



THE WAR OF 1812 ON THE FRONTIER

By Lura Lincoln Cook

FAMILIES living on the Niagara Frontier in the early 1800's had to face severe hardships in order to carry on the ordinary business of living. To these normal difficulties of frontier life were added the bitter suffering and tragedy of two and one-half years of fighting in the War of 1812.

When the war broke out the population of the United States was something over seven million people. The eighteenth State, Louisiana, had just been admitted to the Union. The vast new territory of Louisiana, recently bought from Napoleon, was awaiting settlement. However, there were obstacles along the highway of expansion. Florida, which still was in the possession of Spain, could become a source of danger if it fell into the hands of an enemy nation. The Indians in the Illinois and Indiana Territories were restless and threatening. Tecumseh, the Indian chieftain, was busy organizing the tribes to block the westward movement of white settlers. Americans were sure that the British in Canada were helping and encouraging him in his activities.

Many westerners were "Expansionists." Most of them believed that the United States could gain much from a war with England. The conquest of Canada would add a great new piece of territory to the United States, and at the same time it would get rid of the British trouble-makers among the western Indians. Many believed that the Indians would always be a source of danger in the West so long as the British controlled Canada and kept stirring them up from there. Those who were interested in insuring the safety of the Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan Territories against this danger were strong in support of the idea of war with Britain.

Also among the Expansionists were settlers in Kentucky and Tennessee who wanted to see Spanish Florida become American territory. Since Spain was England's ally in Europe and much occupied, at the time, in defending her own land, war with England should offer an excuse to seize Florida. The spokesmen in Congress for these Expansionists were nicknamed "War Hawks." They were led by Henry Clay of Kentucky, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, and Peter B. Porter of Western New York.

Also among the situations leading to war were the happenings in Europe at that time. During the early years of the 19th century, the commerce of the United States was affected greatly by the fierce struggle that was going on between France and England. Napoleon was



General Peter B. Porter.

determined to conquer the continent of Europe and to subdue England as well. England was fighting for self-preservation. Neither Napoleon nor the British Government had much concern for the rights of a weak neutral, such as the United States was at that time.

American ships were continually in danger of seizure from both sides. On the one hand, Napoleon threatened to seize any ship that called at a European port after touching at an English port. On the other side, the British Orders in Council in retaliation declared all French and allied ports in a state of blockade. This meant that Britain considered she had the right to seize any ship attempting to call at one of

these ports.

Another cause of friction was the right claimed by Britain to stop ships on the high seas to search them for English sailors who had deserted. It was claimed that American sailