he could say, as Wellington often did, that he did not know whether

¹Drummond to Prevost, 8 February 1814, Archives, C. 118, p. 45.
he was much of a general but he felt certain he was a first-rate commissariat officer.

Drummond's predecessor suffered a vote of censure by the Legislature of Upper Canada for having proclaimed martial law for the purpose of supplying his troops from the country. Faced with the prospects of starvation or withdrawal, Drummond had no recourse but to seize what was required. Drummond's efforts to induce the western Indians to remove themselves to Lower Canada failed as did his endeavors to persuade the Six Nation Indians to return to their deserted farms. For want of officers and equipment, Drummond directed the enlistment of 400 militiamen into a militia corps élite. The surplus levies were returned to their farms in the hope of increasing productivity while relieving the supply problem. Captain William Robinson of the 8th Regiment was given command of this newly armed battalion of light infantry hereafter known as the Incorporated Militia. Several captured field-guns and wagons were allocated to this unit.¹

British optimism was not improved by intelligence reports detailing American movements. American newspapers clamored for the speedy recovery of Fort Niagara. Late in January, Black Rock was reoccupied by the Americans

¹Drummond to Prevost, 29 March 1814, Archives, C. 682, p. 269.
who made their presence felt by subjecting Fort Erie to periodic artillery fire. At the same time the British learned that large barracks were under construction upon Lewistown Heights. The subsequent movement of large bodies of troops from Sacket's Harbor in the direction of the Niagara were almost immediately revealed by deserters in Kingston, and General Riall was placed on his guard. Severe cold weather accompanied by heavy snow falls during the latter part of March delayed the progress of defensive positions under construction by the British. In early April, Riall sallied forth from Fort Niagara and destroyed all earthworks along the New York bank of the river lest they fall into the hands of the advancing Americans. A deserter who came into the British lines reported that 7,000 troops were assembled at Buffalo.  

News from the Ohio country was anything but encouraging. A great council of the Indians of Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan was held at Dayton under supervision of American agents. Those Indians assembled were informed that they would be treated as enemies unless they took up arms against the British. Each warrior was promised a

---

1 Drummond to Prevost, 1 February 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 8.

stipend of seventy-five cents per day and warned that their wives and children would be retained as hostages to insure Indians co-operation. The Delawares, Senecas, and Wyandots joined in the war dance and were directed to mass at Detroit. Similar attempts to mobilize the Indian were undertaken in New York and Pennsylvania.¹

American marauding parties made frequent inroads into the western districts. These American incursions diminished grain available to the British. Meanwhile, it became known to the British command that a squadron of six American ships, loaded with troops, had passed through Lake Huron with the intention of attacking Mackinac, the only post still retained by the British in the west. On Lake Ontario, a forty-two gun frigate, the USS Mohawk, latest product of the frantic shipbuilding race, seemed to give Chauncey's squadron a decisive edge over Yeo's, who lifted an eighteen-day blockade of Sacket's Harbor on June 6. The loss of Lake Ontario threatened to undermine Drummond's entire position in Upper Canada.

Upon the prorogation of the Assembly of Upper Canada on March 18, Drummond returned to Kingston and threw himself with great vigor into the labor of defending the pro-

Every soldier that could be of the slightest use was set to work in the Kingston shipyards. Two frigates of the largest class were launched and made sea-worthy while the American fleet was some weeks from being ready for action. Having thus obtained the naval lead, he sought permission to assault Sacket's Harbor while that vital town's garrison was understrength. Governor-General Prevost refused. Nevertheless, Drummond made a successful dash from Kingston upon Oswego, a naval and military base second in importance to Sacket's Harbor. Despite a valiant defense, the American garrison was speedily expelled leaving the British in command of the harbor and its accumulated stores. Yeo maintained a strict blockade of Sacket's Harbor. The net effect of these two actions was to delay the equipment of the American fleet for several weeks, thus retarding any offensive action along the dangerously weakened Niagara frontier.

Early in May, the American army at Batavia, New York began to take shape. Secretary Armstrong promised that the force should consist of not less than 5,000 regulars and 3,000 militiamen drawn from New York and Pennsylvania. The cavalry and artillery were reorganized and the enlistment of three new regiments of riflemen was authorized.

---

1 Prevost to Drummond, 9 April 1814, Archives, C. 683, p. 21.

To encourage recruitment, a bounty of $124 was offered to each person enlisting. Most of the infantry regiments selected had served in previous campaigns, consequently, they had seen as much active service as their opposite numbers.¹

A camp of instruction was established under the very capable command of the youngest general, at age twenty-seven, in the American Army, Winfield Scott. Scott came from a family with an excellent martial tradition. His grandfather fled Scotland after Culloden, settling in the vicinity of Petersburg, Virginia where he acquired a large plantation. Winfield's father, a captain in the Continental Army, educated his son at Richmond and William and Mary College. At age twenty, Scott was admitted to the Virginia bar yet two years later gave up his legal career for a captain's commission in the army. Posted to New Orleans, Scott had a personal dispute with his commanding general, James Wilkinson. His charges of incompetence and treason, while probably valid, resulted in a duel with one of Wilkinson's aides-de-camp and a year's suspension. With the commencement of the war, Scott was commissioned a lieutenant-colonel of artillery and posted to the Niagara frontier. At the Queenston fiasco Scott's military talent clearly manifested itself. Although a junior officer, Scott assumed command of the American troops atop

the heights. Overwhelmed, Scott conducted the surrender of the American forces, himself becoming a prisoner-of-war. Paroled by the British, Scott returned to Washington a hero, his conspicuous talent rewarded by his being commissioned a brigadier-general. Returning to the Niagara, he took a prominent part in Dearborn's invasion of Upper Canada, temporarily being commandant of Fort George, the very post where he was held prisoner but a year before.¹

Upon Scott's shoulders fell the responsibility of molding the new American army. The troops were drilled seven to ten hours a day, six days a week. Parades and ceremonies were carried out with exactness and spirit. Like Von Steuben, Scott organized and drilled officers who in turn organized and instructed squads and companies. No official drillbook then being in existence, Scott translated his dog-eared Manuel Général de Service des États Major-Généraux, (Ordinance de 1791).²

For the first time an American army could execute harmonious movements of many battalions without confusion. Strict sanitation reduced sickness down to unprecedented

²Ibid., p. 119.
levels for this period - less than ten per-cent "unfit for duty."\(^1\) Morale soared and reasonably good weather and sufficient rations reduced desertions. Scott did not shrink from public and summary executions of deserters and malcontents. Even officers were not exempt from Scott's rigid regime. At one point, out of twenty-five men confined to the blockhouse, nine were officers.\(^2\) "Confidence, the dawn of victory, inspired the whole line," later declared General Scott.\(^3\) Summing up, Scott wrote in his memoirs of Camp Buffalo:

> A system of sanitary police laid down; rules of civility, etiquette, and courtesy - the indispensable outworks of subordination - prescribed and enforced, and the tactical instruction of each arm commenced.\(^4\)

Scott intended to forge an army that "would possess the firmness and cohesion of veterans." By mid-May, he seemed satisfied that his aims had been fulfilled. In a letter to re-instated General Winder, he wrote:

> I have a handsome little army of 1,700... the 9th, 11th, 21st, and 25th Regiments and two companies, Second Artillery. The men are healthy, sober, cheerful, and docile. The field officers highly respectable and many are decent and emulous of improvement. If, of such materials, I do not make the best army now in service by the first of June, I will agree to be dismissed from the service.\(^5\)


\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Scott, *Memoirs*, 1: 121.


\(^5\)Scott to Winder, 7 May 1814, as cited by Jacobs, *The War of 1812*, p. 131.
The American war effort was plagued by political factiousness, especially in the crucial northeastern states. The New England states, facing economic stagnation as a result of the loss of the British trade, were firmly in the hands of the Federalists, many of whom were openly talking of secession. These populous states, the industrial and commercial center of the American republic, were of decisive importance if the United States was to sustain the effort against Great Britain. In New York, the Republican governor, Tompkins, advocated prosecution of the war yet he was handicapped by a vocal Federalist minority in the legislature. Ironically, it was British actions that brought about the erosion of the Federalist Party in New York when Drummond's December offensive along the Niagara crystalized pro-war sentiments. Not surprisingly, the spring elections of 1814 prostrated the Federalist Party giving Tompkins his long awaited free hand. The state Senate readily passed a bill authorizing the enlistment of 4,000 state troops to serve for one year. A general order providing for the equipment of the New York contingent was issued by the New York Legislature in March. It provided for the equipment of two infantry regiments of ten companies, each consisting of 108 officers and men, and an independent battalion composed of one company of rifles, two companies of light infantry, and one company of mounted rifles. This brigade, number-
ing 2,562 of all ranks, was given to Major-General Peter B. Porter, a United States congressman from the Niagara District and one of the chief promoters of the war. As chairman of the committee on Foreign Relations, he prepared the report of December 1811 recommending war with Great Britain.\textsuperscript{1}

Porter's militia was subjected to Scott's drills and soon attained a high degree of efficiency. The Pennsylvania contingent, numbering 600, participated in the razing of Port Dover and did not arrive at Buffalo until late in June. General Porter proceeded to Onondaga, the ancient council place of the Six Nations, soliciting the assistance of those tribes in the projected invasion of Canada. The Iroquois readily promised to join the coalition and a council was organized at Buffalo to ratify the treaty. All the nations except the Mohawks were represented as Le Fort, an Onondaga, was elected war chief. Mainly through the actions of Red Jacket, celebrated chief of the Senecas, upwards of 600 Indians were assembled to join the expedition.\textsuperscript{2}

While these extensive preparations for the invasion were in progress, Drummond was fruitlessly urging Prevost

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., pp. 129-133.

\textsuperscript{2}Cruikshank, \textit{Lundy's Lane}, p. 11.
to reinforce his army. Prevost had his attention centered on a numerous American army forming on the shores of Lake Champlain. Penciled upon the margin of Drummond’s letter of June 21, which expressed his firm belief that the main attack would be made on the Niagara and that the movement of troops toward Plattsburg was simply a feint to prevent reinforcements from being dispatched from Lower Canada, Prevost wrote: "Much obliged to Lieutenant General Drummond for his opinion, but it is entirely without foundation."\(^1\) Drummond was forced to rely upon the troops already in the Niagara peninsula. As soon as navigation opened, he reinforced Riall with the 103rd Regiment and a small company of marine artillery. Even after the arrival of these troops, the strength of the Right Division of the army in Upper Canada, distributed from York to Long Point upon Lake Erie, did not exceed 4,000 effectives of all arms.\(^2\) For fear of a sudden amphibious assault, a battalion was maintained at both Burlington and York. Both flanks of the British position in Niagara were exposed to American movements by an enemy in command of the lakes. The Port Dover episode illustrated the American ability to launch just such an attack. Riall feared an American landing on the shores of Lake Erie whereby the

---

\(^1\) Prevost to Drummond, 27 June 1814, Archives, C. 683, p. 300.

\(^2\) Drummond to Prevost, 22 June 1814, Archives, C. 683, p. 304.
enemy, already on his flank, could gain his rear by the western roads thus cutting off his retreat to Burlington. With the Americans enjoying uncontestable command of Lake Erie, the British were indeed vulnerable to such a movement.¹

The actual force available for the defense of the Niagara was less than 2,800 regulars, 300 militia, and 150 Indians, distributed along a front of thirty-six miles. Slight fieldworks had been constructed at Chippewa and Queenstown and a redoubt of considerable strength built at the mouth of the Niagara, at first named Fort Riall but subsequently called Fort Mississauga.² When these works, in addition to Forts Erie and George, were properly garrisoned, scarcely 700 men remained available for field operations. Many of the troops still nominally effective were so enfeebled by disease, exposure, and fatigue that they had become unfit for combat. The surgeon of the 8th Regiment recommended that the battalion, then stationed at Chippewa and Niagara Falls, should be immediately removed as nearly every man in it had been down with dysentery or intermittent fever during the past twelve months.³ The Royal Scots had suffered as much in

¹Hitsman, Incredible War, p. 93.
²Captain Martin to Prevost, 3 July 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 13.
³Drummond to Prevost, 21 May 1814, ibid.
the same manner. Writing from Kingston to Prevost, Drummond summed up the situation: "One of the best regiments is shut up in Fort Niagara, another decidedly inefficient, and a third expected to be so if compelled to take the field."¹ Late in June he determined to relieve the 8th Regiment by the 41st Regiment and sent forward the Incorporated Militia to the frontier but was unable to relieve the Royal Scots as he had intended.²

Deserters who came into the British lines maintained that a movement on the part of the Americans was imminent. They also reported that the ardor of the troops was much improved by the distribution of hand-bills announcing that Napoleon had gained a great success at the gates of Paris in which the emperors of Russia and Austria and the Prussian king, along with 40,000 of their troops, had been captured.³ A flotilla of nine armed vessels had been assembled at Buffalo while the Americans were collecting boats with the intention of crossing the Niagara. In response to these reports, a detachment was dispatched by Riall to reconnoiter in the hope of penetrating the enemy's designs. Although the British patrols ranged the country,

¹Drummond to Prevost, 4 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, pp. 36-37.
³Babcock, Niagara Frontier, p. 157.
their only success was the seizure and burning of the American barracks upon Lewistown Heights. Owing to this uncertainty, Riall was forced to retain the greater part of his force at Chippewa and Queenstown, leaving his right wing comparatively weak. In Fort Erie there was a garrison of 125 men rendered all but hors de combat by illness. Colonel Thomas Pearson, with a detachment of Lincoln Militia, the light companies of the Royals and the 100th Regiment, watched the river from its head to Chippewa, where five companies of the 100th were posted. The 103rd Regiment was at Burlington, the Glengarry Light Infantry at York, and the 8th Regiment had begun its march to Lower Canada in the hope of regaining its health. Both in the 41st and the 103rd there were several companies of mere boys so youthful as to reduce their utility to garrison duty.¹

Many of the disloyal inhabitants had fled from the colony during the two preceding years. Others had been taken into custody and most of those who refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown were exiled to the United States. "It is but justice to say," Drummond remarked, "that by far the greater part of the inhabitants are well disposed, and many have on various occasions manifested their loyalty to the service by their actions

in the field. Those chiefly who have shown an opposite disposition are such as from time to time have crept into the Province from the neighboring states and settled on lands purchased from individuals."¹

A considerable number of the Lincoln Militia, paroled by the Americans during their occupation of the Niagara district in 1813, could not again serve in the war. Drummond proposed to increase the Incorporated Militia to 900 men by drafting one-fourteenth of the male population capable of bearing arms. He was strongly opposed to enlisting the remainder except when forced to. "I regret," he said, "that our present circumstances should render it necessary to call upon the yeomanry of the country for their services in the field while their farms must be neglected, especially when produce and provisions of every kind have become very scarce and extravagantly dear, and it is with difficulty the commissariat are able to procure the necessary supplies. These considerations would induce me most willingly to dispense with the military for the domestic services of the militia if our regular forces here were such as to enable me to do so."²

Of all these circumstances, the Americans were well

¹Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 14.

²Drummond to Lord Bathurst, 20 March 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, ibid.
informed. A careful estimate in April placed the British regular force on the Niagara frontier at 1,940 men. Since the opening of navigation, one American vessel had cruised day and night along the north shore of Lake Erie, constantly landing and taking on spies.\textsuperscript{1} American intelligence reported the deterioration of the British situation along the frontier. While the British waned, the Americans, by the end of June, were fully prepared to launch their final gambit. Scott's finely tuned machine, the best fielded by the United States during the war, was confident in its ability to succeed where previous invasion attempts had failed so miserably.

\textsuperscript{1}Babcock, \textit{Niagara Frontier}, p. 169.
II. THE BATTLE OF CHIPPEWA

At daybreak on July 3, the American army was skillfully landed under the cover of the guns of a brig-of-war and two schooners. Two beachheads were established, one above and the other a short distance below Fort Erie. These landings, out of range of the fort's three artillery pieces, were not opposed. This is not to say that the landing was not uneventful. General Scott, eager to get ashore, fell into the river while sounding for the bottom with his sword. Encumbered with sword, epaulets, cloak, and jackboots, Scott was forced to swim for his life. Scott's pride perhaps the only casualty of the day, the fort and its garrison was secured by early evening.

The regular force of the invading army consisted of the 9th, 11th, 19th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th United States Infantry, part of the 2nd Rifles, a squadron of cavalry, and four companies of artillery. Organized into two brigades, under Generals Scott and Eleazier Ripley, the army numbered between 4,000 and 5,000 of all ranks. The militia and Indians, composing a third brigade, under the command of General Porter, numbered in excess of 2,000. The entire force was commanded by Major-General Jacob

---

1Scott, Memoirs, 1: 124.
Brown.¹

Born in 1775 into a Bucks County, Pennsylvania Quaker family, Jacob Jennings Brown initially was a surveyor in the Northwest around modern Cincinnati. Returning to the east, Brown secured a position as a secretary to Alexander Hamilton. Under Hamilton's patronage, Brown was elected a county-court judge at Watertown, New York. In 1808, he was elected colonel of militia, less because he was thought able to command than because his large estate made a good spot for the quarterly drinking bouts which passed for militia drill. Politically active, Brown held several pocket boroughs in Upstate New York. Despite having been Hamilton's protege, Brown became a Republican who delivered his boroughs to Tompkins in the elections of 1811. As a reward, the frontier farmer was commissioned a general and given command of the Northern District of New York.² Brown owed his Niagara command to the celebrity won by his success, or rather his good fortune, in the defense of Sacket's Harbor the year before. His military knowledge was so slight that General Wilkinson asserted that Brown was unable to post the guards of a camp correctly. Wilkinson even told a story of his planting a

¹Hitsman, Incredible War, p. 96.

battery in a hollow for the advantage of elevating the guns to fire at the heights above.¹

The Second Brigade of Brown's army was commanded by Eleazer Wheelock Ripley. Born at Hanover, New Hampshire, Ripley's family claimed Myles Standish as an ancestor. Ripley came from a long line of theologians - his father was a professor of divinity at Dartmouth, a college founded in 1770 by Ripley's namesake and grandfather, Eleazer Wheelock. Himself a graduate of Dartmouth (1800), Ripley practiced law at Portland, Maine (then part of Massachusetts). Elected to the Massachusetts House, he soon elevated himself to Speaker. Upon the outbreak of the war, he volunteered for the 21st Regiment and was commissioned a lieutenant. A year later, Ripley was regimental colonel; by 1814, at age thirty, Ripley was a brigadier general.²

The War Department instructed Brown to direct his offensive toward Burlington, isolating the forts at the mouth of the river and severing their communications with York. Having gained the head of Lake Ontario, he was to await the arrival of Chauncey. With the aid of the navy, Brown would reduce the Niagara forts or move directly upon

²Tucker, Paltroons and Patriots, 2: 603-604.
Kingston, as circumstances dictated. The views and expectations of the Secretary of War are described in a letter to the President on April 30 in which he stated:

Eight, or even six thousand men landed in the bay between Point Abino and Fort Erie and operating either on the line of the Niagara or more directly, if a more direct route is found, against the British post at the head of Burlington Bay, cannot be resisted with effect without compelling the enemy so to weaken his more eastern posts as to bring them within reach of our means at Sacket's Harbor and Plattsburg.

In a letter of June 10, which actually put Brown's army into motion, Armstrong informed that officer that the Secretary of the Navy was of the opinion that Chauncey's squadron would not be ready to co-operate before the 15th of July, but he added:

To give, however, immediate occupation to your troops, and to prevent their blood from stagnating, why not take Fort Erie and its garrison, stated at three or four hundred men? Land between Point Abino and Erie in the night; assail the fort by land and water; push forward a corps to seize the bridge at Chippewa; and be governed by circumstances in either stopping there or going further. Boats may follow and feed you. If the enemy concentrates his whole force on the line, as I think he will, it will not exceed two thousand men.

True to Armstrong's prediction, the British did not shrink from accepting the American challenge. Major-

1 Scott, Memoirs, pp. 134-136.
2 Armstrong to Madison, 30 April 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, pp. 111-113.
3 Armstrong to Brown, 10 June 1814, ibid., p. 127.
General Riall, the British commander, was an officer of twenty years standing yet had seen little actual warfare. Contemporaries described Riall as a short, stout, near-sighted man, of an impetuous temperament, and rashly brave.¹

Riall ordered Colonel, the Marquis of Tweedale, commander of the British light troops, to reconnoitre the American positions. The Americans were strongly posted upon the heights opposite Black Rock. The next day, July 4, the American army advanced, brushing aside Tweedale's opposition and rebuilding the many bridges along their path. At nightfall, the American advance guard camped within sight of the British field-works at Chippewa. General Brown was well informed respecting the movement and numbers of his opponent for he estimated that Riall could not bring more than 1,000 men into the field.² With the confidence engendered by consciousness of an overwhelming numerical superiority, Brown continued his advance with the main body of his army.

Riall hurriedly concentrated all available British troops at Chippewa. Five companies of the Royals were brought forward while a dispatch called for the instant

¹Merritt, Recollections, p. 99.
²Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 17.
recall of the 8th Regiment. The fire-eating British com-
mander was compelled to await the approach of the invaders
at Chippewa instead of assaulting them on the march as he
originally intended. Reconnoitring their position on the
morning of July 5, Riall estimated the American force in
sight at 2,000. The 8th having come up at noon, Riall
determined to attack the Americans without delay.¹

Brown's intention was to outflank the British position
by the construction of a bridge over the 150 yard wide
Chippewa River. The American army did not possess pontoons
so this project would occupy several days. The three bri-
gades of the army bivouacked in a field, which was two
miles long and a half a mile wide, along the banks of the
Niagara River. A dense forested area composed their flank.
A bridge existed at Chippewa but it was protected by a
battery on the south bank. Adjacent to the battery stood
Fort Chippewa consisting of a few barracks, storehouses,
and a navy yard.

General Brown, in order to secure his flank, dis-
patched Porter's Brigade to take up positions in the for-
est. The bulk of the American army busied themselves con-
structing pontoons and preparing for a belated July 4th
feast. No offensive actions being expected from the Bri-

¹Riall to Drummond, 6 July 1814, Archives, C. 684,
p. 51.
tish, Brown did not post a picketline.\(^1\)

The British were not idle. Scott and his staff, breakfasting by invitation with a local family, nearly fell prisoner to an Indian patrol. Fearing for his life, Scott sprinted back toward the American lines.\(^2\) The Indians did not follow, apparently being interested in reconnaissance, not combat. Similar scouting parties passed around the American camp and their reports induced Riall to believe that the main body of Brown's army had not yet come up. Riall by now had three skeleton battalions of infantry, numbering 1,300 rank and file, a troop of the 19th Dragoons, six pieces of field artillery, 300 Indians and a like number of Lincoln Militia.\(^3\) In the meantime, the Americans in his front had been joined by Ripley's entire brigade and the greater part of Porter's bringing the American forces available to Brown to 5,000 with nine guns.\(^4\) They had encamped behind Street's Creek, a shallow stream less than twenty yards in width at its mouth, which was easily fordable everywhere. A tract of cultivated land in their front, divided into fields by ordinary

\(^3\)Riall to Drummond, 6 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 52.
log or brushwood fences, extended from the river to the dense woods on the American left. Near Chippewa, a thin belt of trees stretched down almost to the water's edge, partially concealing the movements of either army from the other.

Late in the afternoon Riall aroused the attention of his adversary by pushing forward a detachment of the Lincoln Militia and the entire body of Indians, led by Captain John Norton. These elements established themselves in the woods on the American left flank. Brown promptly ordered a portion of Porter's brigade to drive them back. Finding that the British offered an obstinate resistance, Brown continued to pour in militia and Indian reinforcements until 1,300 men were engaged. The skirmish lasted half an hour, in the usual Indian mode, with a great deal of firing and very little bloodshed. Perceiving themselves seriously outnumbered, the British retreated. ¹

While the opposing militia and Indians were engaged in their skirmishing, Riall sent forward his three light infantry companies of regulars. Well-versed in forest warfare from the experience of previous campaigns, they concealed themselves in the thickets and awaited the approach of the Americans. When Porter's men were within a few yards, a single heavy volley, pealing through the

¹Cruikshank, *Lundy's Lane*, p. 18.
woods, threw the Americans into utter confusion. They were, at the same time assailed in the flank by the militia and Norton's Indians. This rout continued beyond Street's Creek until stopped by elements of the 25th Regiment and a squadron of cavalry. Several prisoners were taken including three officers of the Pennsylvania Militia and a Cayuga chief. Le Fort was wounded and Dochstadter, chief of the Oneidas, was among the fifteen Indians killed.¹

The Americans were in the midst of their holiday meal when Riall's unexpected assault fell upon Porter's brigade. But fortune was shining down on the American army that day, Scott, ready to display his finely drilled machine whenever possible, was conducting a parade. Riall's sudden onslaught might otherwise have forced Brown's retirement had Scott not been on hand with his brigade already in formation. Hearing the crash of musketry, Scott began to debouch across the bridge over Street's Creek, his troops deploying under heavy fire with remarkable steadiness and parade ground precision. Brown, who witnessed Porter's rout, galloped to Scott, positioned near the bridge, and exclaimed: "You will have a battle!"² Without halting Brown pushed on to the rear to put Ripley into motion, leaving the direction of the battle to Scott.

¹Ibid.
²Scott, Memoirs, 1: 128.
Riall moved his entire force forward bringing up his three pieces to engage the American artillery which had taken up a position to command the road in their front. The British artillery was pushed gradually forward until it stood within 400 yards of its antagonists. A spirited exchange followed. So incessant was the firing during this phase of the battle, that Captain Nathan Towson, commander of the American battery, was enveloped in smoke and could not properly sight his guns. Scott came racing up to the battery and cried out, "Captain, more to the left; the enemy is there!" while pointing out the direction with his sword.¹

Three guns of Towson's battery followed Scott's advice. Nevertheless the American guns were being swept from the field until one of the British cassions was struck by a shell and exploded. This explosion disabled several men and horses besides causing great confusion and depriving the British of much of their ammunition.²

In consequence of this unfortunate event, General Riall was obliged to bring forward his infantry prematurely to relieve his guns which were being menaced by American infantry on the right flank. Forming six companies of the Royal Scots and five companies of the 100th Regiment into two columns, parallel with each other, Riall led

¹Elliott, Winfield Scott, 1: 121.
²Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 18.
Battle of Chippewa
July 5, 1812.

- Brigade
- Cavalry
- Army
- Artillery

Adapted from Lossing, Pictorial fieldbook, p. 519.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
them in person against the center of the American position. The 8th Regiment, enfeebled by disease and wearied by its long march, was held in reserve. Each of these battalions, their light companies detached, numbered less than 400 rank and file. Scott's Brigade alone markedly outnumbered the force about to attack it.¹

The less than inspiring performance of American arms in the war led the British officers to make some sarcastic remarks regarding American valor. The Marquis of Tweedale explained away American bravery as being due to the date - July 4. He was soon to regret his jibe. When Riall saw the grey uniforms of Scott's Brigade, he was elated. "Why these are nothing more than Buffalo militia!" He did not know that clothing shortages had forced Scott to dress his men in militia grey instead of regular army blue. Only when "they deployed with the greatest regularity and opened a heavy fire," did Riall realize that "These are regulars, by God!"² To this day, in commemoration of the Battle of Chippewa, American West Point cadets wear the grey uniforms of the First Brigade.

The genuine hero of the victory of Chippewa was General Winfield Scott. Riding up and down the lines he exclaimed, "Let us make a new anniversary for ourselves" in

¹Ibid.

²Riall to Drummond, 6 July 1814, Archives, C. 388, p. 107.
reference to the "Glorious Fourth." Addressing Major Jacob Hindmann of the artillery, he stated, "Let us put down the federal convention by beating the enemy in front. There is nothing in the constitution against that!" Surveying his lines and anxious to save time, Scott, ever conspicuous in his brilliant uniform, dashed along the front rather than take the less exposed circuitous route to the rear. A cheer rose from every man as they witnessed the exploits of their daring commander.

By the time the British had made their formations, the Americans had brought up the whole of their artillery and speedily reduced the British guns to silence. These pieces then directed deadly canister fire upon the advancing columns. Scott maneuvered the 9th and 11th Regiments in a wheeling movement overlapping the wings of the British line. Holding their fire until the British were within sixty paces, the Americans opened up a fierce and incessant fusilade. Losing heavily at every step, the Royals (1st Regiment of Foot, the oldest regiment in the British army) and the 100th Regiment moved steadily forward until within 100 yards of the American lines when they received the command to charge. With all the futile

---

1 This proposed convention did take place at Hartford, in December of 1814.

2 Scott, Memoirs, 1: 129.
bravery of Sir Edward Pakenham's columns at New Orleans, the British marched into the mouths of the American muskets.

The fields were intersected by deep furrows and covered with tall grass, which greatly impeded the progress of the British advance, rendered footing uncertain. Colonels Gordon and Tweedale fell desperately wounded at the head of their battalions. Nearly every field officer was struck down. The men fell in heaps under the scathing fire of the American infantry and artillery. In the words of Scott, "they mouldered away like a rope of sand."\(^1\) As the British moved forward the American artillery fire literally tore great gaps in their ranks, which for some time were steadily closed up. Finally, the survivors became inextricably confused and the assault faltered.

With the British lines perceptively wavering, Scott decided to launch a counter-attack. Halting before the 11th United States Infantry Regiment, Scott inspired his troops by stating: "The enemy say that Americans are good at long shot; but cannot stand the cold iron. I call upon you to give the lie to the slander. Charge!" With this, the regiment bolted forward.

When Riall saw his troops breaking, he did not follow. At first, the fiery Irishman seemed to have in mind a suicidal charge. He rode straight toward the Americans,

\(^{1}\)Ibid., p. 131.
his aides at his side, as if seeking death in preference to the humiliation of defeat. Even this effort failed to inspire his shattered troops. His personal honor assured, with many of his escort down and his uniform pierced by several balls, Riall was the last British officer to leave the field.¹

The American counter-attack halted after the British infantry broke. In the absence of a pursuit, the British were allowed a respite in which they brought forward the reserve formation, the 8th Regiment. The retreat was accomplished in tolerable order. Most of the dead and many of the wounded were left upon the field and the guns removed only by the gallant exertions of some of the dragoons. The troopers, who attached their own mounts to the carriages, rode off in the face of the enemy.²

The easy triumph was mainly owing to the American superiority of numbers and artillery. Judging from its loses, Ripley's Second Brigade was scarcely engaged. Porter's Brigade was routed in the preliminary fight in the woods and played no part in the actual battle. Nevertheless, Scott's Brigade alone numbered 2,129 with most of the 327 artillerymen engaged in his support. American


²Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 18.
numerical superiority was obvious to Riall who wrote in his report:

Royal Scots and 100th Regiment charged with the greatest gallantry, under the most destructive fire but I am sorry to say, however, in this attempt they suffered so severely that I was obliged to withdraw them finding that further effort against the superior numbers of the enemy would be unavailing.¹

In his history of the war, Henry Adams chauvinistically wrote:

The Battle of Chippewa was the only occasion during the war when equal bodies of regular troops met face to face, in extended lines on an open plain in broad daylight, without advantage of position; and never again after that combat was an army of American regulars beaten by British troops.²

This conclusion, although widely accepted by American historians, is in error. In his letter to Winder (May 6), Scott claimed his strength at 1,700. This, however, did not include 287 officers and men of the First Battalion / 22nd Regiment which later was detached to Scott's command. General Scott's biographer, Charles W. Elliott, accepts Ripley's estimate of the strength of the First Brigade stated at 2,129.³ Adams discounts Ripley stating that the entire army, on July 1, mustered 3,503 for duty, about

¹Riall to Drummond, 6 July 1814, Archives, C. 388, p. 107.
³Elliott, Winfield Scott, 1: 153.
1,000 being absent, sick, or detached.\(^1\) This figure would appear an underestimate in view of the level of discipline and sanitation exercised at Camp Buffalo. In his memoirs, however, Scott speaks of a "deficiency of numbers" during the battle. Adams mistakenly interprets this to denote the general situation. In fact, this was in reference to Scott's overambitious deployment in which his line was formed into an obtuse angle, the apex toward the rear. Riall's precipitate advance exposed his columns to flank attacks. Scott immediately recognized this and executed a bold maneuver: holding his center in position, he pushed his wings forward opening intervals between his units.\(^2\) Thus, Scott's "deficiency in numbers" was not in reference to his ability to meet Riall but merely his inability to maintain a solid tactical disposition while he sought to infilade his assailants.

American losses have been variously stated but it is unlikely they exceeded 400. On the other hand, General Riall lost upwards of 500, of whom two-fifths were killed or missing. Of nineteen officers of the 100th Regiment who went into action, fourteen were killed or disabled, with 190 non-commissioned officers and men. Only 146 unwounded men of this battalion returned from the field.

\(^1\)Adams, *James Madison*, 2: 35.

Lieutenant George Lyons' company, posted off the extreme left of the British line directly in front of the American battery, went into action with thirty-five officers and men of whom only six escaped uninjured. The seven companies of the Royals suffered still more severely. Eleven officers and 207 rank and file were reported as killed, wounded, and missing. Altogether these two battalions of the 100th and Royal Regiments lost 422 officers and men out of a total of 950. On the whole, Riall's force was reduced by more than a third. The loss sustained by the Lincoln Militia indicates that they fought with equal stubbornness, six officers and forty men being killed or wounded of the 110 committed.

The glory of the victory of Chippewa belongs to Winfield Scott and his excellent battalions. At no time did Brown play a role in the conduct of the battle. This fact was recognized by Brown who wrote:

Brigadier General Scott is entitled to the highest praise our country can bestow - to him more than any other man I am indebted for the victory of the 5th of July.

Brown's role in the battle was hardly praiseworthy. Along with Ripley's brigade and a few units of Porter's

---

1 Riall to Drummond, 6 July 1814, Archives, C. 388, p. 108.
2 Ibid.
3 Elliott, Winfield Scott, 1: 154.
militia, Brown made a wide circuit to the left attempting to get between Riall and the river. The action was over before Brown's columns were concentrated. Scott was left to engage Riall without any troops held in reserve, an obvious tactical error. Had the First Brigade been commanded by a lesser general than Scott, the victors might well have been clad in scarlet, not grey.

Wilkinson's jibe at Brown's military knowledge appears valid. Convinced that the outnumbered British would not dare attack, Brown did not even take the precaution to establish a line of pickets. With no proper outposts, Riall's advance swept upon the startled Americans. If not for the holiday parade, the British onslaught might well have resulted in a romp rather than a bloody repulse.

The American nation, accustomed to recurring disasters and shameful defeats, was electrified by the news of the victory. The military debacles suffered in Canada, in addition to the British blockade, had prompted many New England Federalists to call for a convention. Scott's brigade, save for a single battalion of Pennsylvanians, was composed of New Englanders. They, in their repulse of Riall, did much to defuse this movement.¹ Throughout America the news of Chippewa was greeted with bonfires, church bells, and guns fired in salute. History is filled

¹Caffrey, Twilight's Last Gleaming, p. 214.
with greater military feats but few succeeded in bringing a greater shift in national feeling than Chippewa.

Brown continued in his attempt to flank the British position at Chippewa by means of a bridge. On July 7 Riall destroyed his field-works and abandoned Chippewa. The redoubt at Queenstown was likewise evacuated and Riall retired, unpursued, upon Fort George. The British had already been abandoned by the Indians and by many of the militia who were alarmed for the safety of their families. The militiamen were directed to collect their families and cattle and reassemble at Burlington, which most of them succeeded in doing.¹

Provisions had begun to fail and the garrisons were placed on half rations. Parties were sent out to scout the country and drive cattle into Fort George. The invading forces advanced to the summit of Queenstown Heights where they menaced the British position. Here they remained inactive for several days. On the night of July 12, a company of the British 8th Regiment were reconnoitring the American outposts in hope of securing a few prisoners. This body of thirty-four men was intercepted by General Joseph Swift of the New York Militia with 120 volunteers. A sharp skirmish ensued in which the British

¹Cruikshank, *Lundy's Lane*, p. 21.
lost six killed while the American leader was killed.¹

Next morning the movements of his opponents led Riall to believe that an attempt would be made upon the depot at Burlington. Having increased the garrisons of the three forts at the mouth of the Niagara, Riall resumed his retreat toward the head of the lake with only 836 officers and men.² Meanwhile, minute-guns could be heard from the heights above as the Americans paid tribute to their fallen general. Riall encamped at Twenty Mile Creek there to be reinforced by Colonel Hercules Scott and 600 men of the 103rd Regiment of Foot.

The prospect of a successful defense of the three forts, if they were resolutely attacked, was not promising. Fort George was garrisoned with 733 men. Beyond a simple stockade, the fort possessed no means of resisting a determined assault. Mississauga was manned by 404 men and could not survive a bombardment while the reduction of Forts George and Mississauga almost certainly sealed the fate of Fort Niagara with its garrison of 647.³

For more than a week, Brown lingered on the brow of Queenstown gazing anxiously out upon the blue waters of

¹Ibid.
²Riall to Drummond, 12 July 1814, Archives, C. 388, p. 146.
³Ibid.
the lake below in the vain hope that Chauncey would appear. Naval guns, in conjunction with Brown's army, would easily reduce the British forts. Moreover, the Battle of Chippewa had put the finishing touches on the army that Winfield Scott had hammered into an effective fighting machine. The Americans came out of the battle with a new sense of invincibility. However, Brown delayed his movement toward Burlington until the British forts on his flank were eliminated and without Chauncey's fleet, the American general was wary of assaulting Fort George. From the American headquarters at Chippewa General Brown wrote triumphantly to Armstrong:

I will advance, not doubting but the gallant and accomplished soldiers I have the honor to command will break all opposition to the shores of Ontario north of Fort George, where if Commodore Chauncey can meet us, it is well.¹

Brown was doomed to disappointment. The Secretary of War was not empowered to command the movements of the commodore. On July 13, Brown wrote a frenzied letter to Chauncey in these terms:

Meet me on the lake shore north of Fort George with your fleet and we will be able, I have no doubt, to settle a plan of operations that will break the power of the enemy in Upper Canada, and that in the course of a short time. At all events, let me hear from you. I have looked for your fleet with the greatest anxiety since the 10th. I do not doubt my ability to meet the enemy in the field and march to any direction - your fleet carrying the necessary supplies. We can threaten Fort George and Niagara, carry Bur-

¹Brown to Armstrong, 6 July 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, p. 139.
lington Heights and York, and proceed direct to King­ston and carry that place. For God's sake, let me see you. . . . There is not a doubt resting in my mind that we have between us the command of sufficient means to conquer Upper Canada within two months if there is prompt and zealous co-operation.¹

Chauncey, ill with fever, would do nothing until com­pletely ready to do so. On July 19, Secretary Armstrong wrote Brown:

If Chauncey gives you his aid in taking Fort George and Niagara and intercepting supplies and reinforce­ments to Burlington and York, you will by the first day of September present a line of posts from the mouth of Niagara to Glouster Bay covering and quiet­ing all westward of that line and menacing Kingston to the east.²

But, on July 22, the Secretary of War was forced to write:

The delay and silence of the Commodore are unaccount­able. My letter to you fixing the first day on which he would certainly leave Sacket's Harbor and by which your movements were to be governed, was written at the instance of the President, who was anxious to prevent any want of co-operation between the two arms from ignorance of each other's movements.³

Not even the combined authority of the President of the United States and the Secretary of War could bring about a co-operation between the fleet and the army. It was August 10 before General Brown received a reply to his letter of July 13. In that answer, Chauncey wrote:

¹Brown to Chauncey, 13 July 1814, ibid., p. 144.
²Armstrong to Brown, 19 July 1814, ibid., pp. 149-150.
³Armstrong to Brown, 22 July 1814, ibid., p. 156.
That you might find the fleet somewhat of a conven-
ience in the transportation of provisions and stores
for the use of the army and an agreeable appendage
to attend its marches and countermarches, I am ready
to believe, but, sir, the Secretary of the Navy has
honored me with a higher destiny - we are intended
to seek and fight the enemy's fleet. This is the
great purpose of the Government in creating this
fleet and I shall not be diverted in my efforts to
effectuate it by any sinister attempt to render us
subordinate to, or an appendage of, the Army.¹

In this letter, the commodore displayed himself as
a master of the sarcastic utterance, the explanation being
that he resented the action of the War Department in plac-
ing him second in authority to an army officer and bitterly
resented the suggestion that the function of the navy was
to be a mere appendage of the army. This attitude and
spirit of Commodore Chauncey is an illuminating commentary
upon the efficiency and authority of the government at
Washington. Small wonder that its war operations so fre-
quently ended in shameful disaster.

From time to time, Brown's columns wound down into
the plain and crept within cannon-shot of the batteries
of Fort George. During these weeks, the Americans did
not succeed in accomplishing an effective blockade of the
British works. Upon one occasion, two British field-guns
galloped out of Fort George and shelled the American rear-
guard. The same day, five American cavalry videttes were
surprised and carried away by Canadian militia lurking in

¹Chauncey to Brown, 10 August 1814, ibid., p. 162.
the woods along their line of march. The women and children in the farm houses and fields by the wayside conspired to mislead and baffle the detachments sent in pursuit.

Meanwhile, a levée en masse of the militia from Long Point to the Bay of Quinte had been proclaimed. In a few days, Riall was joined by upwards of a thousand men of different battalions, "many of them fine serviceable fellows," but badly armed and undisciplined. A goodly number of these marched in from the London district. Those who had temporarily deserted rapidly recovered from their panic and a considerable number of stragglers came into the British lines.

The course of the American militia and Indians was marked by pillage. "The whole population is against us," wrote Major Daniel McFarland of the 23rd United States Infantry. "Not a foraging party goes out but is fired on, and frequently returns with diminished numbers. This state was to have been anticipated. The militia and Indians have plundered and burnt everything." Much to the Americans' surprise, they found that the Canadian peoples were still "fervent beyond parallel in the cause of their king and country." Willcocks' Canadian volunteers eagerly

---

1 Riall to Drummond, 12 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 177.
2 Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 22.
3 Ibid.
seized the opportunity of wreaking summary vengeance upon their loyalist enemies. Old men and boys were sent as prisoners into the United States and women were often maltreated.

Before the invasion, General Brown had intimated that he expected to be in a position to invest Forts George and Mississauga by July 10. This engagement would have been joined had Chauncey's ships been in sight. Contrary to the advice of his engineer officers, Brown deemed it necessary to await siege-guns and wrote an urgent dispatch to hasten their arrival.

While Brown sat at Queenstown and Chauncey remained in the safety of Sacket's Harbor, the partisan warfare daily grew more intense. On July 15, an American wagon-train was attacked at Queenstown and the greater part of it destroyed. On the following night, an outpost at Fort Erie was overwhelmed. Next day, the Canadian militia surprised and took a cavalry picket at St. David's, Willcocks himself narrowly escaping with his life. A similar fate befell an American troop at Beaver Dams. On the 18th, while the main body of the American army was engaging in a reconnaissance-in-force toward Fort George, the British again dashed into St. David's and Queenstown securing many prisoners. These incidents so exasperated the invaders that upon July 19 they burnt the entire village of St. David's, alleging (probably with truth) that the inhabi-
tants had participated in the attack on their wagons and had killed an officer of dragoons. This was followed up by the destruction of every dwelling between Queenstown and Niagara Falls save for the home of Thomas Lundy, who, ironically like General Brown, was a Quaker from Bucks County Pennsylvania. These proceedings were attended by such revolting conduct on the part of the New York militia under Colonel Isaac Stone, that Major McFarland, who was sent to cover their retreat, declared that he would resign his commission if the commanding general had not been dismissed from the service. A subsequent court-martial was convened with Stone being removed from his command.

Having been joined by several companies of the Glengarry Light Infantry from York, Riall advanced to Ten Mile Creek. The British left wing, composed of militia and Indians, threatened the rear of the American position from DeCew's Falls. The entire male population immediately flew to arms actuated by a spirit of intense hostility toward the American invaders. Riall's scouts found their way into St. David's, Queestown, and even Chippewa, harassing the enemy's pickets and capturing stragglers. Meanwhile, British apprehensions were aroused by mysterious negotiations on the part of their Indian allies with their kinsmen in the American service. In addition, an American

\[1\] Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 23.
raid from Detroit upon the defenseless settlement of Port Talbot compelled Riall to detach the Oxford battalion of the militia and some Indians in the direction of southwestern Upper Canada.¹

On July 20, having left about 300 men in possession of Queenstown Heights, Brown advanced with the remainder of his army, within two miles of Fort George. Here he encamped collecting materials for siege batteries. Brown appears to have entertained the hope of inducing Riall to hazard another engagement against unequal numbers. Riall concentrated a force of 1,700 regulars, 700 Lincoln Militia, and 700 Indians at Twelve Mile Creek with the intention of pouncing on Brown's flank should the American general attempt an investment of the forts. Fort George was then garrisoned by 400 men of the Royal Scots and 260 of the 100th Regiment; Fort Mississauga by 290 of the 8th Regiment, a company of Negro volunteers, and a few artillerymen and artificers; while Fort Niagara was held by 550 men of the 41st Regiment and fifty artillerymen. Near one-fourth of these garrisons were upon the sick lists and others too young to be of much service.²

Deserters from the American army came into the British lines with increased regularity. From them, Riall

¹Riall to Drummond, 12 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 173.
²Riall to Drummond, 20 July 1814, ibid., p. 182.
was able to discover that Brown had been joined by considerable reinforcements since his success at Chippewa.\footnote{Riall to Drummond, 16 July 1814, ibid., p. 176.} He had also assembled a number of boats at Lewistown so as to better facilitate the provisioning of his forces without the necessity of preserving the long line of communications with Fort Erie.

Also on July 20, a company of the Glengarrys, commanded by Captain James FitzGibbon, reconnoitred toward Queenstown. From Queenstown Heights, FitzGibbon obtained an excellent view of the entire American army spread out in the plain below. As he watched, the Americans began to strike their tents and retreat toward Queenstown. Staying too long in his crow's nest, FitzGibbon's party was detected by American light infantry. A fire-fight resulted in the eviction of the British who were pursued almost to the British outposts, then centered at Ten Mile Creek. That night the American army slept at Queenstown while the British pushed their advance-guard to Four Mile Creek where communications were restored with the forts.\footnote{Riall to Drummond, 23 July 1814, ibid., p. 186.}

The sudden retirement would seem to be a result of Brown's fear lest his lines of retreat be threatened by the militia then rising in response to the \textit{levée en masse}.
Discouraged by the lack of co-operation from the navy and worried about his flank and rear, Brown ordered a retreat beyond the Chippewa River. Relinquishing all hope of Chauncey's intervention, Brown hoped to lull the British, by his retrograde movement, into a false sense of security. Then Brown envisioned a rapid march upon Burlington, thereby trapping the British in the bottleneck of the Niagara peninsula. He harbored no doubts that the American army was superior to anything the British could field against him but had based his hopes of reducing the forts entirely on the arrival of Chauncey's squadron with heavy artillery. Nevertheless, Brown's bold plan was not without its merits.

Unfortunately for the American scheme, across the lake at York, General Drummond arrived from Kingston with 400 men of the Second Battalion / 89th Regiment of Foot. These solid soldiers, under the command of Colonel Joseph Warton Morrison, had played an important role in the hard-won victory at Chrysler's Farm the autumn before. Two companies of the 104th Regiment had already been sent forward to strengthen Raill. The commanding officer of this body of troops was Lieutenant-Colonel William Drummond of Keltie, a nephew of the British commanding general. Further reinforcements were making their way westward leaving the vital fortress of Kingston almost without a garrison.

---

1 Drummond to Prevost, 23 July 1814, ibid., p. 188.
One of General Drummond's first acts was to order the discharge of all the very young and old militiamen with the object of relieving the troublesome logistical situation. Learning that the Americans had established Lewiston as their logistics base, he immediately embarked the 89th Regiment in two vessels, Star and Charwell, with instructions to proceed directly to the mouth of the Niagara. Upon their arrival, Lieutenant-Colonel John Tucker was instructed to draft two-thirds of the garrisons from the forts making, with the 89th and the flank companies of the 104th Regiment, a body of about 1,500 men. At daybreak on July 25 this force was to move against the American batteries begun near Youngstown. In conjunction with this, Riall was instructed to advance toward St. David's in the hope of riveting American attention upon the Canadian, and not the American, shore. Drummond informed Riall in a letter on July 12 that a bold and successful stroke at the American supply depot would seriously jeopardize the position of the invaders. However he explicitly stated that no major engagement was to be accepted until the remainder of the British reinforcements were brought up. Then, the British general confidently expected to

1Drummond to Prevost, 24 July 1814, ibid., p. 197.
2Ibid.
campaign at a single blow.¹

Riall had learned his lesson well at Chippewa and he too cautioned against any precipitous movement against the enemy's concentrated strength. Riall believed that the reinforcements, already on the march, consisting of three strong regular battalions, would "create such a force as to render the enemy's discomfiture and annihilation complete."² Little did the general realize that the fateful clash of arms was but a few short hours away.

¹Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, ibid., p. 211.
In the early evening of July 24, Drummond himself went on board the schooner H.M.S. Netley and set sail for Niagara to take command of the troops in the field. Due to his "zeal, intelligence, and local knowledge," the Duke of York selected Drummond for the Canadian command. The same officer saw Riall as "an active and intelligent young man."\(^1\) These officers were nobly supported by many gallant and resourceful young officers. Colonel Hercules Scott had been with Abercromby in Egypt and under Wellington in India. Harvey, Morrison, and Pearson had repeatedly distinguished themselves in the preceding campaigns against the Americans. As the historian Brigadier Ernest Cruikshank pointed out in 1891, "few in that fighting age could lead a charge better than Drummond of Keltie."\(^2\)

When General Drummond landed at Fort Niagara at daybreak, it was learned that the situation had been markedly altered. General Brown had retired to Chippewa and Riall had taken the opportunity to push beyond the line St. David's-Queenstown to a strategic rise near Niagara Falls. Commanding the pivotal nodal point at the junction of Lundy's Lane and Portage Road, Riall was in a position

---

\(^1\)Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 30. The Duke of York was Commander-in-chief of all British forces.

\(^2\)Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 35.
to resist any American advance while capable of readily being reinforced from the rear. At nightfall on July 24, the dispositions of the British forces were as follows:

a) The First Brigade, Colonel Scott in command, composed of a detachment of the 19th Light Dragoons, half a battalion of the 8th, and seven companies of the 103rd, with two 6-pound field-guns, lay at Twelve Mile Creek;

b) The Second Brigade, Tucker commanding, held the forts at the mouth of the Niagara. This force consisted of half a battalion of the Royal Scots, the 2nd Battalion of the 41st, and a wing of the 100th, as well as two 24-pounders and two 6-pound guns. Tucker's units had that very day been reinforced by Morrison and his detachments from the 89th Regiment of Foot;

c) The Third Brigade, under Lieutenant-Colonel Pearson, was designated the Light Brigade. It was made up of a troop of the 19th, the light companies of the 8th and 103rd, the Glengarry Light Infantry, and the Incorporated Militia. This force encamped at Four Mile Creek;

d) The Fourth Brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Perry's command, consisted of three battalions of militia and a body of Indians who formed the right wing of the British line extending along Twelve Mile Creek as far as DeCew Falls. Four battalion companies of the Royal Scots and four battalions of militia, with three 6-pounders and a howitzer, were held in reserve under Lieutenant-Colonel John Gordon.1

On paper, this looks to be a formidable force yet the battalions of the Royal Scots, 8th, and 100th were skeleton formations. The latter could only muster one captain, three subalterns, and 250 effectives while the others were scarcely any stronger. The militia units were small in numbers and miserably armed and equipped. There were, in

1 Ibid., pp. 25-26.
total, about 4,000 men scattered over thirty miles. Riall's position did allow for a speedy concentration, at a few hours' notice, in a strongly defensible position atop what is now Drummond Hill.¹

On the evening of the 23rd, Brown's army encamped upon their victorious field between Street's Creek and Chippewa with a battalion of riflemen and a regiment of militia still posted at Lewistown Heights. The advance picketlines of the Lewistown garrison extended as far as Youngstown with the principle supply base removed to Fort Schlosser.

At midnight, Colonel Pearson was ordered by Drummond to advance his Third Brigade, numbering about 800, along Portage Road. By 7 a.m. of July 25, Pearson was in possession of the high ground at Lundy's Lane.² All this was done without encountering any armed resistance. In the course of the march, this detachment was animated by the spectacle of two stout country-women bringing in an American soldier whom they had disarmed and made their prisoner.³

¹Hitsman, Incredible War, p. 198.
²Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 235.
³Cruikshank, ed., Contemporary Narratives, p. 77.
troop movements:
July 24-25, 1814

Adapted from map furnished by Regional Niagara Urban Planning Commission, Niagara Falls, Ontario.
Instructions were forwarded by Riall to Scott to move upon the same spot (from Twelve Mile Creek) at 3 a.m. but these orders were subsequently countermanded resulting in First Brigade remaining in quarters until the afternoon. Only Riall, accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Drummond and a small escort, joined Pearson in the morning of that fateful day. These movements forced General Drummond to alter his plan of operations. Morrison, with the 89th, a detachment of the Royals, and another of the 8th, two 24-pounders, and a party of rocketeers, was directed to march to Riall's aid at Lundy's Lane. On the opposite shore, Tucker's force of 500 advanced from Fort Niagara supported upon the river by a number of boats manned by seamen under the command of Captain Alexander Dobbs, R.N. Tucker's column arrived at Lewistown by noon and expelled the small garrison after a trifling skirmish, capturing a hundred tents and a quantity of other stores. Their action complete, the light company of the 41st and the detachment of the Royals were brought over to reinforce Morrison's column bringing that force to some 800 effectives.  

After a brief halt, Pearson's column resumed the march. At 6 p.m. a dragoon rode up in great haste to meet General Drummond who was in the rear of the column. The trooper informed Drummond that the Americans were moving

\[1\] Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, Archives, C-684, p. 235.
on Riall's position in great strength. Upon hearing this startling news, the British general raced forward and on reaching Lundy's Lane, to his intense displeasure, he found Riall in the process of quitting the hill.\(^1\) Only units of the Light Brigade were covering the retreat while the Americans were within a few hundred yards of the crest of the hill. The narrow road leading to Queenstown was choked by Morrison's column which by now was within the commanding general's view from atop the prominence that now bears his name. To continue a retreat under such circumstances would almost certainly hazard disaster. Anxious to make use of the best defensive position south of Queenstown, the fifty foot flat-topped hill at Lundy's Lane, and unwilling "to baulk the ardour of the troops," Drummond decided to stand and fight.\(^2\) He at once countermanded the movement, ordering Lieutenant Tompkins, with his guns, to hold the advancing Americans in check until the British could come up and consolidate.\(^3\)

In the course of the afternoon, General Brown learned that the British were advancing in considerable strength along the right bank of the river. Later, news came of

---

1\(^{Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 27.}\)
2\(^{Grey, Lundy's Lane, pp. 27-28.}\)
3\(^{Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 28.}\)
the coup at Lewistown. Brown concluded that his base at Schlosser would be the next post to be assailed. In preparation for his rapid advance upon Burlington, the American general had reserved only one tent to every ten men and only enough provisions for the march to the head of Lake Ontario.\(^1\) The rest of his baggage was maintained at Schlosser. The British move against Lewistown appeared to give Brown the decisive advantage. The American army had enjoyed two days rest after their short march from Queenstown and Fort George. With the British forces divided, Brown believed that the favorable moment for the executing of his offensive had arrived. The force at Lundy's Lane was reported to be nothing more than a body of militia sent forward as a corps of observation. At 4 p.m. Brown ordered his entire force under arms. Winfield Scott's First Brigade, accompanied by Towson's company of artillery with three guns and the entire body of cavalry and mounted riflemen, marched toward Queenstown with instructions that if opposed, it was to engage the enemy until the remainder of the American army could be committed.\(^2\)

The American generals were unaware of Drummond's arrival on the frontier with reinforcements. Emerging

\(^1\)Ibid.

from the woods nearly opposite the falls, Scott came into
view of an extended line of battle astride the hill.

Scott dispatched Major Roger Jones to gallop the
three miles to the American camp at Chippewa. Scott pro-
mised to hold his ground until reinforced. The American
advance had already been met by British skirmishers fight-
ing a delaying action behind which Drummond was hurriedly
reconstituting his lines.

The leading elements of Pearson's column already be-
gan to arrive upon the field. The American infantry, pur-
suing the British light infantry, were suddenly hit by
artillery fire. Scott had two options: He could break
off the action and await Brown or he could assault the
British before they could receive reinforcements and sol-
idify their positions.

Once engaged, Scott felt himself obliged to attack.
A retreat, exposed to artillery fire and a British pursuit,
might soon dissolve into a rout. The rapidly forming Bri-
tish lines directed a heavy fire upon Scott's formations.
To an officer of Scott's stamp, any retrograde movement
never really was an option. The brilliant young Virginian
might well have adopted Frederick the Great's motto:
"l'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace." Military his-
torian Mathew Steele wrote of Scott:

---

1Elliott, Winfield Scott, 1: 172.
The fault of attacking superior numbers and attacking vigorously as General Scott always did, is one seldom to be censured in a leader. Scott, like all courageous, dashing leaders, had the quality of inspiring his men with something of his own spirit.\(^1\)

Since Chippewa, the army regarded the First Brigade as invincible and Scott, considering the effect of his retreat upon the rest of the division, chose to hold the front and attack.\(^2\)

The Battle of Lundy's Lane was an accident of fate. Neither Brown nor Drummond had any illusions as to what was at stake. A victory would secure for the Americans the control of Upper Canada as far as Kingston. A victory by Drummond would mean that Upper Canada, for months, would be free from any dangerous attacks from the enemy. As far as the rival generals were concerned, the fight must be to the finish. With the subordinate officers and with the rank and file, the battle would be a test of the fighting qualities of the opposing armies. In this conflict, honor and fame were in the balance. In addition, the deepest passions of both armies were aroused. The Americans were burning with the desire to wipe out the shame and humiliation of the many defeats suffered during the past two years at the hands of inferior numbers. The British were fired by the desire to reverse the defeat

\(^1\)Mathew Steele, American Campaigns (Washington: Adams, 1909), p. 79

\(^2\)Scott, Memoirs, 1: 139.
sustained at Chippewa.

The exact strength of Brown's army upon the eve of battle is difficult to establish. He had received considerable reinforcements. As soon as it was known that he had passed the frontier, troops were put into motion from Detroit, Ohio, and Sacket's Harbor. A letter in the Baltimore Dispatch, dated July 12, told of Brown's being reinforced by one thousand men. These reinforcements of regulars included detachments of the 11th, 22nd, and 23rd Infantry Regiments which brought those units to full strength.¹ On July 16, deserters reported that 700 men crossed the river from Lewistown to reinforce the army, then lying at St. David's. Furthermore, the Niles' Register of Baltimore reported that "General Brown has received some handsome reinforcements from Buffalo, and there is no reason to believe he cannot maintain his ground for some time."²

The most authoritative evidence on the subject is to be found in a pamphlet published by General Ripley in 1815. It contained an official statement showing the effective strength of the two brigades of regulars to have been 136 officers and 2,620 non-commissioned officers and men. On the 24th, 100 men of the 22nd Infantry and 220 of the 1st,
who were not included in Ripley's memorandum, arrived from Fort Erie. Ripley subsequently produced a second report stating the effective strength of Porter's Brigade on July 30, five days after the battle, to have been sixty-one officers and 538 rank and file. The loss to this corps in the action of July 25, according to the official published return, was 112. However, this does not include loss from desertion and straggling which are endemic in a militia force, especially after a hard-fought fight. Thus, the total given by Ripley for the entire American army was 4,059 officers and men. The general staff, dragoons, mounted riflemen, and a detachment of engineers still must be accounted for but no official return has ever been published. Making these allowances and considering the probable understatement of militia loses, it is my opinion that Brown fielded an army of at least 4,500 of which 3,500 were regulars. Taking into consideration men detailed to camp duties and illness, Brown still must have been able to bring 4,000 men into action. American historian Henry Poulson, writing at the turn of the century, cites a letter written in Buffalo the day after the battle which quotes that exact figure. Brown possessed


2 Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 30.
nine artillery pieces, three of which were 18-pounders and one a 5 1/2 inch howitzer. In artillery, the Americans enjoyed a decided preponderance from the onset of the engagement yet the excellence of the British position counterbalanced Brown's advantage.¹

Leaving the Queenstown Road (Portage) at nearly a right angle, Lundy's Lane followed a course almost due west for about half a mile when it begins to trend northward. The road, an old Indian tract, was named after the Lundys, a loyalist family whose homestead was a mile and a half west of the battlefield. Almost a hundred yards west of the junction of the roads, on the south side of Lundy's Lane, stood a Presbyterian church. A low frame building with a distinct red coat of paint, it occupied the highest point of the rise. The hill slopes gently southward and westward but dips more abruptly to the east and north. On the right of the church lay a small enclosure in which a few weatherbeaten wooden slabs and rude headstones marked the graves of the fathers of the settlement. Southward, a thriving young orchard covered the slope below the graveyard extending quite to the edge of Portage Road and encircling a small farm and out-buildings. Meadows and cultivated fields lay beyond bounded by thick woods which extended to the river and along its banks.²

¹Mahon, The War of 1812, p. 274.
²Grey, Lundy's Lane, pp. 28-29.
Fearing an ambush, Winfield Scott carefully reconnoitred these woods with his cavalry patrols. While the Americans were thus occupied, the British light infantry regained the commanding position they had just abandoned. The lane was then bordered by many apple, cherry, and peach trees. In these orchards, the Glengarry Light Infantry took up their ground forming the right flank of the British position. Tompkins' two field-pieces, with a small Royal Marine Artillery Congreve Rocket detachment, was sighted at the summit of the knoll among the graves so as to sweep the approaches. The units of the Incorporated Militia were posted on the extreme left of the British line behind the fences and in the fields. An interval of more than two hundred yards was left unoccupied, which was thickly overgrown with scrub-pine and brushwood. The extremities of both wings were inclined slightly forward. The remainder of Morrison's column formed to the rear of the guns in the shelter of the ridge, as they came up. The troopers of the 19th Dragoons were posted on the high road some distance further away.¹

No better ground for receiving an attack could be found for many a mile. Small parties of the 1st and 2nd Lincoln Militia continued to arrive from their various outpost duties. These units reinforced the Glengarrys on

¹Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 236.
the British right flank. The entire number of all ranks in the field when this formation was complete was 1,637, of whom half were provincial troops. Soon after the battle commenced, the light company of the Royal Scots arrived from Twenty Mile Creek. A courier was sent off to countermand the march of the remainder of Colonel Scott's column which, it was learned, had taken the road from the Beechwoods to Queenstown.¹

A romantic myth has evolved that Drummond's force was composed of Wellington's veterans. With the exception of Scott and perhaps a small number of other officers exchanged from other regiments, not a man in the entire force had ever served under that illustrious commander. For that matter, very few had seen any active duty outside Canada.²

As the Americans emerged from the woods, the 9th, 11th, and 22nd regiments deployed in the fields on the left of Portage Road. The 25th, under Major Thomas S. Jesup, debouched to the right of the road. The American artillery was brought up and unlimbered upon the road. Scott's First Brigade numbered 1,506 with artillery units, two troops of Dragoons and the New York commands of Brough-

¹Drummond to Prevost, 25 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 239.

ton and Stone adding another 300 men.¹

Falling back under pressure, the British skirmishers frequently formed as if to offer resistance. The Americans deployed and made the necessary preparations to sweep away the British. No sooner did the Americans threaten; than the British melted away. Much valuable time was gained by these maneuvers, which continued until the American advance guard was within musket range of the British firing line.

The sun was about an hour and a half high (between 6 and 7 p.m.) when Scott began the engagement by a general attack of light troops along the entire front of the British position. On the right, the Glengarrys easily maintained their ground. In the confusion, a section of the Royal Scots was brought forward. Startled by the sudden apparition among the trees of men in green uniforms, not unlike those they encountered earlier (American riflemen) at Lewistown, the Royals fired a volley into the Glengarrys. This resulted in several casualties and increased confusion on the British flank.

Having observed the British forces opposed to him, Scott satisfied himself that he was facing only a portion of Drummond's army. He quickly decided to launch a frontal assault while simultaneously turning each of the flanks.

¹Babcock, Niagara Frontier, pp. 143-148.
Scott formed the 11th and 22nd United States Infantry regiments for the direct assault while detailing the 9th and 25th to turn the flanks. The center attack was not pushed with vigor being flung back by artillery fire alone. Captain Towson's two 18-pounders were unable to silence the British battery. The withering fire of the well-served British guns cut down the Americans before they reached the foot of the hill.

The Americans soon gained a decided edge on the left flank. Observing the belt of unoccupied ground next to the river, Scott ordered Jesup to take the 25th Infantry on a wide circuit through the undergrowth. His object was to turn Drummond's flank and gain control of the Queenstown Road from the rear. Favored by the approach of night and concealed by the thick woods, Jesup's men made their way unperceived into the interval. The Incorporated Militia, in the midst of shifting toward the left, was caught entirely by surprise. Jesup's charge swept away the militia battalion taking prisoner four officers and one hundred men. Following up his success, Jesup advanced as far as the road. Finding it occupied by the 19th Dragoons, Jesup immediately dealt with the troopers as he had done with the militia. The routed cavalry rallied some miles north of the field.

This was not the full measure of the American success. The 8th Regiment, its flank exposed by the rout of the
The Battle of Lundy's Lane
July 25, 1814.

First Phase: the repulse of Scott's Brigade. 8 p.m.

Map adapted from original battlefield sketch enclosed in dispatch of 5 August 1814: Prevost to Lord Bathurst as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, pp. i-ii.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
militia, had to follow suit. Major Jesup's light company, under aptly named Captain Daniel Ketchum, scored two further successes. Captain Loring, aide-de-camp to General Drummond, was captured while attempting to locate the cavalry. General Riall, that thirty-eight year old, hot tempered Irishman, having been, as usual, in the thick of the fighting, fell wounded (which subsequently required his arm to be amputated.) The unlucky general was being carried to the rear in the gathering darkness. His stretcher-bearers' witless cry of "Make room there, men, for General Riall!" took the party directly into Ketchum's troops. 1

These valuable prisoners were speedily hurried from the field and when their identity became known to the remainder of the brigade it became a signal for a loud and prolonged cheer. Cheering became general along the entire American line, having been taken up by Ripley and Porter's advancing columns. 2

The American cheer for Riall's capture was countered by a British shout when a lucky shot with an unpredictable Congreve rocket struck one of Towson's caissons which instantly exploded with a great bang. The successful British battery redoubled its fire overpowering but not si-

1 Ketchum's report appeared in the Niles' Register, as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 33.

2 Major Jesup's memorandum as cited by Cruikshank, Contemporary narratives, pp. 235-242.
lencing the American guns. The remnant of the Incorpora­
ted Militia reformed in the rear of the 89th. This fine, mainly Irish, unit had defeated four times its number at Crysler's Farm the November before.¹ Fronting Portage Road and covering the flank and rear of the troops atop the hill, the 89th's musketry soon compelled Jesup to re­linquish the position he had just gained. In the action, Colonel Robinson fell seriously wounded, his command de­volving on Major James Kerby.

Scott immediately discerned that the key to American success lay in the capture of the British guns. Regroup­ing the 9th, 11th, and 22nd regiments after their initial half-hearted assault, Scott once again committed his regu­lars to a direct attack. Once again, Towson's guns were unable to lend support. This general advance was carried with greater conviction by the Americans, who threatened to overrun the British guns. Drummond immediately seized upon the situation and counterattacked with elements of the 89th, 8th and Royal Scots. This action culminated in a fierce, no-holds-barred struggle in which both sides suffered grievous loses.

Scott's battalions were clearly losing this renewed musketry exchange with the British regulars. The assai-

lants finally retired leaving the slope strewed with their dead and wounded. During the repulse, Scott's brigade suffered 600 casualties among the 1,300 committed to the attack. Major Henry Leavenworth, commander of the 9th United States Infantry, asked of Scott, "Sir, your rule for a retreat now holds good?" The rule being that when a third of a battalion were decapacitated, the officer in command was entitled to order a retirement. Scott waived his rule and urged the wreckage of the 9th to hold firm.¹

Colonel Hugh Brady's 22nd Infantry, which displayed great consistency under fire at Chippewa, broke into a rout and ran across the front of the 11th. That regiment, in the midst of a wheeling maneuver, had several of its platoons carried away by the tide. The American officers failed to halt the fugitives and only a part of them could be induced to return to the action with the majority left "skulking from the fire" in the woods.²

After an hour and a half of combat, Drummond considered using what little light remained by launching a counter-attack. The Glengarry Light Infantry and the Lincoln Militia on Drummond's right flank saw action only in the repulse of the 9th Infantry at 6:30 p.m. The arrival of the re-


²Major McNiel's letter as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 33.
remainder of the American army quickly dissuaded him.

In the course of Scott's assault, the Americans were reinforced by a 100-man vanguard of Ripley's Brigade. Soon Brown, in command of the reserve, appeared and assumed the direction of the battle. Biddle and Ritchie's companies of artillery, with six guns, advanced to Towson's assistance. The awful stillness that engulfed the battlefield after Scott's second repulse, broken only by the ceaseless roar of the falls, gave way to a renewed artillery duel. Notwithstanding the disparity in numbers, the British guns still maintained a decided advantage. Captains Thomas Biddle and John Ritchie were both wounded, the latter mortally. Towson reported the loss of twenty-seven of thirty-six serving his three guns.¹

Brown's chief of staff, Colonel William McRae, came to the same conclusion Scott arrived at an hour before: ultimate success or failure depended upon the Americans taking the hill and silencing the guns. By this time (8:28), the entire American force had arrived on the field.² Scott's command was exhausted and much diminished in numbers. The task of succeeding where Scott failed fell to Ripley and his Second Brigade. The 1st, 21st, and 23rd regiments were formed for the main assault with

¹Ibid. Ritchie died beside the piece he vowed never to leave.

²Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 29.
elements of the 2nd Rifles, 17th and 19th Infantry in supporting roles. Porter's Brigade, composed of Dobbin's and Swift's New York Volunteers, Fenton's Pennsylvania battalion, and Willcock's Canadian Volunteers, attacked the British right while Jesup still secured the opposite flank. Brown had 1,400 deployed for the direct assault: four battalions formed into lines with another behind in close column of companies. With a force far more powerful than Scott's, Brown, if intelligent and resolute, possessed sufficient strength to crush his inferior foe before relief could arrive.

For a few moments, firing almost ceased. In this respite, the American artillerymen brought forward ample supplies of ammunition and perfected their arrangements for the advance. Owing to the growing darkness, artillery fire had ceased to be effective. While the moon had risen, its light was rendered faint by drifting clouds of smoke. Only these irregular flashes of gun fire indicated the line of battle.¹

The battle had now continued for nearly three hours. The British units were reduced to less than 1,200 officers and men. The situation, in British estimations, appeared critical. Ammunition, always a precious commodity for the British, was nearly exhausted. The remaining stocks of

¹Merritt, Recollections, p. 79.
ammunition were taken from the militia troops and quickly distributed among the regulars. There no longer could be any doubt in the minds of these tough British and Canadian troops that they soon would be confronted in a no-quarter fight with the whole of the American army. Defiantly, they determined to fight and die at their positions.

Like something out of an old motion picture, just when all looked hopeless, the reserves arrived amidst cheers and squealing bagpipes. After their original marching orders were cancelled, the British forces at Twelve Mile Creek remained in their camp until afternoon. Then orders were received from Riall instructing a portion of the force to join him at Lundy's Lane via DeCew's Falls. This required a fourteen mile march under a scorching summer's sun. Colonel Scott immediately broke up camp and taking with him seven companies of his own regiment (103rd), seven companies of the Royal Scots, five of the 8th, the flank companies of the 104th, and a few selected men of the militia, began the trek. Due to the depleted numbers, Scott's entire column did not muster more than 1,200. This force was accompanied by three

1 Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 29.
2 Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 35.
6-pounders and a 5 1/2 inch howitzer. ¹

Colonel Scott's advance-guard was within three miles of the battlefield fifteen minutes before the battle when it met with a second dispatch from Riall ordering the column to fall back to Queenstown. Scott's aboutface took him four miles further from Lundy's Lane before yet another rider brought orders to retrace his steps and march to the sound of the guns. Thus, after a twenty-one mile march, Scott's Brigade arrived on the field at 9 p.m. These weary and foot-sore infantrymen took up a position in support of the Glengarrys and Lincoln Militia just in time to meet Major General Porter's newly arrived-riflemen.

The action began with a brisk attack on the British left by Jesup from the woods along Portage Road. The American artillery opened fire with renewed vigor to aid the advance of the infantry. The American attempt to turn the British right was foiled when Drummond directed his headquarter wing of the Royals and the flank companies of the 104th (New Brunswick) Regiment to prolong his flank. The remainder of Scott's brigade formed into a second line in the rear of Lundy's Lane. ²

¹Captain MacKonchie's letter of August 9 as cited by Mahon, The War of 1812, p. 274.
²Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 240.
These dispositions were not completed when a large body of enemy troops was observed advancing upon the British battery. The troops destined to carry out the assault were composed of the 1st United States Infantry (Colonel R. Nicholas) and elements of the 17th, 19th, and 2nd Rifles as well as the whole of Colonel James Miller's 21st Infantry. This formation formed out of view of the British in a hallow. With their initial movements concealed by the darkness, the Americans advanced silently in line, two deep, followed by the 23rd (Major D. McFarland) in support. General Brown turned to Colonel Miller, "Sir, can you take the battery?"

"I'll try, sir."¹

At the outset, this assault appeared that it would go the route of all previous frontal attacks. The force of 1,400 bayonets, under the command of Ripley, marched into the mouths of the British guns. The 1st Regiment, forming the center of the American line, bore the brunt of the fire. The regiment, fresh from uneventful garrison duties in the distant frontier posts along the Mississippi, disintegrated almost immediately, suffering only thirty-three casualties out of the 250 committed. Its place in the line was assumed by McFarland's excellent infantry.

¹Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 32. "I'll try, sir" is the motto of today's 5th United States Infantry Division whose crest bears the British cannon taken by the men of the 21st Regiment.
Despite their admirable advance, the 23rd began to waver as its commander fell dead. On the verge of collapse, the regiment was rallied by Ripley who personally led the 23rd forward.¹

Miller’s approach on the opposite flank was screened from the view of the gunners by the church and the orchard. The Americans could clearly see the British battery illuminated by the slow matches of the enemy gunners. Following a shallow ravine fringed by thickets of shrubbery and trees, the men of the 21st (330 strong) formed up in two lines behind a vine-covered log fence—only 20 yards from the British battery.²

The attention of the gunners was riveted upon the enemy batteries below. Resting their muskets on the fence, the Americans fired a single volley then rushed forward with fixed bayonets. Though totally surprised, the men of the Royal Artillery (4th Battalion) resisted ferociously with rammers and handspikes. Many artillerymen, the American volley unheard amidst the din of the artillery duel, were bayoneted while still trying to reload their field-pieces.

The Americans sustained heavy loss. Among the dead was Captain Abraham Hull, the son of the general who had

¹Cruikshank, Lundy’s Lane, p. 36.
²Ibid.
so ignominiously surrendered Detroit. This youth so acutely felt his father’s disgrace that he had already fought a duel in a vain attempt to silence censure. On going into action at Lundy’s Lane he told a fellow officer that he sought death as the only relief from the sense of dishonor that agonized him.¹ Lieutenant Joseph Cilley, who led the charge, cut down an artilleryman with his saber and the next moment fell desperately wounded by his side. A single gun sought to shift its aim but the gunners were cut down attempting to reload.

The British battery, which had been so deadly effective against the Americans, was now lost. Both of the 24-pounders and one of MacKonochie’s 6-pounders were taken. Lieutenant Tompkins and a few of his men were taken prisoner and confined in the church. Inadequately guarded, all forty men succeeded in escaping during the confused fighting that followed. One of the captured British officers called the charge “the most desperate thing we ever saw or heard.”²

The success of the 21st prompted the other American battalions to redouble their efforts. Ripley came forward with the 23rd and reformed 1st. Ripley’s entire brigade now was concentrated on a very narrow front between the

---

¹Tomes, Battles of America, 3: 166.
²Grey, Lundy’s Lane, p. 29.
church and Portage Road. Winfield Scott busily rallied his depleted troops and moved to Ripley's support. The positions of the adversaries were reversed - the American line, reformed, now crossed the original British position at right angles, their backs to Portage Road. The British left, overwhelmed by the general advance, was thrown from the hill. On the British right, Porter's volunteers were involved with the flank companies of the 104th and the Royals in a noisy fire-fight.

Miller's coup was delivered with such rapidity and drive that the adjacent British infantry had no time to advance in support of the guns. Drummond sought to organize an immediate counter-attack but found his infantry in considerable confusion. Mustering what troops he could, the British general led the redcoats into the teeth of the Americans atop the hill. Scott wrote, "British orders of 'Halt, dress, forward' were audible in the awful stillness of the night. At length, a dark line could be seen approaching at a distance of sixty paces." Miller's coup was delivered with such rapidity and drive that the adjacent British infantry had no time to advance in support of the guns. Drummond sought to organize an immediate counter-attack but found his infantry in considerable confusion. Mustering what troops he could, the British general led the redcoats into the teeth of the Americans atop the hill. Scott wrote, "British orders of 'Halt, dress, forward' were audible in the awful stillness of the night. At length, a dark line could be seen approaching at a distance of sixty paces." A confused hand-to-hand struggle ensued in which the British were repulsed with severe loses. At short range, the American musketry was particularly effective owing to their practice of adding three large buck-shots to the ordinary musket ball. The Royals detachment engaged was decimated,

1 Scott, Memoirs, 1: 143.
losing its commander. The Royals, hurriedly retreating
down the hill, rallied around the colors of the 89th.
Colonel Scott's 103rd Regiment was ordered forward. Un-
familiar with the new American positions, they blundered
into the center of the American line receiving a murderous
volley for their folly. The British regulars, like the
1st United States, were thrown into disorder.1

While the battle raged, the American artillery lim-
bered up their pieces and advanced toward the summit.
While bravely galloping forward, the American artillery
met with unforeseen disaster. One howitzer team zealously
rode within easy musket range of the British infantry
whose volley tore into the Americans killing or wounding
the team. The riderless horses plunged into the British
lines. This action had a double edged result: while se-
curing the howitzer, the British infantry were thrown into
disarray. The other American guns enjoyed little success,
several caissons exploded, ignited by Congreve rockets.
Some of the surviving pieces fell silent for want of ammu-
nition. Most of the horses were killed forcing the Ameri-
cans to man-handle their pieces when maneuver was called
for. Despite the adversity, the American artillery dis-
played determined bravery and tenacity.

Cruikshank, *Lundy's Lane*, pp. 36-37.
Not to be outdone, the British artillery inched forward until less than fifty yards separated their muzzles from the opposing guns. Half an hour later the redcoats came on again with the same measured steadiness. Within musket range, the British line halted and fired a fierce volley. Musketry, traded at twenty yards or less, illuminated the night. Even the rival regimental badges were distinguishable. Occasionally the clouds broke allowing the moon to glimmer through but there was no wind to shift the powder smoke or relieve the exhausted and thirsty combatants in the sultry midsummer's night. In the words of General Scott, "the scene has never been surpassed."¹

The battle degenerated into a confused, ferocious, and sanguinary slugging match waged at bayonet point. Fire discipline vanished giving way to clubbed muskets, bayonets, and swords. The British resolutely strove to regain the summit they had lost only to be pushed down the slope again. Refusing to be driven from the field, these tough British veterans regrouped in the hollow at the foot of the slope and came on again. Regiments, companies, and sections were broken up and intermingled yet the few remaining officers preserved some semblance of cohesion. Those few troops lucky enough to have ammunition continued loading as coolly "as if it had been a sham

¹Scott, Memoirs, 1: 144.
battle."¹ Either side could clearly hear the officers shouting their orders. General Drummond, in the middle of the conflagration, encouraged his troops to "stick to them, my fine fellows!"² An American officer responded by urging his men to "level low and fire at their flashes."³

It is impossible to give an accurate account of these melees. For over an hour, at distances never more than seventy feet, these two splendid formations engaged in a terrible fight for death or glory. From time to time, sudden rushes surged forward. The enemy lines swayed but did not break. The disputed summit was now strewn with the bodies of the dead and dying. Prisoners were taken simply because men, disoriented by the shifting tides of battle, stumbled into the enemy's hands. In the darkness, it was every man for himself with the Devil taking the hindmost.

By examining personal reminiscences, historians assert that the British made three unsuccessful attempts to wrestle the rise away from the Americans. One such attempt was conducted by the 103rd, the British boy-regiment, so called because of the youth of its members. This, their baptism of fire, was a severe test indeed - it was a test they

²Shadrack Byfield, A narrative of a light company soldier's service in the 41st Regiment of Foot during the late American War (Bradford, England: Bubb, 1840), p. 143.
²Ibid., p. 146.
³Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
proved inadequate to meet. Melting away before the American volleys, the 103rd could only be rallied by the extraordinary exertions of Major William Smelt. In another desperate assault, the British succeeded in forcing their way into the battery. Fearing the capture of the guns, Major Jacob Hindman spiked two cannon.¹

In the short interval between these assaults, Brown and Scott consulted in consequence of which, Scott's Brigade, already mustered in a narrow lane south of the hill, moved into columns of attack in echelon. After the repulse of the second British attack, Scott moved forward hoping to exploit the British disorder. Marching in perfect order with considerable elan, the Americans were led over the hill and down the other side by General Scott. Drummond, his horse shot from beneath him, hid the battleworthy remnants of the 89th Regiment of Foot in a field of grain. The kneeling infantrymen, exercising superb fire-control, withheld their volley until the American battalions were within twenty paces. Upon Drummond's order, the 89th opened up a merciless volley that tore the Americans to bits. An eyewitness stated that "the effect of that single volley on the enemy's ranks was awful in the extreme."²

¹E.L. Allen's letter which appeared in the Pittsfield Sun (Mass.), as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 30.
²Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 30.
With a hooray, the British carried home the success with the bayonet throwing Scott's command into utter confusion. The 11th and 22nd, out of ammunition, turned tail and ran. Lieutenant F.A. Sawyer of the 11th had one man in his platoon. Major Leavenworth rallied and reformed what was left of the 9th Regiment: fewer than 200 men.¹

Having rallied to the left of their original position, the men of the American First Brigade advanced yet again under the indefatigable Scott. His intent was to smash the British right. Scott's example could not fail to inspire. Having already had two mounts shot from beneath him and his buttock badly bruised by a ricochet shell fragment, the six foot five inch Virginian refused to admit defeat. However, fate was not kind to Winfield Scott this day as he saw his skeleton regiments again repulsed with heavy loss, himself falling from a fractured shoulder, a result of a one ounce British ball. Carried to the rear, Scott would not leave the battlefield. The courageous American general was laid out beneath a tree, feet first, facing the enemy.²

Illustrative of their devotion to duty and bravery, Scott's regimental commanders, Colonels Brady, Jesup, and McNiel and the Brigade-Major, Gerald Smith, had also been

¹Ibid.

²Scott, Memoirs, 1: 145-147.
disabled. The 11th and 22nd Infantry regiments could not be rallied while only Leavenworth's exertions, all the while himself wounded, kept the 9th together as a fighting unit. The entire First Brigade lost more than half its officers while its manpower had shrunk to battalion size. In the absence of officers, the bewildered American survivors aimlessly stumbled about the battlefield. On one occasion, a body of men actually threw down their arms and attempted to surrender en masse but finding the British reluctant to cease firing, they took up their weapons again in despair. This regrettable incident aside, the lists of killed and wounded bore testimony to the gallantry and steadfastness of Scott's men.

About this stage of the battle General Brown himself received a severe grazing in the thigh from a stick of a Congreve. An aide encouraged his general: "Never mind, dear general, you are winning the greatest battle ever gained for your country." With both Brown and Scott incapacitated, the command of the American army fell to Ripley. The Second Brigade had suffered less than Scott's yet its regiments were badly shaken by the long hours of cruel combat. Porter's Brigade, while wholly unsuccessful

---

1Lossing, Pictorial Fieldbook, p. 648.
2Cruikshank, Contemporary narratives, p. 157.
3Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 30.
upon the left, was also in a distressed state.

At this crucial juncture, Brown issued a peculiar order which went far toward depriving his army of the fruit of victory won by desperate fighting. The wounded general ordered his successor, Ripley, to quit the field and return to Chippewa. There he was to reform his scattered division and renew the battle in daylight. Scott, whose wounds were considered fatal, could give no counsel. Undoubtedly, the indomitable Scott would have considered no retreat but Brown was disheartened by the numerous American stragglers he encountered. He wrote:

While retiring from the field, I saw and felt that the victory was complete on our part; if proper measures were promptly adopted to secure it.\(^1\) An American retirement now needlessly surrendered the position so dearly bought with blood.

Ripley was able to haul away all but one of his own artillery pieces, leaving the British pieces to be retaken by Drummond. More important than regaining their lost cannons, the British recovered the all-important initiative. Experience would have taught Brown the imprudence of abandoning a hard-won position in order to reorganize regiments, although severely shaken, still flushed with success.

The British suffered as severely as their opposites, yet General Drummond determined to seize the summit none-theless. Unaware of Ripley's intentions, the British commander busily reformed his shattered legion for a final, supreme effort.

Drummond was Scott's equal for reckless bravery and determination. Earlier in the fight, he received a wound in the throat which was very nearly fatal. Bleeding profusely, Drummond declined to dismount to have it dressed.² Twenty minutes later, he had his horse shot out from under him. Many officers, Colonels Pearson and Robinson among them, were down. His regiments already listed casualties in excess of thirty percent. Not to be discouraged, Drummond rallied his regulars and deployed into line for another assault.

At midnight, the thinned red lines reformed and closed. The officers threatened, cajoled, and urged the wearied infantrymen up the slope. The honor of spearheading the assault fell to Captain John Glew and his light company of the 41st. Private Byfield of the 41st described the action:

> Our bugle then sounded for the company to drop. A volley was then fired upon us killing two corporals and wounded a sargeant and several of the men. The company then arose, fired, and charged.

1Cruikshank, *Lundy's Lane*, p. 39.

2Byfield, *Narrative*, p. 156.
The Battle of Lundy's Lane  
July 25, 1814.

Ripley carries the British battery.

Situation at mid-night: British in command of the hill.

Maps are my own.
Faced with surprisingly little resistance, the British surged forward. The Americans, in the midst of organizing the retreat, were easily smashed. One American cannon resisted the British until all but two of the gunners were down, this 6-pounder falling to the advancing British. The two 24-pounders were recovered but the lost 6-pounder had already been removed. Several artillerymen were captured but their officers made good their escapes on horseback. Many caissons and horses were similarly secured. The light companies of the various British units pursued the enemy with sporadic firing continuing in many quarters of the field. Since the British were too exhausted to pursue in strength, Ripley was allowed to make good his retreat with the few units he still possessed. Thus, the greatest battle ever fought on Canadian soil ended with the redcoats once more in command of the rise.

Almost all American commentators, armed with General Brown's official report, convey the impression that the Americans were not compelled to quit the hill they had won. Brown did not even admit the loss of any guns. One must keep in mind that Brown was a political animal, not unlike those political generals that plagued the war efforts of the conflicting armies in the American Civil War. Not until August 7, when it was in Brown's interest to do

---

1Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 30.
some favorable arithmetic, did his official returns reach Washington. Brown's figures were at odds with those of several of his subordinates, including one of his major-generals, to say nothing of Drummond's meticulous report. Major Hindman, Brown's commandant of artillery, testified that "General Brown said to him: - 'Collect your artillery as well as you can and retire immediately. We will march to camp together.'" Hindman continued saying that most of his men and officers were killed or wounded and that he himself was wounded and thought it best to retreat. "I found the enemy in possession of the guns and wagons. Some of the men and horses were captured. I then left the field. Lieutenant Fontaine informed me that the enemy charged his party at the guns and made them all prisoners but that he dashed through their ranks and escaped." ¹

Equally conclusive evidence, the demoralized state of the American Army, substantiate British claims of victory. Brown gave a figure of 854 casualties (171 killed, 573 wounded and 110 prisoners and missing), which is indeed suspect in view of the fact that the Americans did most of the charging. ² The British admitted the loss of 878: 84 killed, 559 wounded, 193 missing with 42 seen

¹ Major Hindman's evidence appeared in Ripley's Facts as cited by Babcock, Niagara Frontier, p. 167.

² Brown to Armstrong, no date, as cited by Wood, Selected Documents, 3: 163.
taken prisoner (the Americans claimed 169). Brown's report failed to include two units which had detachments engaged. The remnant of Scott's Brigade, collected by Leavenworth, mustered only 500 men upon its return to Chippewa. British fatigue parties collected 210 American corpses and several newly-made graves were found at Chippewa which would put American dead markedly in excess of Brown's claims. Drummond stated in his official letter that several hundred prisoners had fallen into his hands yet the American commander admitted only 110. This figure would seem extremely low if one considers the state of confusion that the American regulars were thrown into. This is to say nothing of Porter's Brigade of militia which can certainly be suspected of wholesale dispersion and desertion following their reverses. The British militia, who maintained themselves resolutely upon the British flanks often without ammunition, claimed double that number of losses. All things considered, one would be hard pressed to accept Brown's report.

Lieutenant J.B. Varnum, son of Senator Joseph Varnum of Massachusetts, wrote on July 27 from Buffalo stating his brigade (Scott's First Brigade) was almost annihilated.

---

1 Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 247.
2 Ibid.
yet the official report only admitted the loss of five hundred or about a third of its effective strength. Col- onel Miller, commander of the tough Massachusetts-recruited 21st stated his losses as 126, not 104. Major Foster testified that only fifteen or twenty of the 11th United States Infantry (First Brigade) escaped uninjured - his statement confirmed by a letter written in the Northern Sentinel, dated August 19, 1814, by an officer of the 11th in which he reports the loss in his company of 74% with only one man present at roll call from his own platoon. A similar fate befell the 23rd Regiment (Ripley's Brigade) where Major Hindman related that Tappan's Company, numbering forty-five rank and file on the morning of July 25th, mustered only 9 the next day. The American artillery suffered enormous casualties. Towson's artillery was severely handled while in Ritchie's Battery, one gun lost all its men while another lost all but two. Despite this, Brown claimed his total artillery casualties as forty-six.

Brown never did furnish complete figures of militia losses. He failed to include the 2nd Rifles and the 17/19th Infantry in his reports yet British returns show three officers wounded and captured from these corps. Fourteen

---

1 Varnum's letter cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 42.

2 Miller's letter to his wife, 28 July 1814, ibid.

3 Ibid.
officers of Porter's Brigade, led by Major James Herkimer (Stone's Mounted Riflemen), published an open letter in several newspapers accusing General Brown of falsifying the records and of understating the contributions of the volunteers. In view of this evidence, little credence can be placed upon Brown's official report.

The British estimated American losses at 1,500. This would appear overly optimistic. Historian J. L. Hildreth stated that the American army was reduced to sixteen hundred men. This would require the loss of some two thousand battlefield casualties and desertions. Yet another source, quoted by Cruikshank, stated the loss in killed and wounded at twelve hundred. The British historian, Randal Grey, writing in 1975, applied some analytical mathematics to determine the American casualties at Lundy's Lane. Placing the British casualties at 900, Grey computed American losses as 1,100. His formula was simple yet an accurate one - he compared the casualties among junior officers and N.C.O.'s. The ratio being 97 American casualties: 85 British.

1 The company entered the action 162 strong and when mustered out, numbered only 48 men. The others had either been killed in battle, died of wounds, or been taken prisoner. J. Doty, History of Livingston County, New York, as cited by Mahan, The War of 1812, p. 279.


3 Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 42.

4 Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 32.
As already quoted, British casualties amounted to 878. The 2,200-man infantry contingent bore the brunt, sustaining 614 casualties with the Royal Scots and the 89th Regiment of Foot being the hardest hit. The 89th lost 63 percent of its strength (254) including seventeen officers, 14 sergeants, and six drummers. The Royal Scots suffered 172 casualties, over a quarter of the number that famed unit, later to serve on the victorious field at Waterloo, lost during the entire war.\(^1\)

The 800 man militia force contributed to the British successes in no small measure. The Incorporated Militia suffered most, losing 142 officers and men of whom 92 were listed as missing, a result of their rout at the hands of Jesup. The Glengarry Light Infantry, instrumental in the repulse of both the 9th U.S. Infantry and Porter's militia, listed its losses at 57. The other volunteer units' casualties are as follows:

- 104th Regiment (flank companies) ............. 6
- Lincoln Militia ........................................ 13
- 2nd. York Militia ................................. 9
- Provincial Dragoons .......................... 3

In his official letter, Drummond lauded his militia formations:

> The zeal, loyalty, and bravery with which the militia of this part of the Province have come forward to cooperate with His Majesty's troops in the expulsion

\(^1\)Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 248.

\(^2\)Ibid.
of the enemy, and their conspicuous gallantry in this and the action of the 4th, claim my warmest thanks.¹

The total casualties represented about 27 percent of Drummond's 3,300 combatants. Many of the wounded, being injured by buckshot, were soon capable of returning to duty. However fully a third of those wounded were rendered hors de combat. The 110 officers and N.C.O.'s on the casualty lists paid the price for the excellent fire discipline and cohesion they maintained during a confusing and hotly contested night battle.

The armies had fought one another to a stand-off. The British fell asleep amidst the dead and wounded upon their victorious field. Only a few hours of sleep was possible upon the chilly ground before sunrise. The plight of the thirst-crazed wounded, ironic with the famous waterfalls so near at hand, was terrible. The Americans suffered far worse than did the British for want of that precious commodity. Hercules Scott's brigade, while on the march from DeCew's Falls, had been provided with water and milk at the Lundy homestead. The Lundy house, which had previously served as officers' quarters for both armies at various times, was converted into a makeshift hospital and canteen. Nineteen-year old Catherine Shannon-Lundy, mistress of the Lundy homestead, labored throughout

¹Ibid.
the night and subsequent days to provide assistance to Drummond's troops.\footnote{Some time after the battle, General Drummond presented Mrs. Lundy with his dagger. This weapon is still in the possession of the family.} The lack of water on the American side prompted historian Rossiter Johnson to write that "the principal reason why the Americans abandoned the field was the want of water."\footnote{Janet Cureton, "Catherine Lundy at the Battle of Lundy's Lane," \textit{McLean's}, October 1960, p. 57.} There were more compelling reasons why the Americans quit the field yet it is undeniably true that the steaming heat of that July day, in combination with the lack of water, had a telling effect on both sides.

What a terrible sight must have greeted the men upon awaking from their slumber amidst the corpses. The dead were found piled in windrows, three deep, in and about the position of the batteries. The summit was strewn with the mangled remains of sixty to seventy horses. The gruesome labor of clearing up the battlefield began. The remains of 200 American soldiers were burnt in a giant funeral pyre above which now stands a column in tribute of the battle.

The plight of the seriously wounded British was lamentable in the extreme. Fort Niagara became the main terminal for these casualties. The wounded were carted by wagons to Queenstown, then transported by water to the
river's mouth and the waiting fort. These men were scarcely better off once they completed their journey. There was a single doctor present, the twenty-two year old surgeon of the 89th Regiment, Dr. William Dunlop. His hospital was nothing more than a tumbled down, fly-infested wooden barracks in which he was to treat 220 men. He worked non-stop for some ninety-six hours with the aid of one lone orderly before taking five hours' sleep. These incredibly tough veterans fought death with the same determination they resisted the Americans. One lieutenant of the Glengarry Regiment, with five wounds considered fatal, survived the ordeal of Fort Niagara and carried one ball with him for the rest of his days.¹

The next morning, General Ripley again crossed the Chippewa River with a force of 1,800 with the avowed intention of collecting the dead and wounded. Actually, he was following Brown's orders to occupy the hill and retake the guns. All of the Americans officers regarded this as an act of folly. Advancing toward the hill, Ripley found Drummond's force drawn up for battle a mile and a half in advance of Lundy's Lane. Not wishing to renew the bloodbath, Ripley declined to offer battle and retreated with all haste back to the American camp. Hurrying across the

¹Dr. William Dunlop, Recollections of the American War, 1812 - 1814 (Toronto: Historical Publishing, 1905), pp. 41-43.
river, Ripley ordered the destruction of the bridge as well as the burning of Bridgewater Mill and Clark's warehouse. Preparations were made for the retreat, with tents and rations being destroyed or thrown into the river. The retreat, began at noon, was conducted with such celerity that the entire force arrived at the heights opposite Black Rock at midnight in such a state of exhaustion that the American army lay down to sleep without so much as bothering to pitch their tents or light watchfires. All of this extraordinary behavior for an army whose commander claimed to be victorious.¹

But the battle had so weakened the British, they could not conduct a pursuit in force. This allowed the Americans to encamp under the guns of Fort Erie. Certainly, had Drummond pursued Ripley closely, the American commander would have been forced to cross the Niagara River. The British did send forth a weak advance-guard in pursuit of Ripley. This body of dragoons, light infantry, and militia succeeded in capturing a few stragglers and picking up corpses which had fallen from the American wagons during Ripley's precipitate retreat. Drummond, considering himself too weak to attempt an investment of the American fortified camp at Fort Erie, remained, with the bulk of his force, near Lundy's Lane until the arrival ———

¹Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, pp. 42-43.
of reinforcements enabled him to advance again.

A considerable controversy still rages between the differing Canadian and American interpretations of this battle, which the London Times deemed "equally glorious and important."¹ British and Canadian historians maintain Lundy's Lane, or Niagara as it is sometimes referred to in British histories, to be an undisputable British victory. Conversely, Americans view Lundy's Lane (also called Niagara Falls or Bridgewater) as an American tactical success. American historians cite Brown's letter in which the American general maintained that the victory was secured when he ordered the retirement. Certainly, by 11:30, the battle was within his grasp - his exhausted infantry held possession of the heights and the captured British guns. Despite these successes, Drummond's little army was hardly a defeated rabble. Repulsed three times with severe losses, the stout British veterans rallied around their colors determined to strike again. Brown's two brigades had been mauled with both the commanding general and his most resolute subordinate, Winfield Scott, carried from the field seriously wounded. Given the lack of water, the exhausted state of the remnants of the American army, and the serious shortage of artillery ammunition, it is highly improbable the Americans could have defended the hill in face of this

¹Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 36.
final onslaught by Drummond's red-coats.

Both Brown and Scott steadfastly refused to admit they were defeated, claiming that only Ripley's withdrawal marred an otherwise perfect American triumph. General Ripley's reports defended his conduct stating that his actions were in accordance with Brown's final directive. This is substantiated by the reports of other officers who testified that Ripley's retirement was clearly a judicious measure designed to preserve the unity of the army.¹

It is incongruous that General Scott could claim victory for American arms. His initial assault at 6:30 disintegrated with heavy loss without his troops firing a volley. The final onslaught of Scott's brigade came to grief in the wheatfields before the muskets of the 89th Regiment of Foot. At the conclusion of the night's fighting, Scott's Brigade numbered 200 effectives under the command of a major. As for Brown, the mere fact he laboriously falsified the casualty figures would indicate he himself considered the battle something less than the victory he claimed.

Brown, whom the twentieth-century American historical writer Fletcher Pratt called "the best battle captain in the history of the nation," played a passive role in the direction of the battle, allowing his subordinates to

¹Hitsman, Incredible War, p. 199.
conduct operations. Upon arriving on the field, Scott immediately appraised the situation correctly and sought to engage Riall's force, pinning it down until the main American army could come up to deliver the coup de main. Scott, just 600 yards from the hill, took an inordinate amount of time deploying his units. While the American brigadier meticulously arranged his immaculate lines, the British, behind some delaying tactics, were able to reoccupy the hill. When Scott's fine battalions moved to the attack, they were faced by an imposing semi-circular array with the British artillery in a commanding position.

The impetuous Scott, instead of awaiting Brown and Ripley, led his brigade in the assault only to see it evaporate before the British guns. The American batteries, although superior in number, failed to give their infantry comrades any fire support; Scott's second frontal push suffered the same humbling fate. When Brown finally assumed command, he found Scott's First Brigade exhausted and all but shattered. Deploying Ripley's Brigade, the American force confronted a reinforced British army, Hercules Scott having come up in the meantime. Had Scott restrained himself once he was assured that the British would offer battle, the combined might of the two brigades of regulars and Porter's militia would certainly have overwhelmed their

---

1Pratt, Sword of the Border, p. 387.
opponents. Brown, like Scott before him, committed his troops to piecemeal frontal attacks, successful, not on account of brilliant generalship but merely due to Miller's escaping detection and staging his coup that resulted in the capture of the British guns.

Brown, all his units either broken or engaged, had no reserves to consolidate his gains. The men of Ripley's Brigade were the match of the British redcoats meeting blow with forceful blow yet the strain of the struggle began to be evident. With so many of the officers down and the command situation uncertain, Ripley was wise to break off the action.

Drummond, every inch a soldier, displayed contempt for death and a cool, calculated cunning. Brown and Ripley, unquestionably brave and zealous, simply lacked military experience. Drummond's aim was to fulfill his duty in the defense of the British possessions of Upper Canada. He harbored no political ambitions. Unlike Scott, he waged a wise defensive battle offering attack only to regain his lost position. The British general's orchestration of the battle had its faults: witness the Royal Scots firing upon the Glengarry Light Infantry and the 103rd Regiment marching blindly into the American center receiving crushing volleys before retiring in disarray. In Drummond's defense, the British units maintained remarkable cohesion, especially after their expulsion from
the hill. The British regulars, while hardly the superior of the Americans in the assault, illustrated excellent discipline in their ability to rapidly rally after a bloody reversal. This faculty was conspicuously absent among American units who proved exceedingly difficult to rally once repulsed.

Both generals agreed that this, the Battle of Lundy's Lane, had no equal in the history of the war in America. Drummond's July 27 dispatch recorded that "the steadiness and intrepidity displayed by the troops... were never surpassed."¹ Brown's report stated that "the battle... will find but few parallels. More desperate fighting has rarely been known."²

In terms of the percentage of casualties suffered in a single day's action among battles waged in North America, Lundy's Lane is only surpassed by the Civil War struggle of Antietam. Curiously enough, these two bloody fights have many obvious similarities. Like Brown, General Robert E. Lee invaded the North and was forced to engage McClellan on ground not of his choosing. The battle was most stubbornly contested and sanguinary in the extreme yet McClellan's failure to exploit his numerical superiority resulted in a tactical setback. However, in the strategic sense,

¹Drummond to Prevost, 27 July 1814, Archives, C. 684, p. 250.
²Brown to Armstrong, 7 August 1814, Cruikshank, Documents, p. 172.
Antietam was a Federal victory compelling Lee to quit Maryland and with it his first invasion of the North. While Brown might claim a questionable tactical victory at Lundy's Lane, he lost his chance to cripple the British army. The strategic victory was Drummond's.

Lundy's Lane defused the American invasion threat. Brown's army, badly mauled, retreated in less than perfect order on Fort Erie. The British occupied the field of battle; their final charge was opposed only by an American army reduced to a mere skeleton of its former, formidable self. Drummond's beleaguered men slept upon their reconquered knoll with the American tiger emasculated. Upon this solid evidence, one must conclude that Lundy's Lane was a British victory - a close-run thing, to borrow Wellington's phrase, but a British victory nonetheless.

---

View of Fort George: glacis, bastion, and north bastion (above).

The business end of a naval 24-pounder - Fort George.
Fort Niagara as seen from the north-east bastion of Fort George.

Fort Niagara as viewed from Mississauga Point, site of Fort Mississauga.
The trail taken by Col. Murray's troops descending to the Niagara River.
The point on the American shore, above Jamestown, where Murray's troops landed.
The main-gate and guardhouse of Fort Niagara. The gate was constructed by the French; the parapet and palisades, identical to Fort George's, built by the British prior to the American War of Independence.

The interior of Fort Niagara with the French-built chateau.
The Battlefield of Chippewa: this photograph, taken exactly 164 years after the battle, illustrates just how little the scene has changed. Note the cultivated fields and the belt of trees obscuring the view of Chippewa as noted in Riall's report.

The Queenston earthworks, known as Forts Riall and Drummond, now house wading pools and flower gardens.
The lower Niagara, looking toward Lake Ontario, from atop Queenston Heights. The scene is much the same as Brown's who forlornly peered toward the lake in search of Chauncey's fleet.

The ruins of Mississauga. The citadel, constructed from the remains of Newark, post-dated the War of 1812. Note Fort Niagara above the redoubt on the left.
The monument erected at Lundy's Lane in "honour of the victory gained by British and Canadian forces."

Another view of the monument amidst the gravestones. The British battery, the key to the battle, was positioned where the monument now stands.
The Lundy Homestead, among the first stone dwellings built in Niagara Falls, was constructed in 1793. The house was the site of a hospital and canteen after the Battle of Lundy's Lane. During the afternoon of July 25, 1814, it served as an oasis for H. Scott's exhausted infantry. A similar view of the house can be found in Lossing's *Pictorial Fieldbook*, p. 828.

Sometime after the Battle of Lundy's Lane, General Drummond presented Catherine Lundy with this ivory-handled dagger. The weapon is still in the possession of the Lundy family.
Fort Erie: the draw-bridge guarded by a student-soldier dressed in the uniform of the 89th Regiment of Foot. In the background, a view of the stone barracks and wall.

Fort Erie: the east barbette, barracks, and ditch.
Fort Erie: view from the ditch beneath the north-west bastion.

Fort Erie: the American-built bastion and sally-port.
IV. THE SIEGE OF FORT ERIE

The sequel to the battle, the siege of Fort Erie, was demoralizing for the victors of Lundy's Lane. Steeled by the absence of a British pursuit, Ripley elected to occupy Fort Erie. A British fort stood on the site of Fort Erie since 1765. The first fort, little more than a stockade, was destroyed in March, 1779 when a furious storm drove huge masses of ice ashore flooding most of the fort and making irreparable breaches in the walls and palisades. The decision was made to build another, more substantial fort. The second Fort Erie was located farther south and was constructed by detachments of the 8th and 47th Regiments. This fort withstood the assaults of wind and weather for almost a quarter of a century until on February 5, 1803, another notable storm breached its walls and filled its interior with masses of ice and water. In July of that year, Colonel Gother Mann, commander of the Royal Engineers in Canada, inspected the post and recommended that a new fort of a permanent nature should be constructed upon rising ground immediately in rear of the old position.

The new fort proposed by Colonel Mann was to consist of four bastions connected with curtains in the form of a simple square, with all works and buildings constructed of solid masonry. The installation was to be sufficiently large enough to house two or three hundred men. The gate-
way to the fort was to be placed facing Lake Erie and the American shore with defensible stone barracks two stories high on either side forming a curtain between the north-east and southeast bastions. A triangular earthwork defended the entrance. Colonel Mann's recommendations were forwarded to the Master-General of the Ordinance and on January 9, 1804, Colonel Hunter was authorized to direct that "the proposed works be commenced and carried on gradually as circumstances might render expedient."¹

The erection of this, the third Fort Erie, was carried on at a leisurely pace for almost three years, after which the project was discontinued altogether. On August 24, 1811, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Bruyeres of the Royal Engineers reported to Sir George Prevost:

Fort Erie is situated at the entrance to Lake Erie, eighteen miles above Fort Chippewa. The old fort on the border of the lake is in ruins and totally abandoned. The construction of a new fort... on the rising ground above the site of the old fort was begun in the spring of 1805 continuing until the latter end of the year 1807... At the time, the two piles of barracks together with the masonry foundations of the two bastions were finished. The remainder is unfinished and has received some injury from remaining so long neglected. Fort Erie cannot be considered a strong military position, but as it is necessary to have some troops stationed at this to carry on transport and communication. The necessary security and accommodation might be probably obtained by completing this post.²

²Bruyeres to Prevost, 24 August 1811, ibid., p. 147.
Fort Erie was still in this unfinished state when war broke out in 1812. It had been garrisoned by British regulars until news arrived of the capture of Fort George (May 27, 1813). The fort was then dismantled, its magazines exploded, and the small garrison marched off to join General Vincent at Burlington Heights. American regulars immediately occupied the position but abandoned it on July 9 putting the barracks and storehouses to the torch.

The British reoccupied Fort Erie only to lose it again less than a month after the Americans abandoned it. Ironically, on the very day Brown's troops compelled Major Buck and his tiny garrison to surrender, Captain Benjamin Martin, R.E., reported to Governor-General Prevost:

Fort Erie - In a tolerable state of defense, strongly enclosed in rear with palisades. A small blockhouse commenced, to flank the picketing. Three guns mounted-two twelves and one nine pounder.¹

The American commandant left in charge of Fort Erie had made efforts to strengthen his position since its surrender on July 3. He had replaced the timber palisades, which proved to be anything but "strong" with a V-shaped earthwork housing a strong battery. Two unfinished bastions, those to the northwest and southwest, were converted

¹Captain Martin to Prevost, 3 July 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Lundy's Lane, p. 44.
into "detached redoubts" with strong timber stockades and ditches guarding their rear. The American garrison had also constructed a strong work on the bank of the river which was dubbed "Douglas Battery" in honor of Lieutenant David B. Douglas under whose supervision it had been built. From the left of this battery to the right of the fort, continuous earthworks had been erected. All this was completed while Brown's army menaced Fort George and it was to this formidable fortress that Ripley retreated.¹

Drummond's forces, too weak to pursue Ripley, did not arrive before Fort Erie until August 2. The interim between Lundy's Lane and Drummond's advance was not wasted by the Americans who busied themselves preparing the fort for the defense. Under the direction of the engineers, the American troops, employed day and night, constructed entrenchments, batteries, traverses and abattis until the original fort was but a small part of an extensively fortified camp. From the left of the fort and in a line running south parallel with the lake, a strong breastwork seven feet high was thrown up with a firing step behind and a ditch in front six to ten feet wide and four feet deep. The picketing (sharpened stakes), which was placed so close together that a man could not pass between, projected from the exterior of the parapet at an obtuse angle.

¹Mahon, The War of 1812, p. 277.
On the outward side of the ditch, a dense line of abattis, consisting of large trees placed in proximity to one another with their branches trimmed to a razor's edge, offered a nearly impenetrable obstacle to assault. On a sandy mound (known as Snake Hill) at the southwest extremity of the line of works was Towson's Battery, twenty feet in height and mounting five guns. The American enclosure was completed by a line of abattis running from the battery to the lake shore. These extensive preparations made the invader's position secure from any assault unprecedented by regular siege operations.¹

Several days elapsed before Drummond felt himself prepared to resume offensive operations. The 89th Regiment, which was reduced to less than 200 effectives, was sent to Fort George to rest and refit. Weak detachments, garrisoning Fort George, were ordered forward and the Regiment de Watteville, 900 strong, was brought over from York.²

An advance guard, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Pearson, crossed the Niagara River, surprised and seized

¹Adams, *James Madison*, 2: 147, stated that "The number of graduates before the year 1812 was very small; but at the outbreak of the war, the corps of engineers was already efficient. None of the works constructed by a graduate of West Point was captured by the enemy. During the critical campaign of 1814, the West Point engineers doubled the capacity of the little American Army for resistance."

Black Rock, destroying the works there, before rejoining Drummond's main force. The British army, advancing along the repaired river road, camped at Palmer's Tavern, six miles short of Fort Erie. The next day, August 2, saw the British columns occupy the heights opposite Black Rock, two miles from the American works. Drummond's selection of ground was excellent. He placed his forces behind a screen of trees which enabled them to approach the north and western faces of the fort and at the same time detach a column to attack the American fieldworks along the lakeshore without being observed by the enemy. Drummond, personally reconnoitering the American position, decided that the much enlarged works of Fort Erie would require the use of heavier guns than his 24 pounders before they could be attacked successfully.  

Drummond wasted no time taking the offensive. Detaching a force of 600 men (41st Regiment, the light companies of the 89th and 100th, and the flank companies of the 104th) under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel J.G.P. Tucker, the British sought to destroy the American logistics base at Buffalo.  

Crossing the Niagara and advancing along the American side on Military Road, the column was

\[1\] Drummond to Prevost, 4 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, pp. 38-43.

\[2\] Tucker to General Conran, 4 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 34.
surprised by vigorous musketry upon flank and front. The British regulars, bewildered by the resistance, were rallied by Lieutenant-Colonel Drummond. Finding the vital bridge along the Williamsburg-Buffalo road destroyed, an ineffectual attempt was made by the British to rebuild it.

The American force, later identified as the First Battalion/First U.S. Infantry, blasted the British with a steady stream of musketry. Making no headway, Tucker ordered his officers to locate a ford. This effort, also a failure, forced Tucker to retreat, leaving twelve dead, seventeen wounded, and five missing in his wake. Major Lodowick Morgan's battalion (First/First Infantry) suffered a loss of 10 men.

Drummond, suffering the first of many disappointments during the siege, attributed the failure solely to the unmilitary and disgraceful conduct of the troops. At the same time, however, he decided to give the repulsed units an opportunity to retrieve their reputation. The next afternoon, the British staged a reconnaissance-in-force against the American picketlines. This attack was repulsed primarily by the well-served fire of the American artillery and the guns of the three armed schooners, Ohio, Somers, and Porcupine. Having free reign of the river, these ships could enfilade the approaches both above and below.
the British positions.\(^1\)

The British command structure was rendered uncertain by a series of mischances. Major General Henry Conran, sent from York to replace Riall, was disabled by a fall from his horse. Colonel James Stuart (Royal Scots) came down with a fever a day after his arrival from York. Lieutenant-Colonel Scott refused command, feeling slighted by Drummond's overlooking him for promotion. As Drummond was still suffering from the effects of his wounds received at Lundy's Lane, the command situation confused the British siege operations.\(^2\)

On August 6, Brigadier-General Edmund Gaines staged a sortie of his own with a mixed force from several regiments. Gaines assaulted the British positions expelling the British Indians from the forests. A counter-attack by the Glengarry Light Infantry regained the lost positions.\(^3\)

The Americans embarked upon a campaign to enlist large bodies of militiamen from New York. In a letter to Governor Tompkins of August 9, General Porter stated:

> Is it possible that the State of New York will sit with her arms folded and see this army, deserving a better fate, sacrificed? With 3,000 men we should not only be relieved but we might, with certainty,


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 16

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 17.
capture the whole British army in thirty days.\footnote{Porter to Tompkins, 9 August 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, p. 207.}

One thousand militia arrived in Buffalo but refused to cross the Niagara. These men were employed in the construction of formidable works on the American shore at Black Rock. These batteries, in conjunction with the schooners' guns, could enfilade the British lines on the opposite side.

Discovering his position woefully exposed, Drummond relocated his batteries. A system of trenches, 800 yards long with riflepits dug in advance for the pickets, was constructed. The Americans sought to interfere with this work. They launched two sorties against the working parties but both were repulsed with heavy losses. The second of these actions, on August 12, cost the Americans Major Morgan, the victor of Black Rock. The American actions had a secondary function - to ascertain the strength of the besieging force. The repulses left Gaines to estimate that he was facing 5,000 when in fact Drummond had barely 3,000.\footnote{Louis Babcock, "The Siege of Fort Erie," New York State Historical Association Proceedings 8 (June 1909): 39.}

On the other hand, the American schooners so controlled the British flanks that Drummond decided that no assault upon the fort could succeed until these ships were taken or driven away. Therefore, Drummond eagerly accepted a
proposal made by Captain Dobbs, Royal Navy, to seize these troublesome vessels. Dobbs, seeing no service to be had on the lake while Chauncey was in control, had brought 200 seamen and marines up from Fort Niagara. Much experienced in leading such raiding parties during his service in the Mediterranean, Dobbs oversaw the portage of five bateaux and a gig to Point Abino. On the night of the 12th, Dobbs embarked with seventy seamen and marines, rowing quietly down the lake toward the American anchorage. Changing course, they rowed toward the American shore with the intention of approaching the schooners upon the route customary taken by supply boats from Buffalo. At midnight Dobbs' little fleet moved toward the Somers until challenged. His reply, "Provision boats from Buffalo" satisfied the sentry until the boats actually ran aboard the schooner. The British clambered up the side and a short struggle ensued in which two American seamen were wounded and the remainder of the crew forced below.

The conflict alarmed the Ohio and when a British boat was sighted, it was met with a volley of musketry. Nevertheless the British gained the deck and overpowered the crew. The cables were cut but an attempt to board the Porcupine failed when the Somers and Ohio were carried by the current into the rapids. Neither the Porcupine nor the batteries of Fort Erie fired a shot at the captured vessels as they silently drifted down the river. ¹

¹Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, pp. 19-22.
The prizes mounted three heavy guns, manned by thirty-five men. The commander of the Porcupine, alarmed by the loss of his two companion ships, made all haste for Put-In-Bay. F.C. Cooper, in his work, The History of the American Navy, wrote:

... the manner in which they (the British) brought up the men and boats from Lake Ontario for this purpose, and the neatness with which the enterprise was executed, reflected great credit on all concerned.¹

Drummond, exceedingly pleased by the results of this coup, wasted no time in renewing his offensive, commencing a spirited bombardment the next morning. It became evident that the batteries were ineffectual against the earthworks so the fire was directed against the stone barracks. The bombardment continued intermitently until, shortly before sunset on the 14th, a magazine exploded beneath the north-east bastion. The gunners and adjacent covering forces rose in a cheer thinking the fort greatly damaged. Observing earlier in the day that the stone buildings within the fort seemed injured and that the outline of the parapet and embrasures markedly altered by the fire of his guns: Drummond determined to take advantage of the favorable temperament of his troops by staging a general assault against the fort that night.

The available forces numbered not more than 3,000 belonging to ten different regiments. Of these units, only

¹As cited by Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 20.
the 103rd and the Regiment de Watteville were up to strength, the others having been reduced to fragments by the recent operations. The 103rd, formerly known as the New South Wales Fencibles (nicknamed the 'Rum Corps' by the Australians), had been absorbed into the regular British army in 1810. Many of its numbers being convicts, this formation was famed for its insubordination and numerous desertions.\(^1\) Besides this unreliable unit, the other key force in the assault was the Regiment de Watteville. This corps, originally part of the Dutch army, served with credit at Maida.\(^2\) Seeing service at Malta, in Egypt, Sicily, and Spain, its ranks, once fine Swiss mercenaries, were now filled by deserters and prisoners from the French Imperial Army. This polyglot unit, which also included Poles, Belgians, and Spaniards among others, had fought well at Oswego but in the meantime became greatly disaffected and plagued by desertions. It was upon their numerical strength, not their battleworthiness, that Drummond placed his reliance.\(^3\)

Drummond's plan of operations called for a simultaneous attack by three columns upon every accessible part of the fortifications. The first and strongest of these

\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) The Battle of Maida was a victory by a British army, in support of Calabrian guerrillas, in 1806, over the French.

columns, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Fischer of
the newly arrived Regiment de Watteville, consisted of
the remnant of the 1st Battalion/8th Regiment of Foot,
the light companies of the 89th and 100th, as many volun­
teers from the Regiment de Watteville as could be enlisted,
and a dozen gunners of the Royal Artillery.

Fischer's column of assault was instructed to leave
the British lines at four o'clock and march along the
Garrison Road for some four miles before turning toward
the lake shore. Their movements, until the lake was
reached, would be covered by thick forest. Upon gaining
the lake, the force was ordered to halt until eleven o'clock.
No fires were to be lighted and no loud talking permitted.
Every precaution was taken to prevent desertions: the
rolls were counted each hour and no officer was allowed
to leave his unit. To further ensure silence, the flints
were removed from all muskets save those of specially se­
lected veterans. Drummond hoped to repeat the coup of
Fort Niagara by seizing the key to the American position,
the Snake Hill Battery, by a surprise assault.

It was reported by the pickets that a small space was
left in the American defenses between the battery and the
lake. Drummond's plan called for a small body of troops
to penetrate into the American rear thereby creating a
diversion allowing the main assaulting force to carry the
battery by storm. It was hoped that the removal of their
flints would "effectually conceal the situation and number of our troops and those of the enemy being exposed by his white trousers, which are very conspicuous marks to our view, it will enable them to use the bayonet with the effect which that valuable weapon has ever been found to possess in the hands of British soldiers." If the storming party failed to penetrate the American camp at this point, it was provided with hay-bags and short ladders to scale the works elsewhere.

The attack was scheduled to commence at 2:00 A.M. Since nearly the whole of the de Watteville Regiment volunteered, Fischer's column exceeded a thousand troops. Drummond had purposely avoided any demonstrations on this flank in the belief that the Americans might neglect the Snake Hill Battery for the more threatened right. The success of Fischer's attack would determine the outcome of the day.

The center column, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel William Drummond consisted of a small detachment of Royal Artillery under Lieutenant John Charleton, the flank companies of the 41st and 104th Regiments, fifty marines, and ninety seamen, about 360 officers and men in all its orders were to enter the fort itself by escalade when the attacks

1 Drummond to Prevost, 15 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 94.
2 Harvey to Fischer, 14 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 90.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
elsewhere was well developed. It was guided by Captain Richard Barnes of the 89th Regiment, and Lieutenant-Colonel Drummond personally selected Sergeant Richard Smith of his own regiment for the desperate service of leading the assault, an officer's commission serving as an inducement. The left column, composed entirely of the remaining effectives of the 103rd Regiment, about 700 strong, was commanded by the regimental colonel, Hercules Scott.¹

Scott was an outstanding officer, exceedingly brave yet irascible. He openly quarrelled with General Drummond and made no secret of his lack of confidence in him. Before leaving his quarters the night before the assault, Scott criticized Drummond's plan of attack. Writing his brother, he wrote: "I expect we shall be ordered to storm tomorrow. I have little hope of success from this maneuver."² Despite his contempt for the commanding general and his plan, Scott could be depended upon in battle to display his customary coolness and bravery. At the last moment he seemed in high spirits, taking his surgeon's hands in his own and saying: "We shall breakfast together in the fort in the morning."³ Captain Leonard Eliot, Deputy Quartermaster General, was assigned to guide

¹Drummond to Prevost, 15 August 1814, ibid., p. 93.
²Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 22.
³Ibid.
Scott's column, which was directed to assail the right of the American position between the fort and the river. Scott's force would endeavour to penetrate through the opening next to the salient angle of the bastion using their ladders to scale the intrenchments.

The remnants of the 1st Battalion/Royal Scots, the Glengarry Light Infantry, Incorporated Militia, and the remainder of the Regiment de Watteville constituted the reserve under Lieutenant-Colonel Tucker posted along the high ground. The squadron of the 19th Light Dragoons positioned itself behind the battery nearest the fort in readiness to escort prisoners to the rear. General Drummond also took his position at the battery to watch the assault.

In the operational order Drummond stated that "crouching, ducking, and laying down when advancing under fire are bad habits and must be corrected... Lieutenant General Drummond most strongly recommends a free use of the Bayonet."\(^1\) His secret order added that, "the enemy force does not exceed 1,500 fit for duty and those are represented as much dispirited."\(^2\) If the assaulting columns met within the works they were to recognize each other by the watchword "Prince Regent" answered by the

\(^1\)Coles, *The War of 1812*, p. 160.
\(^2\)Harvey to Fischer, 15 August 1814, *Archives, C. 685*, p. 94.
countersign "Twenty." "As proposals of surrender may possibly be made to you," continued the instructions, "you are to attend to none which are not unconditional, not suffering yourself for a moment to be diverted from the prosecution of your attack. Clemency to prisoners it is unnecessary to recommend to you, but in removing them you must be careful not to detach too many men."¹

As Fischer's column was as strong as the other two combined, it is obvious that Drummond based his hope of success upon its ability to carry the Snake Hill Battery. Once this, the key to the American position, fell, Fischer could roll up the American flanks and destroy the American forces within the entrenchments. However Drummond's plan was not adequately researched and was predicated on the belief that a secret and sudden assault could carry the American battery. It was based on sketchy reconnaissance and the belief in British martial superiority. By dividing his forces into two nearly equal bodies with an impassable forest between them, Drummond unwisely exposed either wing to the danger of being overwhelmed by a sudden American counterattack.²

British activities did not go unnoticed by the American commander, Brigadier-General Edmund Pendleton Gaines.

¹Ibid.
²Hitsman, Incredible War, p. 201.
Gaines entered the army of the United States in 1797 as an ensign and ten years later gained national recognition when he arrested Aaron Burr near Fort Stoddard, Alabama and later testified against him at his trial in Richmond, Virginia. A North Carolina farm-boy, Gaines rose to the rank of major-general and held important posts during the Creek, Seminole, and Black Hawk Wars, finally gaining command of the Western Department. Only his dismissal arising out of charges that he exceeded his authority in enlisting recruits prevented him from playing a key role in the Mexican War.

While Fischer's detachments were making their unlit camp upon his flank, Gaines made a round of the works, urging the officers on duty to be particularly vigilant. The chief engineer, Major William McRae, ninth graduate of West Point, followed him, giving advice. All the guns were unloaded and recharged, piles of round and case shot were piled beside them for immediate use. Dark lanterns and port fires were constantly kept burning in all the batteries. It is not clear if Gaines knew of the impending British assault. The increased British troop movements probably prompted Gaines to suspect some sort of British action was afoot.

The cloudy sky made the night unusually dark. A heavy rain began to fall drenching Fischer's column in its bivouac.

---

1Tucker, Poltroons and Patriots, 2: 616-617.
The remainder of the British forces fared scarcely better as they were afforded scant shelter. The left and center columns splashed toward their jumping-off points along a ravine, within 300 yards of the fort.

Fischer's column advanced to the assault led by a company of the 8th Regiment's light infantry commanded by Lieutenant James Young and guided by Sergeant Thomas Powell of the 19th Light Dragoons. This body was followed in succession by the light companies of the de Watteville's and the 100th, a second subdivision of the 8th light company, the grenadiers of de Watteville's, the 89th light company, volunteers from the battalion companies of de Watteville's, and the remainder of the 8th Regiment.¹

About 300 yards in front of Snake Hill, a strong outpost of pickets, commanded by Lieutenant William Belknap, was posted in an oak grove.² The British blundered into the surprised Americans who were routed from their positions after delivering a volley. A spirited chase ensued in which Belknap was bayonetted and captured. The advance was abruptly stopped by abattis. Sergeant Powell quickly decided to flank the abattis and waded into the lake. These trailblazers were soon followed by about half

¹Fischer to Harvey, 15 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 86.

²Belknap, after service in the Mexican War, gained a general's commission.
of the de Watteville light company. The remainder of the company wandered into deeper water where many were drowned and the rest, with difficulty, regained the shore. The grenadiers of the Regiment de Watteville stormed the abattis, many of them succeeding in penetrating that obstacle. When it looked as if the British might succeed, a terrific volley of grapeshot and musketry struck the grenadiers in front and flank. Those who survived this maelstrom ran to the rear in frantic haste. The light companies of the 89th were swept along by the tide. The fire from the redoubt fell upon the confused mass of British troops like rain as the American position seemed wrapped in a constant sheet of flame. The 8th Regiment vainly attempted to halt the rout of the Regiment de Watteville. The unaimed American fire poured into the British masses with deadly effect and, no doubt, more men fell as casualties than if they had boldly advanced to the attack. Many disaffected men of the Regiment de Watteville seized the opportunity and melted away into the forests until they could meekly surrender to the Americans come next morning. This unit lost thirty-four dead, twenty-seven wounded, and no less than eighty-three missing.¹

While the Regiment de Watteville was shamefully put to flight, Young, with a force not exceeding fifty men,

¹Martin, The Regiment de Watteville, p. 28.
was attacked by three companies of the 21st United States Infantry. The little British force held their own in a bloody hand-to-hand fight before being overwhelmed by the intervention of the American reserve. Those not killed or wounded made their escape by the route they had come. The valiant Young, although wounded, made his escape accompanied by most of the officers. Upon gaining the British position, Young found only scattered elements of various units. This tiny body returned the American fire and tenaciously assaulted the abattis and raised ladders against the scarp of the redoubt, only to find them ten feet too short to reach the crest of the parapet. With no hope of success, Young's little force covered the British retreat. The bulk of Young's men were from the light company of the 8th Regiment which lost two-thirds of its members in this action.¹

General Ripley directed the Americans at the Snake Hill Battery with considerable skill. Once the British assault was broken, Ripley realized that this assault was just a part of a general attack. While Young heroically tried to storm the redoubt, Ripley detached four companies to the support of the right wing. The American loss was trifling, not exceeding a dozen men. Including wounded and deserters, Ripley reported the capture of 147 prison-

¹Drummond to Prevost, 16 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, pp. 101-103.
The other two assaulting columns lay quietly in the ravine until the silence of the night was broken by the boom of cannon and crash of musketry from Snake Hill. The British columns immediately moved to the attack. Their approach was soon detected by an outlying picket posted near the river. They discharged their muskets and ran for the protection of the fort. Scott's units moved along the beach while Colonel Drummond ascended the bank directing his march straight toward the north-east bastion. Both moved in close column of half companies. The steady din of battle and roar of cannon on the other flank, the blaze of the guns reflected by the heavy bank of clouds, indicated that a stubborn action was raging there. The American garrison in the fort was on full alert yet withheld their fire. The approach of the British, in their steady, measured tread, could be heard along with the suppressed voices of the officers exclaiming, "Close up! Steady, men, steady!" Then the storm burst forth at ranges of tens of yards. The guns of the batteries, literally crammed to the muzzle with case-shot and grape, and the muskets of the long line of infantry loaded with "ball and buck," opened upon the British at short range with fatal effect. The 103rd Regiment, compressed

1Babcock, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 47.
in the narrow defile between the bank and the river, suffered heavily. Their ranks could not long stand this punishment and they fell into much confusion. Only the strenuous efforts of Scott, Major William Smelt, and other officers rallied the broken units. With these officers in the lead, the 103rd persevered and gained the point where the high bank recedes from the water. The column swerved to the right towards the point where a supposed opening existed between the epaulement and the bastion. The entire path was subjected to the oblique fire of the American infantry. This portion of the fort was manned by the 9th Infantry. Soon, the 22nd, 25th, and the greater part of the 11th, with several units of Porter's militia, formed a body of infantry 1,000 strong on a frontage of only 100 yards. Heroic Colonel Scott, shot through the head on the glacis, was carried back to the trenches to die within the hour. Major Smelt, later a Lieutenant-General, was wounded about the same time. For fifteen minutes their efforts to struggle through the obstructions were continued with amazing bravery. Finding it impossible to effect an entry here, the stalwart men of the 103rd made their ways down the ditch and joined Drummond's column. Three captains, eleven subalterns, and 350 non-commissioned officers and men were numbered among the killed, wounded, and missing. The garrison along this line did not have a man injured. It is doubtful whether the 103rd fired a
single shot in making this desperate assault. ¹

Although by far the weakest, Drummond's column came
the closest to succeeding. Brashly dashing across the
level plain, Drummond's units gained the ditch with little
loss. The guns of the battery were spitting forth their
fire upon Scott's unfortunate column, the heavy smoke lay­
ing thick above the heads of the British assault party.
Raising their ladders against the bastion, the stormers
made their ways through the emrasures inspired by Drummond's
shouts of "Give the damned Yankees no quarter!"² The sur­
prised gunners abandoned their pieces but were momentarily
rallied by their officers and engaged the British infantry
in hand-to-hand combat. Captain Alexander Williams, United
States Artillery, and Lieutenant Patrick McDonough, died
at their guns. McDonough died at the hands of Colonel
Drummond after battling the British with only a gun rammer.
Their officers down, the American artillerymen fled from
the bastion, some taking refuge in or behind the stone
barracks from which they maintained a constant musket fire
upon the British at a distance of only a few paces.³

A small party of Royal Artillery turned a piece upon
its former owners. Soon, however, the bastion was receiv­
ing a hot fire from the battery on the lakeshore. The

² Tucker, Poltroons and Patriots, 2: 617.
³ Babcock, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 43.
British assumed that the battery was taken and the artillery fire directed against them was fired by Scott's men: "Cease firing! You are firing on your own men!" shouted one British officer from the captured bastion. For a moment, the fire ceased until a countermand was heard and the gunners opened up with renewed vigor.¹

The end of the north-east barrack was built directly across the gorge of the bastion, leaving a passage of only seven feet which was partly obstructed by masses of stone from its shattered walls. Through this opening, the attackers made their way into the barrack square, routing all they found there. A burst of musketry from the other barracks illustrated that these strong stone buildings were manned by sizable elements of the American garrison. The British did succeed in compelling the Americans to abandon the parallel bastion. At this stage, Captain Glew, who headed the last successful charge at Lundy's Lane, fell wounded. The command of the flank companies of the 41st Regiment devolved upon Captain Richard Bullock who led them again to the attack upon the barracks. One of the doors was forced open but the British were expelled after a stubborn struggle in which Bullock fell.²

Fischer's attack was clearly blunted and reinforce-

²Ibid.
ments streamed to the threatened fort from Ripley's position on the lakeshore. The first unit to arrive, elements of the United States Artillery under Hindman which, united with a body of the 19th Infantry, sought to regain the interior of the fort. This attempt was easily repulsed and driven back into the ravelin. A second attempt suffered the fate of the first. Detachments from the 11th, 19th, and 22nd Infantry came up and were formed in rear of Fanning's battery with orders to regain the bastion by a flanking movement. While the British had their attention glued upon the Americans in the barracks and ravelin, the Americans burst upon their flank and expelled the British from their position in the barrack square. However the Americans could not budge the British from their position in the bastion.  

Three companies of the 23rd Infantry and one of the 19th, detached by Ripley from the left wing, entered the ravelin and under Major George Brooke, once again assaulted the British-held bastion. At this point in the battle, the British force was very much reduced by the steady fire directed upon it.  

Lieutenant-Colonel Drummond had fallen, mortally wounded, and many of the other officers were disabled. The guns and musketry from the intrenchments on

---

1 Babcock, The Siege of Fort Erie, pp. 43-44.
2 Ibid.
the right constantly swept the ditch rendering it impossible for General Drummond to reinforce his nephew's ill-fated column. At the last moment, Drummond sent forward two companies of the Royal Scots from the reserve. They were raked by fire and few, if any, gained admission into the bastion. One officer and thirty-two privates were killed and two sergeants and thirty-seven privates wounded during the few minutes they were exposed to the deadly fire.¹

Having failed in two attempts to force their way into the barracks, the storming party was preparing for another assault. On their side the Americans in the ravelin were mustering their forces to drive the British out of the bastion altogether when a gigantic explosion occurred in the bastion beneath the feet of the British. The gun-platform, with its guns and men, masses of earth, and fragments of stone were thrown into the air. An extra magazine beneath the platform had become ignited. Many tales and theories purport to explain the mystery. A story became current in the British camp that it had been exploded with a slow match by an American soldier who had disguised himself in the red coat of a British deserter and mingled with the troops until he was able to accomp-

¹Cruikshank, *The Siege of Fort Erie*, p. 27.
lish his designs and escape. Romantic American accounts claim that a fatally wounded American officer crawled to the center of the bastion where he knew a cache of ammunition existed. In all likelihood, these episodes are fictitious, in any case no conclusive evidence is available. The most probable explanation is that the magazine became ignited from a train of powder accidently dropped in charging and firing the guns against the barracks. Thus, the great explosion and the resulting devastation of the storming column were due to that indispensable and unpredictable battlefield commodity - chance.

The American troops were almost entirely protected from the effects of the blast by the stone barracks but the British suffered terribly. Many died, some blown to pieces, others were crushed beneath the falling masses of stone and timber. Those who were uninjured were hurled into the ditch bewildered by the unexpected explosion. Few officers survived and the rank-and-file could not be convinced that the explosion was accidental. They imagined that the entire fort was mined and was about to explode under their feet. When the American fire resumed, the panic-stricken men abandoned the works.

---

1 Tomes, The Battles of America, 3: 178.  
2 Lossing, Pictorial Fieldbook, p. 656.  
3 Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 28.
Drummond's column had been practically annihilated. The small body of Royal Artillery lost eight of their original thirteen. The detachment of seamen lost twenty-three out of fifty who began the assault; the Royal Marines, thirty of ninety. Every officer of the flank companies of the 41st Regiment fell and only thirty-nine men out of one hundred and twenty escaped unhurt. Of the 104th flank companies, twenty-four non-commissioned officers were reported killed or missing and twenty-nine officers and men noted as wounded. Sergeant Smith, the gallant leader of the forlorn hope, received no less than five wounds but no commission. Only twenty-six men of these companies returned unwounded.¹

General Drummond dispatched the remaining companies of the Royal Scots to cover the retreat of the ill-fated attackers. Day was breaking and the extent of the disaster became apparent: the ditch of the fort was piled high with dead and wounded, the plain and river-side was strewn with bodies. Those who survived were totally dispirited and exhausted.² Drummond's effective force was reduced to 1,000 men and a vigorous counter-attack by Gaines could easily have thrown the besieging British out

¹Harvey to Prevost, 15 August 1814, Government Printing Bureau, "Q" Series, multivolume. (Ottawa: Public Records Office, 1405-1409), 128-1: 182. This source hereafter will be cited as Archives, "Q" Series.

²Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, pp. 28-29.
of their works. The loss of the garrison was insignificant amounting to only two officers and fifteen men killed, six officers and forty-six men wounded, and one officer and six men missing.¹ Comparatively uninjured by the assault, Gaines failed to take advantage of the opportunity, apparently being satisfied with the repulse of the British.

Drummond officially stated that he lost 4 officers and 53 men killed; 24 officers, 12 seamen, and 273 soldiers wounded; 9 officers, 7 seamen, and 523 missing. The British loses, totalling 905, were greater than those sustained at Lundy's Lane! In Drummond's Fort Erie dispatch, he pointed out:

Our loss has been severe in killed and wounded; and I am sorry to add that almost all those returned "missing" may be considered as wounded or killed by the explosion and left in the hands of the enemy.²

In General Gaines' report to Armstrong, he markedly underestimated the success of his repulse claiming that the British "got possession of the salient bastion of the old Fort Erie; which was regained at the point of the bayonet, with a dreadful slaughter. The enemy's loss in killed and prisoners is about 600." Curiously, Gaines failed to mention the explosion and the role it played in regaining the bastion but his deception aside, a later

---

¹Gaines to Armstrong, 17 August 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, p. 177.
²Drummond to Prevost, 16 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 101.
report claimed 221 battlefield deaths sustained by the attackers and 360 prisoners of which 174 were wounded, many fatally.¹

In a private letter to Prevost of August 16, Drummond blamed "this failure on the present disgraceful and unfortunate conduct of the troops." The misconduct of the Regiment de Watteville was seen, at least by Drummond, as the single greatest factor in the failure of the attack.² For the most part, however, these troops fought bravely. Much of the blame for the failure must fall to General Drummond. Although his conduct at Lundy's Lane was meritorious and praiseworthy, Drummond had very little command experience, having never directed siege operations. His bombardment of the fieldworks was inadequate, nowhere achieving an adequate breach; his reconnaissance was faulty. The success of the plan depended, in large part, upon surprise yet the increased rate of artillery fire and the added movement of troops warned Gaines that a movement was afoot. All three assaults were committed piecemeal and none was mutually supportive. Had either Fischer's assault or Drummond's lodgement been properly supported, the attacks might well have ousted the Americans, who were forced to maintain a long defensive line.

¹Gaines to Armstrong, 19 August 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, pp. 179-181.

²Drummond to Prevost, 16 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 102.
When Fischer's attack faltered, Ripley was able to dispatch reinforcements to Gaines. At no time did the British batteries play a role in the assault, which might have neutralized much of the American resistance. Instead, they permitted Douglass' Battery to shell the British-held bastion as well as preventing any reinforcement from coming up.

Prevost's reply, subsequently captured by the Americans, severely criticized and censured Drummond for having staged a night assault and removing the flints from the muskets of the troops engaged.

It is not in reproach of its failure that I observe to you that night attacks made with heavy troops are very objectionable, principally because chance and not skill frequently decide the contest and that at night difficulties and dangers are ever magnified, particularly when they present themselves unexpectedly, and in the latter case the best disciplined troops are placed only on a level with raw and undisciplined troops.¹

Fischer's column returned to camp next day in an exhausted state. Drummond took immediate steps to strengthen his position. The 82nd Regiment was ordered up from Burlington and York while the 6th Regiment was instructed to hasten its march from Kingston. Only the terrible state of the roads, turned into quagmires by the rains, deterred Drummond from bringing forth yet another regiment from that vital post. Furthermore, with the Americans in

¹Prevost to Drummond, as cited by Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 30.
command of Lake Ontario, the supply situation was made all the more precarious. Unless Yeo regained control of the lake, Commissary-General William Robinson declared it impossible to provide for the troops of the Right Division beyond the middle of September.¹

The troops were, quite naturally, much dispirited by their severe repulse. Drummond, sharing their dismay, wrote: "The agony of mind I suffer from the present disgraceful and unfortunate conduct of the troops committed to my superintendence wounds me to the soul."²

In his dispatch to Secretary Armstrong, Gaines declared he was prepared "to follow up the blow."³ Enlisting Porter's aid, Gaines began a campaign to enlist 4,000 volunteers from western New York. Gaines wrote to Porter:

I shall not undertake to persuade my young countrymen to come out to the tented field. They have heard the eloquence of our cannon. This, I am sure, is fully sufficient to excite their military ardor and call them to the field, where American troops, if true to themselves, will never fail to reap honorable victory over foreign slaves and mercenaries.⁴

Toward this effort, Porter published appeals:

If the fate of the gallant little army, which for six

¹Robinson to Prevost as cited by Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 31 (no date given).
²Drummond to Prevost, 16 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 103.
³Gaines to Armstrong, 17 August 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, p. 178.
⁴Gaines to Porter, no date given, as cited by Babcock, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 46.
weeks past has been wading through fields of blood for your security, can not move you to action, I admonish you to recollect that your own security, your fruited fields, your stately edifaces, and your fair possessions depend upon the army. Your women and children will feel the weight of the tomahawk . . . (the British commander) had 400 savages in sight of our entrenchments. Should the enemy succeed, there is nothing on this side of Utica that can resist his force or escape his ravages.¹

Governor Tompkins, presupposing the failure of Porter's efforts, ordered General Hall to advance 3,000 men to the frontier.²

The Americans busily repaired the damage caused by the explosion. Limbs and shreds of flesh were found strewn everywhere. The body of Colonel Drummond was discovered, a "noble looking man, his countenance stern, fixed and commanding in death."³ The only offensive action undertaken by Gaines was a reconnaissance-in-force sent out "to look at the British lines." It was repulsed with the loss of fifty men. The British batteries had, in the meantime, reopened a steady bombardment on the fort and surrounding earthworks.

The condition of the besieged Americans was not as good as one might suspect following their successes of August 15. Deserters continued to come into the British lines at a rate of six or seven a day. Only the fear of

¹Ibid.
²Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 31.
³Ibid.
the Indians prevented more from defecting. These deserters also reported that the garrison nightly feared a renewal of the onslaught. Meanwhile, the British morale began to revive, prompting Drummond to write that they "bore the privations and hardships of the service with great cheerfulness."¹

The British busied themselves in the construction of a third siege battery. On the morning of August 24, Drummond was joined by the 82nd Regiment of Foot, about 500 strong. In addition, the first battalions of the 6th Regiment were just reported entering York. Enlivened by this news, Drummond pushed his outposts closer to the American works and redoubled the bombardment. But when their outposts were moved forward, the British also began to suffer from desertion. Thus, the Regiment de Watteville lost more in this way than during the night assault.²

On the afternoon of August 25, a British outpost was overrun by two companies of the 23rd Infantry, commanded by Major Brooke. The overzealous Americans continued their advance and ran into a strong body of the newly arrived 82nd Regiment. Although they repulsed the Americans, these British regulars suffered great losses, primarily because, used to linear tactics, they did not avail them-

¹Drummond to Prevost, 24 August 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 117.
²Ibid.
selves to cover. Henceforth, whenever the 82nd or 6th Regiments were engaged on outpost duty, they were reinforced with units of the Glengarrys or Incorporated Militia.¹

During the night of the 25th, Brooke executed a single act of heroism when he, armed with only a lantern covered by a coat, crept unobserved through the British picket-lines. Using the sounds of the axes as a guide, Brooke advanced to within a few paces of the British fatigue parties employed in the construction of the battery. Climbing a tree, he fixed the lantern to the topmost branches before returning to camp unmolested. Using the light as a target, the American artillery alertly opened a deadly fire which continued until the lantern was discovered and extinguished.²

The British bombardment began to take its toll. Prisoners reported that a daily loss ranged between ten and fifteen. On Sunday, August 28, a British cannonball penetrated Gaines' command post seriously wounding him. The command fell to Brigadier General Miller who was immediately replaced by Brown, now recovered from his wounds. The total loss, from August 16 to September 1, was reported as 59 killed and 147 wounded. During the same period,

¹Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 32.
²Ibid., p. 33.
seventy deserters came into the British lines. The Ameri­
can garrison also suffered from disease. Despite the
arrival of a battalion of the 11th Infantry, the total
garrison mustered only 119 officers and 2,127 men.¹

The situation for the besiegers began to improve.
The frantic shipbuilding race gave Yeo the upper hand on
Lake Ontario for the time being. With the blockade lifted,
the British logistical situation markedly improved. Drum­
mond's army was also reinforced by 500 effectives of the
6th Regiment of Foot. The British general promptly set
about to build a fourth battery. "He (Gaines) has been
unceasingly employed," Drummond wrote to Prevost, "in
strengthening his position by every means in his power.
He has thrown up such an accumulation of mounds of earth,
of batteries and breastworks as will certainly cost us
many men to dislodge him from, and which bid defiance to
our shot."² The British commander, still wedded to the
notion of taking the fort by storm, ordered up the 90th
and 97th Regiments from York and Kingston.³ Not wishing
to hazard another night attack, Drummond decided to stage
a daylight raid hoping to catch the garrison by surprise.

¹Brown to Tompkins, no date given, as cited by Cruik­
shank, Documents, p. 181.
²Drummond to Prevost, 30 August 1814, Archives, C.
685, pp. 118-120.
³Drummond to Prevost, 2 September 1814, Archives, C.
685, p. 121.
The fourth battery was completed on September 4 but Drummond delayed its employment until a sufficient supply of ammunition arrived. The brig Charwell and schooners Vincent and Netley lay at York in readiness to transfer the 97th as soon as they arrived from Kingston.

The Americans were not idle. A militia force, estimated between 4,000 and 5,000 men, arrived at Buffalo, the fruits of Porter and Tompkins' efforts. The armed brig Lawrence and the schooners Lady Prevost, Caledonia, and Porcupine, all former British vessels captured by Perry at the Battle of Lake Erie, arrived carrying 320 regulars and a company of Ohio volunteers.

A sharp outpost conflict took place on September 5 when detachments of the American 11th and 21st Regiments assaulted the British picketlines. This force was mauled by the 89th Regiment, which obtained praise from Drummond who wrote "nothing could exceed the gallantry and good conduct of all the troops, their impetuosity was with difficulty restrained." Lieutenant-Colonel Willcocks, commander of the renegade Canadian Volunteers, was among the dead.

In retaliation, the British launched an attack upon the American works on September 7. Advancing under cover

1Drummond to Prevost, 9 September 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 137.
2Ibid.
The Siege of Fort Erie:
American and British positions,
August – September, 1814.

Main road       Earthworks
Military roads   Battery
Abattis and      Blockhouses
trenches

400 yards

Lossing, Pictorial fieldbook, p. 839.
of darkness, the men of the 6th Regiment overran an out­
post inflicting twenty casualties while suffering but two
wounded. A heavy rainfall put an end to these outpost
skirmishes, the deluge continuing with little interruption
for thirteen days.

On September 9, Drummond believed it necessary to
prepare the Governor-General for the "possibility of my
being compelled by sickness or suffering of the troops,
expressed as they will be to the effects of the wet and
unhealthy season which is fast approaching, to withdraw
them from their present position to one which may afford
them the means of cover. Sickness has, I am sorry to
say, already made its appearance in several of the corps,
particularly the 62nd." On September 11 he wrote that
his batteries had been almost silent for several days
from the "reduced state of the ammunition." The "sudden
and most unlooked for return to the head of Lake Ontario
of the two (American) brigs by which the Niagara has been
so long blockaded," he wrote on September 14, "and my
communication with York cut off, has had the effect of
preventing the junction of the 97th Regiment, which
arrived at York on the 10th, and probably would have
been here the following day but for this unlucky circum-

---

1Ibid.
2Ibid., p. 138.
The hardships endured by the besieging troops was graphically described by Doctor William Dunlop:

It was rather a bivouac than a camp, the troops sheltering themselves under some branches of trees that only collected the scattered drops of rain, and sent them down in a stream on the heads of the inhabitants, and as it rained incessantly for two months, neither clothes nor bedding could be kept dry.  

Nevertheless, the British doggedly persevered. The fourth battery, located on the edge of the woods about a mile and a half inland from the shore battery, dominated a fortified line, covered by abatis, of 600 yards.

Major General Brown feared that the British batteries "would rake obliquely the whole American encampment." He desired "to storm the batteries, destroy the cannon, and roughly handle the brigade upon duty, before those in reserve could be brought into action." Clearly, Brown had an excellent comprehension of the dispositions and strengths of the British forces and batteries. On the night of the 10th, large bodies of volunteers and militia were ferried over from Buffalo; 3,000 disembarking. General Brown wanted to launch a sortie in the early hours of September 11th and toward his aim, he assembled a council-of-war on

1Drummond to Prevost, 11 September 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 141.

2Dunlop, Recollections, pp. 64-67.

3Brown to Armstrong, 9 September 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, p. 186.
the 9th. General Ripley, as he did the day after Lundy's Lane, strongly opposed this operation and a majority of the regular officers agreed. Not to be denied, Brown declared his intention to utilize the militia if the regulars refused to see their duties.¹

A messenger, riding from Kingston to York, was captured by an American raiding party. From these dispatches, forwarded to Brown, the American commander ascertained that Drummond only fielded 3,000 troops. Brown decided to attack Drummond before the 90th and 97th Regiments could come up. Clearly seeing the moment of decision, Brown urged Major General George Izard at Sacket's Harbor to land a force at the mouth of the Niagara thereby severing Drummond's lines of communication and isolating the British in the bottleneck of the peninsula. Mustering 2,000 regulars and 3,000 militia, Brown prepared for his sortie.²

If anything, Brown underestimated the plight of the British. With the coming of the autumnal rains, the health of the besiegers, which had been surprisingly good, deteriorated alarmingly. There was no depot of provisions nearer than Fort George and the roads were impassable. The rains were so heavy that two bastions at Fort Niagara gave way and slid into Lake Ontario, throwing that vital

¹Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 33.
²Ibid., pp. 33-34.
post entirely open on the water front. The forage in the area had long since been exhausted. To make matters worse, Chauncey's control of the lake prevented the transport of the 97th by water, forcing that corps to make the tedious march around the lake and delaying its arrival for another week.

Drummond might well have abandoned the siege had he possessed enough horses to remove the heavy artillery. Not wishing to sacrifice these valuable weapons, he determined to hold his position until reinforcements, supplies, and desperately needed ammunition arrived. Rumors that the Americans were planning a sortie periodically reached him. On September 14, he wrote Prevost:

I have strong grounds for thinking the enemy will risque an attack, an event, which from the necessity of defending my batteries in the first instance with the picquets alone, I shall have to meet under every possible disadvantage, yet I am very much disposed to hope the most fortunate circumstances that can happen, as it will bring us into contact with the enemy at a far cheaper rate than if we were to be the assailants and may at the same time, I trust, bring to a happy crisis a campaign which has been marked by a series of unlucky circumstances as well as, of late, severe hardships and privations.

His opinion was seemingly confirmed when a strong force of 400 men were repulsed by the advance British pickets. In order to protect the batteries from a sudden assault, Drummond divided his force into three brigades:

---

1 Ibid.

2 Drummond to Prevost, 14 September 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 169.
one brigade garrisoned the picket lines while the remaining two stayed in camp. This move did little to help the sad plight of the besieging force, which continued to suffer from the continual rains.¹

Informed by deserters of Drummond's deployment, Brown revived his projected sortie. Forseeing a compellingly forceful assault, Brown hoped to fall upon the forward brigade "roughly handling" it before the other two could intervene effectively. With this object in mind, Brown ordered the commencement of a steady bombardment designed to act as a diversion while fatigue parties cleared pathways by which the infantry could advance to the attack. These parties managed to penetrate into the bush within 150 yards of the forward British trenches.²

The American general wished to assault the British lines on the 17th, knowing the unsteady de Watteville Regiment manned the lines. The attack was set for early afternoon intending to catch the besiegers unprepared. The entire garrison, paraded and drilled, moving off at at noon. General Porter was given command of the left division, aiming to turn the British right. Its advance guard, composed of the 1st and 4th United States Rifles

¹Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 34.
and a body of Indians, spearheaded the movement. The remain-
ing units of the division advanced along the rough
roads cut through the brush as an avenue of attack. The
The right column, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel E.D. Wood, and the left column, under the superintendence of Brigadier
General Daniel Davis, New York Militia, consisted of the
1st and 23rd Regiments as well as assorted militia forma-
tions. Brigadier General Miller was instructed to move
the 9th, 11th, and 19th U.S. Infantry, in small detachments
by a circuitous route, from the center of the American
camp, into the ravine on the north side of the fort. This
ravine would serve, as it had for the British, as the jump-
ing off position. The 21st, and a detachment of the 17th
Regiment was held in reserve in the bastions while the
25th Infantry, the bombardiers, and corps of artillery
were detached to garrison the fort during the sortie. ¹

The sun was shining brightly when the movements began
but the sky rapidly gave way to clouds, then finally to
violent rain. ² General Brown accompanied Porter's divi-
sion, which succeeded in advancing within yards of the
right of the British works, where they quickly deployed
in the intervening forests. At 2:31 p.m. Brown gave the
signal for the attack, then made his way to join Miller's

¹Ibid., pp. 49-51.
²General de Watteville to Drummond, 19 September 1814, Archives, Q. 128-2, p. 271.
troops in the ravine. Before he reached his destination, the steady roll of musketry announced the commencement of the action. Miller's regulars immediately assailed the batteries on their front.

Passing around the abattis and trenches, Porter's units wheeled to the right taking the pickets and support troops in flank almost before the British soldiers could stand to arms. Offering only token resistance, the men of the Regiment de Watteville were swept away. The successful attackers overwhelmed the enemy in neighboring works, leaving only a log blockhouse, gallantly defended by a small detachment of the 8th, to be reduced. Not allowing his militia time to bask in their glory, Porter hastily pushed on against the battery and breastworks defended by other detachments of the de Watteville Regiment. Emerging from the forests, the Americans seemed an irresistible force taking the sad British defenders in flank and front. With many of their officers down, the mercenary regiment melted away leaving their colonel, Fischer, and twelve other officers, wounded on the field. One hundred and sixty-five redcoats were captured including two majors. Hardpressed and surrounded, the blockhouse was compelled to surrender. In only half an hour, the Americans succeeded in capturing two British batteries

1Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 36.
and all the intervening earthworks. The expelled British troops fell back on the only remaining battery adjacent to the river. While the Americans were busily dismantling the siege batteries, the British reserves were approaching on roads all but impassable. Drummond, accompanying these columns, recognized the strength of the American positions. The Glengarrys were thrown into the forests to impede the enemy's thrusts against Battery No. 1. The British general detached the Royal Scots and 89th Regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon, to move against the trenches while the 82nd and a wing of the 6th moved upon the enemy-held Battery No. 2. The reliable Glengarrys, happening upon the American flank, exploited their fortune by launching a counter-attack. Porter's militiamen, badly shaken by the crash of musketry, fled. The momentum of the assault grew, taking these fine Canadian troops past the entrenchments and right up to the glacis of the fort. Just as this feat was accomplished, Lieutenant-Colonel Pearson fell seriously wounded.¹

Brown, fearful that his assaulting forces might be cut off by the determined British countermeasures, ordered his reserve forward. This body became hotly engaged in the open ground losing heavily, before falling back. The Americans in possession of the British batteries spiked

¹De Watteville to Drummond, 19 September 1814, Archives, Q. 128-2, p. 272.
the guns and destroyed their carriages. The magazines in the newly constructed battery were blown up by Lieutenant David Riddle (15th Infantry) who was badly burned in the explosion.¹

Confused by their success yet unable to advance, the American militia began to lose cohesion. Their newly won positions were not properly guarded by outposts, which allowed the British relief columns to approach totally unobserved. With disaster looming, the American officers, satisfied with the reduction of the siege batteries, ordered a disengagement. Before this could be accomplished the British were upon them. Seven companies of the 82nd, under Major (later Lieutenant-General) Henry Adolphus Proctor, scored a brilliant success, routing the enemy from Battery No. 2.² Confused by the woods, rain, and sudden appearance of the British, Porter's militia ran for their lives. The bravest amongst them attempted to cover the retreat but the steady precipitation had rendered most of their weapons unserviceable. Firing a volley, the British carried the assault home with the bayonet, casting the Americans out of their conquered positions. The remaining officers rallied their disorganized troops in the ravine where the reserve and fortress artillery covered

¹Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 37.
²De Watteville to Drummond, 19 September, Archives Q. 128-2, p. 273.
The action of September 17 was no outpost skirmish but rather a major clash: both sides suffered an accumulated loss of more than one thousand men. The fact that the Americans were able to inflict greater damage upon the defending British speaks well of the preparation and execution of Brown's sortie. While ultimately repulsed, Brown was indeed correct when he reported that the British army had been "roughly handled."

The Americans suffered heavily in the assault, especially in officers of rank: Brigadier General Davis, and Lieutenant-Colonel E.D. Wood were left dead on the field; Major General Porter and Brigadier Ripley were among the wounded; twelve officers were taken as prisoners. General Brown's official report acknowledged the loss of 79 killed, 216 wounded, and 216 missing but as after Lundy's Lane, these figures seem suspect, especially in regard to militia casualties. McBurney's Regiment went into action with 176 non-commissioned officers and men of whom 76 returned uninjured; of 12 officers, 8 were listed as killed or wounded, 4 as missing.  

Aside from the crippling of the siege batteries, the

---

1 Babcock, *The Siege of Fort Erie*, p. 53.
American attack inflicted 579 casualties upon the besieging force. Brown claimed he had captured twelve officers, twenty-three sergeants, one drummer, and 349 rank and file. Two-thirds of the losses fell upon the 2nd Brigade which had occupied the trenches. Lieutenant-Colonel John Gordon (Royal Scots), commander of the First Brigade, was mortally wounded and Lieutenant-Colonels Fischer and Pearson were disabled from future service in the campaign.¹

The following day, Drummond was joined by the 97th Regiment. Despite this substantial reinforcement, he had little more than 2,000 effectives - a force far too small to continue siege operations. The protracted wet increased the fatigue of the troops, many of whom fell ill. Reporting to Prevost, Drummond wrote:

> Within the last few days, the sickness of the troops has increased to such an alarming degree, and their situation has really become one of such extreme wretchedness from the torrents of rain which continued to fall for the last 13 days, and from the circumstance of the Division being entirely destitute of camp equipage, that I feel it my duty no longer to persevere in a vain attempt to maintain the blockade of so vastly superior and increasing a force of the enemy.²

Curiously, he failed to mention that Brown's sortie might have had a little to do with his decision.

The size of the American onslaught convinced Drummond

¹De Watteville to Drummond, 19 September 1814, Archives, Q. 128-2, p. 274.
²Drummond to Prevost, 24 September 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 266.
that 5,000 men were within the walls and earthworks of Fort Erie. The British commander feared that the Americans might land a force upon Lake Erie in the vicinity of Point Abino, thus gaining his rear. Far more unnerving was the report from Kingston stating the arrival of Izard's division at Sacket's Harbor. Drummond, envisioning a movement such as Brown had already suggested, immediately saw that his position before Fort Erie was entirely undermined. Drummond had wished to retreat before Brown's sortie but now his weakened and exposed position left him no option but to lift the siege.\(^1\) Accordingly, he ordered a retirement beyond Frenchman's Creek where he would be free from any turning movement from Lake Erie. By great effort, the siege guns were removed on the 18th and 19th without molestation.\(^2\)

On the night of the 21st, shortly after tattoo was sounded, the British division retreated, predictably in a driving rain, leaving their huts intact and watchfires burning. This movement was not detected by the Americans until daybreak when their pickets pushed forward to the edge of the plain. A small British rear-guard fired a few volleys, forcing the Americans to fall back upon their entrenchments.\(^3\) This body was allowed to retreat without

---

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 267.

\(^2\) Harvey to Prevost, 21 September 1814, ibid., p. 261.

\(^3\) Babcock, *The Siege of Fort Erie*, pp. 56-57.
incident, burning the bridges as they did. A cavalry
picket was left to watch the fords over Frenchman's Creek
while another, supported by a detachment of the Glengarry
Light Infantry, guarded the Point Abino Road.¹

The action of September 17 prompted the British
historian, Sir William Napier, to write that Brown's
sortie was "the only instance in history where a besie­
ing army was entirely broken up and routed by a single
sortie."² This indictment appears greatly exaggerated.

While the American assault did succeed in giving Drummond
a fright, the action alone certainly did not compel the
British to quit the siege. The tough British regulars
responded quickly and effectively against the threat and
succeeded in gaining the initiative, and the battlefield,
from their assailants. While injured, the military capa­
city of Drummond's division was not destroyed and the
British retreat was not anything resembling a rout. In­
clement weather, not Brown's sortie, was the principal
agent in the erosion of the British position. Clearly,
the rude huts could not provide shelter for winter opera­
tions. Drummond was aware that Brown would soon be joined
with Izard's force, creating a field army far larger than
anything the British could manage to muster. In Drummond's

¹Harvey to Prevost, 21 September 1814, Archives, C.
685, p. 261.

²Ernest Dupuy, The Compact History of the United
opinion, his division might better be provided for at Niagara where the lines of communications were reduced and greater security provided by the three forts. Undeniably, Brown's sortie was a success militarily yet the fact remains that Drummond would have soon broken off the siege for a variety of reasons, military and otherwise.

Drummond sent the 8th and de Watteville Regiments to the mouth of the Niagara where the situation was desperate. The works at Fort Niagara continued to deteriorate in the continued rains and the engineers reported their inability to repair them readily. The 6th, with the field artillery, lay at Chippewa with the 1st Battalion/Royal Scots stationed at Black Creek. The 82nd camped upon the victorious field at Lundy's Lane while the 89th and flank companies of the 104th camped in the redoubts atop Queenstown Heights. Major General Abraham de Watteville, recently arrived from Kingston, assumed command of the troops south of the Chippewa while Drummond made his headquarters at the Forsyth's homestead above the falls. Major General Richard Stovin, also fresh from Kingston, took command of the troops at Queenstown and in the forts. These dispositions enabled Drummond to speedily concentrate upon either flank or retreat toward Burlington Heights if threatened by a pincer movement. The troops were comfortably housed in private homes and barns while materials were gathered for
the construction of barracks.

No hostile actions were undertaken by either side until September 29 when a British cavalry patrol was overwhelmed by an American force from Fort Erie. Brown did not possess a clear picture of the British deployments and strengths. The British enjoyed knowledge of the American situation including news of the arrival of General George Izard's division at Batavia. Drummond ordered the Incorporated Militia to aid in the harvests of all grain south of the Chippewa. In the meantime, the Royal Scots and the 97th Regiment retired, leaving only the light companies of the 6th, 82nd, 97th, and Glengarry Regiments, as well as a squadron of the 19th Dragoons, to guard the line of the Chippewa River. The Royal Navy manned a schooner at Chippewa to safeguard the river approaches.

General Izard's division, nearly 4,000 strong, sailed from Sacket's Harbor on September 21. Rather than assailing the exposed forts at the mouth of the Niagara, Izard contented himself with a landing near present-day Rochester. On September 24, Izard began his march to Buffalo. Progress was slowed by rains and the state of the roads.

1 Drummond to Prevost, 2 October 1814, Archives, C. 685, p. 1.
2 Drummond to Prevost, 6 October 1814, ibid., p. 7.
3 Drummond to Prevost, 2 October 1814, ibid., pp. 1-2.
Arriving on the 26th, Izard decided to exploit Brown's success and advance up the American shore toward Fort Niagara. In the meantime, Brown began a series of movements designed to force the British to abandon their fortifications at Chippewa. Izard declared his intentions of retaking the "shamelessly lost fortress of Niagara" yet remained inactive until October 1, advancing only as far as Lewistown by October 5. Generals Brown and Porter met Izard at Lewistown and asked that the siege of Fort Niagara be abandoned in favor of an advance along the Canadian shore, for Brown's reconnoitering parties had reported that the strengthening of the forts cost the British much of their field army. The cautious Izard agreed with his subordinates reading of the situation. To facilitate a union between the two American divisions, Izard fell back to Fort Schlosser from which he could cross the river above Chippewa.\footnote{Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, pp. 41-43.}

On October 8, Izard accomplished this retrograde movement only to discover that an insufficient number of boats had been collected for his passage into Canada. Unable to cross with more than a quarter of his force at one time, Izard halted the operation. Transferring his heavy baggage to the boats, the American division marched once again toward Buffalo. Not until October 11, fully
three weeks since arriving on the frontier, did Izard cross
into Canada with his foot-sore battalions. All this march-
ing and counter-marching ended only in exhausting his
troops.¹

The success of Brown's sortie encouraged militia en-
listment. In addition, the 17th Infantry, 200 riflemen,
and 300 dragoons arrived at Fort Erie from the west.²
Drummond believed Brown's force, with these reinforcements,
numbered 6,000. Izard's division reportedly boasted six
regular regiments. Spies and deserters kept the British
command aware of American strength and deployment through-
out this crisis. The British commander assumed the Ameri-
cans would, once they fixed the British positions, launch
a flanking movement, utilizing their naval superiority on
Lake Erie.³

Hence, on October 10 Drummond had the bridge over
Black Creek destroyed and withdrew all but fifty men of
the Glengarry Regiment. The 6th Regiment retired to the
bridgehead at Chippewa while defensive positions were con-
structed at the junction of the Chippewa River and Lyon's
Creek. The fortifications at Lyon's Creek prevented any
American flanking maneuver as well providing infilading

¹Drummond to Prevost, 10 October 1814, Archives, C.
686, p. 10.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
fire across the approaches to the vital Chippewa bridge.

The British right was patrolled by dragoons and militia along the course of Lyon's Creek and the Chippewa. The Royal Scots, 82nd, and 97th Regiments were posted along Portage Road, easily concentrated at Chippewa within two hours. The Marquis of Tweeddale, recovered from his wounds sustained at Chippewa, commanded a brigade at Queenstown consisting of the 89th and 100th Regiments, the flank companies of the 104th, a troop of dragoons, and two field-pieces. A large cache was established at the mouth of Twelve Mile Creek where the heavy baggage was maintained. The local inhabitants were hostile to the invaders and could be trusted to present every obstacle possible. When it became clear that Izard had crossed the Niagara, Drummond called a *levé de masse*. Arrangements were made for the speedy concentration of all these detachments at Chippewa upon the firing of a single shot at Lundy's Lane to be repeated at Queenstown.

On the morning of October 13, Major General Izard, who assumed command by virtue of his seniority, began his advance. His force, the largest American army assembled on the frontier, was organized into two divisions commanded by Brown and Brigadier General Daniel Bissell. The advance-guard collided with the outposts of the Glengarrys

---

1Ibid.

2Harvey to Drummond, 11 October 1814, ibid., p. 14.
at Black Creek. After an exchange of fire, the British retreated, leaving their stores in flames. Izard halted and began constructing a bridge. Next day the advance continued to Street's Creek, where progress was slowed owing to the necessity of rebuilding the bridges over the many streams along the road in order that the artillery maintain the pace. The Glengarrys established a picket-line south of the Chippewa.¹

Meticulous Izard wasted the afternoon constructing a bridge over Street's Creek, everywhere fordable. This accomplished, he deployed his entire force in an extended line stretching a mile and a half from the Niagara River to the woods near the mouth of Lyon's Creek. The British outposts hastily withdrew behind their fortifications. Activity in the British rear led Izard to assume that Drummond was preparing for a retreat. The Americans hurried six guns into action. As the British works were not completed, the American artillery fire had a clear effect: several British pieces were disabled with only a token fire being returned.²

Next morning Lyon's Creek was reconnoitred for a crossing place while strong columns of infantry assembled within view of the British. The bombardment, so success-

¹Drummond to Prevost, 15 October 1814, ibid., p. 31.
²Ibid., pp. 31-32.
ful the day before, was curiously suspended. Toward noon, Izard received some disconcerting news. The British fleet, with the launching of the St. Lawrence, regained control of Lake Ontario.¹ This information so disturbed Izard that he immediately ordered a retreat. The shift in the naval balance was of potentially great significance but Yeo's 112-gun ship could do precious little to aid Drummond immediately. Nevertheless, Izard retired, thereby allowing a brilliant opportunity to crush Drummond's outnumbered army pass.

In an attempt to hide his weaknesses, Drummond pursued, finding huge stores of provisions abandoned or in flames. Shortly afterward, two unsuspecting provision boats blundered into the British position, with one of them, containing a day's supply of food for a full brigade, falling into the red-coats' hands. Izard speedily retired behind Black Creek leaving all his handiwork, the bridges, intact.²

The Americans decided to launch one last half-hearted attempt to out-flank the British position at Chippewa. On October 18, a force of 1,000, made up of detachments of the 5th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Regiments, set out for Cook's Mills on Lyon's Creek. The force was under the

¹Drummond to Prevost, 18 October 1814, ibid., pp. 34-35.
²Ibid.
command of Bissell. The terrible condition of the roads
did not allow Bissell to haul his artillery along.\textsuperscript{1} The
Americans surprised a militia unit at the mill and succeed-
ed in forcing a crossing of the creek. This action turned
the British right and suggested that Izard was planning
a renewed thrust toward Burlington. A demi-brigade under
Tweeddale reinforced Lieutenant-Colonel Myers at Misener's
farm, seven miles from the redoubt at the confluence of
the Chippewa and Lyon's Creek. Myers was instructed to
discover what the American intentions were and their
strengths.

Bissell's unsupported advance left him isolated.
Drummond hoped to meet and destroy Bissell's brigade be-
fore it could be reinforced or retreat. On October 15,
500 men of the 90th Regiment landed at Fort George. This
force, with a detachment of Yeo's marines, was ordered
forward under Major General Richard Stovin.\textsuperscript{2}

During the night of October 18, the Glengarrys came
into contact with Bissell's outposts. Some sporadic fire
took place. Myers, with a force of 750 men, advanced at
daybreak. The American outposts were soon encountered.
A large body of American troops were sighted in a ravine.

\textsuperscript{1}Cruikshank, \textit{The Siege of Fort Erie}, p. 43. Drummond,
in his dispatch of October 18 stated, "the enemy cannot
possibly bring guns." He was correct.

\textsuperscript{2}Drummond to Prevost, 20 October 1814, \textit{Archives, C.}
686, pp. 77-78.
Myers' advance-guard, the omnipresent Glengarry Light Infantry, succeeded in flanking the American position while the remainder of the British force attacked them in front. A sharp skirmish flared up with the Americans falling back upon their main body posted in a wood some distance in the rear.

Colonel George Pinckney of the 5th United States Infantry, posted across the creek, forded the stream with the intention of assailing the British rear and taking their guns. Myers quickly perceived this movement and retired hoping to draw the main American force into the open and engage them despite his inferior numbers. Rising to the occasion, the Americans posted themselves along the skirt of the woods and opened a heavy musketry fire. Myers replied with his field-pieces and rocket section. The American formations, tightly compressed as they were, suffered considerable losses. The British commander was not about to attack the Americans while his adversaries showed no inclination of leaving their wooded shelter. After a half hour fire-fight, Myers broke off the action, having sustained one man killed and thirty-five wounded. General Bissell reported twelve killed, fifty-four wounded, and one missing.¹

Bissell assumed that the British would not hazard an

¹Myers to Drummond, 19 October 1814, ibid., pp. 70-73.
action unless anticipating strong reinforcements. Fear­
ing disaster, the American general ordered a retreat de­spite himself receiving a substantial reinforcement of two regiments of infantry.¹ To his credit, Bissell did not destroy the mill, contenting himself with the burning of

grain. Drummond remarked that the American enemy had been "studiously cautious in abstaining from his burning and plundering system."²

On the 21st, a body of American troops fronted Drum­mond's position before Chippewa. This was a covering force for Izard's retreat which began at noon that day. Corre­

sponding with Secretary Armstrong, Izard wrote:

I confess I am greatly embarrassed. At the head of the most efficient army the United States have pos­sessed during this war, much must be expected from me; and yet, I can discern no object at this point worthy of the risk which will attend its attempt.³

Meanwhile, the British general launches a counter­

attack.⁴ The advance was inaugurated by the dispatch of a cavalry screen which, to Drummond's surprise, found the Americans camped upon the heights opposite Black Rock.

¹Cruikshank, The Siege of Fort Erie, p. 45.
²Drummond to Prevost, 20 October 1814, Archives, C. 686, p. 78.
³Izard to Armstrong, 21 October 1814, as cited by Cruikshank, Documents, p. 202. For his indecision along the Niagara, Izard was disgraced. Faced by a storm of public criticism, General Izard resigned his commission in January 1815.
⁴Drummond to Prevost, 23 October 1814, Archives, C. 686. p. 85.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Not wishing to reopen another sad siege of Fort Erie, especially with the coming of the first fronts, Drummond returned to his cantonments.  

Izard wasted no time in recrossing the Niagara but a strong gale forced him to delay this operation. On November 1st, the last brigade of the shortlived "Army of the Niagara" recrossed the river. Convinced that the difficulties of maintaining Fort Erie outweighed its strategic and political significance, Izard gave orders for its reduction. The artillery was removed and huge mines laid beneath the bastions. On the 5th, the final tiny garrison disembarked leaving the barracks aflame and the demolition of the bastions and the Snake Hill redoubt complete. In the words of the historian Henry Coles, "the invasion ended with both a bang and a whimper."  

Drummond was aware of the American plans for evacuation and dispatched Captain FitzGibbon of the Glengarry Regiment to have a look. Arriving just after the final explosions, he rode undisturbed throughout the deserted and dismantled works around which so much gallant blood had been shed in vain while the enemy silently rowed back to the American shore never again to sally forth into British Canada.

---

1Drummond to Prevost, 30 October 1814, Archives, C 686, p. 96.
2Coles, The War of 1812, p. 163.
3Drummond to Prevost, 5 November 1814, Archives, C 686, p. 121.
V. The Niagara Campaign Reconsidered

The War of 1812 ended amicably over a Christmas dinner of roast beef and plum pudding. The Treaty of Ghent represented a return to the status quo; that is, Canada remained British. When one considers that Great Britain was simultaneously waging war against Napoleonic France and the United States, one is left to wonder how she managed to preserve her position in Canada. There can be only two explanations: (1) the ineptitude of the Madison administration and of the American military, and (2) the superiority of the British army.

The United States blundered into the War of 1812 primarily because Congress was in the hands of a group of bellicose young politicians. The Revolutionary leadership was at its nadir. James Madison, himself a man of considerable talents and experience, was of this Revolutionary generation. As president, Madison endeavored to maintain accord with the warring nations of Europe. With his actions buried in secrecy, opponents pictured Madison as a timorous pacifist dragged into the war by congressional War Hawks. In fact, he worked for peace but British diplomacy, predicated upon a condescending attitude toward the United States, hampered Madison's moderating efforts.

The United States was ill-prepared for war. The national defense had long been allowed to atrophy. The
prospect of war against Great Britain crystalized political factionalism and threatened to reopen the rift of sectionalism. Madison, in times of peace, may well have been a successful chief executive. However as war approached, he exercised less and less leadership. Madison's efforts to form a national administration failed, his cabinet divided into factions. At no time did the president command a controlling voice in Congress. John Calhoun, a leading War Hawk from South Carolina, wrote, "It is to be hoped, that as it is now seriously determined upon, the Executive department will move with much more vigor. Without it, it is impossible to proceed."\(^1\)

Madison's prosecution of the war was marked by anything but vigor. He never seemed to direct policy, rather drifting from policy to policy depending upon the prevailing opinion in his fractious cabinet. In the summer of 1813, Attorney General Richard Rush wrote John Adams that the nation "seems to fight for nothing but disaster and defeat; and, I dare to add, disgrace."\(^2\)

Clearly, James Madison was not made of the stuff of a great war leader. His leadership was vacillating and indecisive. As commander-in-chief, Madison should have


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 97.
orchestrated the various invasion attempts and mediated between conflicting generals and governmental departments. As "Father of the Constitution," Madison was wedded to republican doctrines which prevented him from grasping the emergency powers the situation demanded. As a result, the American war effort was retarded by the absence of sound fiscal and defense policies. The historian must be wary of speculation but one can not but wonder what turn history would have taken had a man of Alexander Hamilton's talents been at the helm.

It would be an injustice to lay the blame totally upon Madison's doorstep. At the onset of the war the American army was commanded by a collection of superannuated generals whose service dated back to the Revolution. Isolated from Europe, the American military establishment was allowed to languish into obsolescence. For fear of spawning an aristocratic officer caste, the United States steadfastly refused to establish a military academy until 1802. In 1812, there were no scientific soldiers among the senior commanders and no regular drill manual to coordinate battlefield maneuver. Educated young men gravitated to the medical and legal professions, commerce, or agriculture and rejected the poor-paying military life of dreary routine and garrison duty. The American army, inactive since 1783 except for a few Indian campaigns, was not the effective tool of diplomacy that the War Hawks
believed it to be. Not until 1814 did the United States begin to produce competent generals. Therefore, the inability to field proficient generals, along with a marked slackening of national unity and dedication, explain the lethargic conduct of the American war effort.

Despite the ineptitude of both politicians and generals, the Americans, by virtue of the vulnerability of Canada and their own numerical superiority, should have triumphed in their task of conquering Canada. Human material and economic treasure were present in sufficient numbers to insure the creation of a powerful military machine. The American population, especially the yeoman farmers, possessed enormous military potential. The fine legacy of the Continental Army demonstrated America's ability to rapidly develop a formidable army. The feats of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies were achieved, not by regular, professional troops, but by raw recruits who developed their skills on the battlefields of Valmy, Fleurus, Lodi, Marengo, Montenotte, Rivoli, and countless others. In the great armies of France, the levies, after receiving only the rudiments of equipment and training, were forged into a revolutionary military machine. Certainly, the human raw material of the American farmer, mechanic, and frontiersman was at least the equal of France's. As history would indicate, the American soldier, if intelligently led, is the equal to any on earth. One
must look beyond American failures alone to find the solution of the question.

During the Napoleonic Wars the British army earned the admiration and respect of Europe. The beginning of the wars found Great Britain woefully unprepared. A contemporary wrote:

Our army was lax in its discipline, entirely without system, and very weak in numbers. Each colonel of a regiment managed it according to his own notions, or neglected it altogether; professional pride was rare; professional knowledge even more so. Never was a kingdom less prepared for a stern and arduous conflict.¹

In a few short years, the British army displayed a remarkable turn-about, prompting General Sir George Bell to assert that "we had the bravest, the best, the finest disciplined and well seasoned army in the world."² Few would disagree.

Despite all the great changes, the British army maintained its eighteenth century character. Officers were the sons of the upper classes, not skilled professionals. The rank and file was composed of long-serive volunteers, mostly uneducated. Even in this, the age of the "nation at arms," the British army remained small, its field formations rarely exceeding 40,000 men.


The British armies were commanded and officered primarily by aristocrats. All officers' commissions, from ensigns' to lieutenant-colonels', were open to purchase. There were other means of promotion - promotion by brevet, rank for recruitment, and selection by merit - but the purchase system accounted for three-quarters of all commissions. Money and approval of the regimental colonel were all that was required. As Bell observed, this meant that veteran officers found themselves under the command of "boys from the nursery who stayed at home and never smelled powder."¹

The Duke of York sought to remove the worst abuses. In 1766, an official scale was set establishing prices; a commission could only be sold after twenty years service or incapacity. Boys were no longer allowed to hold commissions without proper preparatory educations (sixteen was the minimum age). Commissions could not be purchased in the Royal Artillery or the Engineers. These branches became the preserves of the middle-class officers. Three years' service was required in order to qualify for the rank of captain; seven for that of major. From the rank of colonel up, promotion went by seniority.²

Experience produced capable, often exceedingly fine, officers but the British officer remained essentially an

¹Bell, Rough Notes, 1: 115.
²Rothenberg, Age of Napoleon, p. 176.
amateur for whom military life was but a continuation of the rural life of the estate. War was a game, only rougher and more dangerous. When he joined his regiment, the average officer possessed little military knowledge. Wellington wrote:

Nobody in the British Army ever reads a regulation or an order if it were to be a guide for his conduct, or in any other manner than as an amusing novel; and the consequence is, when complicated arrangements are to be carried into execution. . . . every gentleman proceeds according to his fancy.¹

The Duke of Wellington, himself a creature of the purchase system, strongly defended the system. The British army was unrivaled in battle and Wellington declared that the excellence of the army was derived from the fact that it was officered by gentlemen. As the magnitude of operations expanded, it became clear that trained staff officers, not zealour amateurs, were necessary. In 1799 and 1802, the Duke of York instituted High Wycombe and Great Marlow, staff colleges on the model of those of France and Prussia. Despite these attempts, the British army suffered from the lack of staff cadre throughout the Napoleonic period.²

The British officer was separated by an unbridgable social gulf from those he commanded. The enlisted men,


who never represented a cross-section of the British population, were recruited almost exclusively from the lower classes. Parliament refused to introduce conscription, the necessary troops having to be obtained by voluntary enlistment. In England and Scotland, the war relieved much of the unemployment which had previously induced men to join the army. In Ireland, conditions were so miserable that the bounty of eighteen guineas and a fixed pay of one shilling per day with regular rations proved an effective inducement. But even the Irish recruitment proved insufficient. Hence, the British hired foreign units and recruited on the continent whenever possible. Despite these efforts, the army remained understrength. By 1809, the British army had 200,000 men under arms but this figure is misleading. Over half that total were stationed at various posts throughout the empire and when Wellington faced Bonaparte at Waterloo, only half of his 67,000 troops were British.

Discipline in the army was harsh but necessary. The regiments, composed often of the worst elements of society, were founded upon the notion that there was more to be feared from the sergeant than the enemy. Any relaxation of discipline might have proved fatal. Rifleman Harris, a veteran of the Peninsula, wrote of the retreat to Corunna, "if he (General Sir Robert Crauford) flogged two,
he saved hundreds from death."  

Discipline was often difficult to maintain, particularly after a successful battle or during a retreat. After Vittoria, Wellington wrote that the British army was unrivaled in battle but that indiscipline remained a serious problem. 

The army never resorted to using "press gangs" as did the navy. This could not but help produce a most beneficial effect upon the morale of the British army. The army never faced a mutiny as did the Royal Navy. The average soldier was proud to be a member of his regiment. Whether a private or a non-commissioned officer, the mere fact of serving in the British army gave the soldier a sense of being an aristocrat among the soldiers of Europe. As the French historian Elie Halevy explained, "the British Army was an army of snobs, but the universal snobbery produced a maximum good." Perhaps the greatest tribute was paid by a French officer who observed that the British soldier "has no superior in the world; fortunately, there are but a few of him." 

Between Valmy and Waterloo, a period of twenty-three years, Europe was convulsed by a series of wars and coali-

---

1 Rifleman Harris, Recollections of Rifleman Harris, as cited by Rothenberg, The Age of Napoleon, p. 179.
2 Ibid.
3 Halevy, England in 1815, p. 83.
tions. Hostilities were by no means limited to the European continent. Like the Seven Years' War, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were global conflagrations. While the United States was never formally allied with France, the War of 1812 can not be divorced from the European political and military situation. From a purely military standpoint, the tactical systems employed during the Niagara campaign of 1814 mirrored those of Europe.

The American army under Brown was not unlike the citizen armies of Revolutionary France as developed by Lazare Carnot. In 1793, Carnot became Minister of War to the revolutionary Committee of Public Safety and proceeded to implement, by iron-handed administration, the concepts of war which evolved in France after the humiliations of the Seven Years' War. The best known military philosopher of this period was the Comte de Guibert. In his *Essai général de tactique* of 1772, Guibert formulated the concept of a popular citizens' army, imbued with the aggressive fires of patriotism, overcoming one which retained the old ways.

Guibert was a codifier of Frederician tactics but with an important difference. The defeats suffered by France during the Seven Years' War unleashed a flood of books and pamphlets calling for reforms in organization, tactics, and weaponry. The debate revolved whether the French army should imitate the Frederickian linear forma-
tion (l'ordre mince) or utilize tight-packed columns of attack (l'ordre profond). In his writings, Guibert advocated a synthesis of column and line, the ordre mixte.

One of the greatest theorists of the eighteenth-century, Guibert criticized the restricted tactical practices of the century, believing that fluidity and mobility were the formula for success. He recognized that discipline and training remained the greatest defects of the French armies. To compensate, he devised maneuvers which reduced the wheeling movements of deployment down to the bare essentials, thus achieving the maximum in flexibility and simplicity. The ordre mixte provided for a rapid evolution from column to line to column while still allowing for the much prized column of attack.\footnote{French military thinkers (de Saxe, Foland, Mesnil-Durand) believed that the national temperament was ill-suited for linear tactics. The ordre profond best allowed for the crushing offensive a outrance carried at bayonet point.} Guibert recognized the importance of being able to form an order of battle ahead of the line of march, directly from marching columns. Through a rapid series of movements, French troops were enabled to deploy from column to line closer to the enemy, thereby gaining the tactical advantage. In battle, he envisioned a conflict between linear formations decided by infantry fire-power. However, under certain circumstances, like the storming of a village or forest, Guibert
foresaw the advantages of a mass column of attack using the bayonet.¹

Guihert advocated the employment of skirmishers. These formations of elite light troops would seek to disorganize the adversary's resistance and inflict casualties before the lines actually came into collision. Artillery fire, in Guibert's opinion, should not indulge in duels against their opposite numbers but rather attempt to break up the enemy's infantry formations. Frederick's tactical successes, as at Leuthen and Rossbach, were achieved, not by overwhelming artillery fire, but by the high degree of mobility displayed by the Prussian gunners. Behind these diversions, the necessary deployments for the advance could be completed with immunity. Utilizing his superior battlefield mobility, an able commander could advance quickly and effectively against any exposed weaknesses created by the skirmishers and artillery fire in the enemy's lines.²

The principles and methods of Guibert played a major role in forging the kind of army capable of achieving great and glorious ends under the genius of Napoleon.


Guibert had caught the vision of a new system of grand tactics. . . . The new mobile warfare which he sketched was one of the major sources of Napoleon's inspiration. Guibert can claim an important part in the new warfare which the Wars of the French Revolution ushered in and which Napoleon perfected.¹

The embodiment of Guibert's principles was the Ordinance of 1791 issued by the French war ministry. This manual was the most important of the century serving as the foundation for the victorious armies of the French Republic and Empire.

The American army raised at Buffalo was founded upon these very principles. The mark of Guibert, transmitted by Scott, is unmistakeable. The American army possessed great offensive capabilities. The experiences of the French levée en masse illustrated that armies could be raised quickly and needed no more than two months' training to acquire the rudiments of the Guibert system. Winfield Scott, an able tactician and administrator, welded his regiments into an excellent field army. The army that embarked upon the final invasion of Upper Canada was distinguished from previous American forces by its competent leadership based upon the foundations of sound tactical doctrines, something unknown in the American service before Scott's Camp Buffalo.

An examination of the American tactics employed at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane would immediately illustrate

¹Quimby, Background, p. 106.
how attentive Scott was to the Guibert system. At Chippewa, Scott's columns marched across Streets' Creek and deployed in perfect order into linear formation. All this accomplished under British fire. The American artillery quickly occupied a forward position lending direct tactical support to the infantry. The simplicity of the Guibert system allowed Scott to extend his lines in a successful effort to enfilade the approaching British lines. The artillery silenced the British guns which likewise were brought forward to cover the advance of their infantry. With the British pieces out of action, the American guns opened a devastating fire upon the advancing British which decimated the redcoats before the volley exchanges began.

The British, already shaken by the deadly American gun-fire, were broken by the mass volleys of the grey-clad American infantry. At Chippewa, the American system allowed for a rapid deployment of a numerically larger force supported by highly mobile artillery. Riall advanced in linear formation and Scott's infantry, also in extended lines, proved its match. Chippewa demonstrated that the American army, if resolutely led and provided with an elementary tactical capacity, could meet and defeat proven British regulars.

The Battle of Lundy's Lane was, in many respects, a classical engagement of the period. The Americans, con-
vinced of their invincibility after Chippewa, fought the battle according to the precepts of the *Ordinance de 1791*. The British, occupying a selected defensive position, deployed into their famed "thin red lines" as in the tradition of the Peninsula and Waterloo. Lundy's Lane would be a confrontation between the *ordre mixte* and the British linear tactics.

Let us now turn our attention to the British system. The solid bedrock of the British army was its regimental organization. Locally recruited and officered, the British regiments enjoyed an unparalleled degree of homogeneity, the cornerstone being their high level of discipline and *esprit de corps*. This system spawned an excellent cadre of long-service non-commissioned officers. British junior officers often refused to perform the tasks of clerk and jailor and left the administrative duties to the non-commissioned ranks. In large part, it fell to the sergeants to perform these duties as well as to maintain the rigorous discipline that characterized the British army. Whatever the individual motivations of the soldiers might have been, the British system inculcated a tremendous loyalty to the regiment. For this reason, perhaps more than any other, British units illustrated, time and again, extraordinary capacities for cohesion and recuperation in battle.

On paper, the regiment consisted of two battalions.
In practice, only one battalion was active at any one time. A second battalion, often little more than a recruiting party, provided the framework for home defense. Late in the wars, several regiments fielded two battalions although not necessarily in the same location. A battalion consisted of ten companies, of which one was the light and another the grenadier company. The strength of the battalion varied, usually something less than 600 men. The experiences of the War of Independence in America taught the British of the necessity of light troops. These specially selected men were trained as all-purpose infantry. Armed with the Baker rifle, they could fight as individual skirmishers, in groups, or in line. Light infantry formations generally fought in open order in advance or on the flanks of the line. As at Lundy's Lane, the light infantry often fired the opening and last shots of the battle. The grenadiers, also an elite formation, were usually held in reserve for the purpose of carrying home the assault.¹

Nothing reflected the anachronism of the British army more than its organization, especially in regard to the artillery and engineering branches. The Master-General of Ordnance and the Board of Ordnance superseded the commander-in-chief, a nearly defunct office until revived in 1793, in control of the weapons, ammunition, and personnel.

¹Rothenberg, The Age of Napoleon, pp. 181-182.
of the artillery. In effect, the engineers and artillery composed an army within an army. The basic organization was the artillery troop. Commanded by a captain, it usually fielded nine guns. The Royal Artillery's high level of competency belied its antiquated organization. In fact, the British artillery branch demonstrated a marked inventiveness pioneering the use of shrapnel and rockets, both of which made their appearances felt in the war in America.

Fundamentally, British tactics remained based upon the linear formation and infantry firepower. The threat of the column of attack did not induce the British to abandon the linear tactics, merely to improve them. The three-deep line was forsaken in favor of two ranks. This allowed for a considerable broadening of the frontage while more muskets were brought into play. The nature of the musket, especially its restricted range, limited the number of files that could effectively engage the enemy.

Time and again the British linear tactics proved their superiority over the French column of attack. The volume of firepower generated by a line, invariably supplemented by artillery, was greater than that generated by the column. A British line, composed of three battalions on a frontage of 175 yards, presented 1,800 muskets. Two French battalions in column formation, 1,920 men in all, brought
only 160 muskets to the fore. The deep column also proved particularly vulnerable to canister fired by well served artillery.¹

Wellington refined these tactics in the Peninsula War. The Iron Duke's soldiers, who saved themselves from decimation by artillery by occupying sheltered positions on a rearward slope, devastated numerically larger French armies. Once the French preparatory artillery fire abated, the British light infantry and artillery provided covering fire behind which Wellington advanced to meet the French onslaught. By concealing his dispositions, Wellington enjoyed tactical superiority. Often, French columns probing for the British flank found themselves confronting the center of the red line. At Waterloo, behind formidable barriers and fortified positions, the British invited the suicidal column assaults. As Wellington remarked, "They came on in the same old way and they went back in the same old way." The line, when manned by British regulars, was superior to the column.²

Drummond's conduct of the Battle of Lundy's Lane was in the Wellington tradition. The British consolidated their lines on the rear-slope of the hill, behind a screen

¹Rothenberg, The Age of Napoleon, pp. 183-184.
of light infantry. Drummond brought forward his artillery, posting it in a commanding position atop the knoll. While inferior in number of guns, Drummond's possession of naval 24-pounders provided the British with a tremendous volume of fire. His center manned by regulars and his flanks guarded by able militia, Drummond beckoned the Americans to attack.

Scott, the American combination of Ney and Davout, accepted the challenge. The American attacks, in ordre mixte, were thrown back by the British lines. Lundy's Lane, like Waterloo, witnessed brilliant feats of valor by both the attacking columns and defending lines. Here too, superior British discipline and tactics were the authors of the attackers' ruin. Only Miller's good fortune of discovering an unguarded salient robbed Drummond of winning his miniature Waterloo. Nevertheless, superior discipline and the ability to maintain cohesion on the battlefield won the day for the British but not before the Americans gained their measure of honor and glory.

The fighting traditions of the United States Army were upheld by the "Army of the Niagara." The actions at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, in addition to the defense of Fort Erie, restored the honor of American arms, tarnished in the two previous years of war. The campaign along the Niagara, although dwarfed by the successes of the British in Spain and at Waterloo, did much to enhance
the honor of the regiments involved. It might be said
that the British regiments were in their element in the
engagements of the War of 1812. The battles in North
America were essentially small-scale, small unit confron-
tations in which British military weaknesses were mini-
mized and their strengths maximized. The adoption of
light infantry formations admirably suited the British
regiments for warfare in America. Semi-autonomous regi-
ments, banned together into demi-brigades, were formid-
able formations, especially on the defensive. American
units of roughly equal size, although in themselves fine
formations, could not match the British.

The military history of the War of 1812 has been
downgraded, seen as little more than a side-show of the
conflict in Europe. This is a curious attitude since
the destiny of much of the North American continent was
held in the balance. Furthermore, the war is pictured
as a British rearguard action fought against a comically
ineffective American army. This certainly was not the
case in the Niagara campaign of 1814. Here, the battles
and sieges were fought with considerable sophistication.
The tendency is to discount the significance of small
scale actions in war. Book upon book has been written
about the exploits of the Peninsula Army but only on three
occasions, at Talavera, Albuera, and Toulouse, did losses
exceed ten per-cent. Wellington's loses were greater
during the Waterloo campaign but it must be remembered that barely half his army was British. At Chippewa, Riall lost thirty-eight per-cent while three weeks later, Drummond suffered twenty-seven per-cent losses at Lundy's Lane. Despite these hard-fought engagements, the reinforced British army still managed to lay siege to a numerically larger force inside Fort Erie. The siege of Fort Erie is remarkable in itself. In Drummond's night assault, the attacking British lost an incredible forty-two per-cent. No siege in Europe conducted in this period approached this. The bloodiest siege of the Peninsula campaign was Badajoz where Wellington lost only seventeen per-cent. The battles along the Niagara, while dwarfed in comparison to the huge struggles taking place in Europe, suffered from no lack of ferocity. The bloody night battle of Lundy's Lane has few parallels.

 Mightier armies have met in conflict, on fields of greater renown, but a fiercer struggle in proportion to the numbers engaged, a severer trial of discipline, a greater test of patriotic bravery - a battle more closely associated with the beauty of nature - the world has never known.1

This was the verdict, 100 years after, of Peter A. Porter, grandson of an American general who took part in this extraordinary battle fought within sight and sound of the mighty Niagara.

1 As cited by Grey, Lundy's Lane, p. 23.
The War of 1812 contributed little to the development of military science. The traditions established at Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and New Orleans provided a legacy from which Americans draw inspiration. However, subsequent wars pale the War of 1812 into insignificance. Today, Canadians and Americans enjoy the longest undefended border in the world. Except for some sporadic explosions of nineteenth-century chauvinism and the Fenian incursions, the peace established at Ghent has survived. Relations between two nations could hardly be better. Most people are only too pleased to forget and forgive old injustices and injuries. In most minds, the War of 1812 has been forgotten.

Each July 25, upon the battlefield of Lundy's Lane, the Union Jack once again faces Old Glory. The flags are held, not by bloodied soldiers, but by aged Daughters of the British Empire on one hand and fat, middle-aged men, curiously garbed in Civil War battledress, on the other. This melancholic ceremony, amidst the tombstones, is viewed by a motley crowd whose numbers annually decrease. On the modern six lane thoroughfare below, hundreds of tourists pass oblivious of the significance of the day. Some miles north, at Queenstown Heights, the once formidable redoubts now house flower gardens and wading pools.
To whom, then, are these long forgotten events important - only to the anachronistic octogenarians; to the play soldiers; and to the historian.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Material


Secondary Material

Adams, Henry. History of the United States during the

Auckinleck, Gilbert. A History of the War between Great

Babcock, Louis. The War of 1812 on the Niagara Frontier.
Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1927.

Bell, George. Rough Notes of an Old Soldier during Fifty


Byfield, Shadrack. A narrative of a light company soldier's
service in the 41st Regiment of Foot during the late

Caffrey, Kate. The Twilight's Last Gleaming. New York:

Chandler, David. The Campaigns of Napoleon. New York:

Coles, Harry. The War of 1812. Chicago: University of

Cruikshank, Ernest. Documents relating to the invasion
of the Niagara Peninsula by the American Army, com-
manded by General Jacob Brown, in July and August,
1814. Welland, Ontario: Niagara Historical Society
The Battle of Lundy's Lane. Welland: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1891.

Drummond's Winter Campaign, 1813. Welland: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1897.


The Siege of Fort Erie. Welland: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1905.


Heitman, Francis. Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army. Washington: Government


Periodicals


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

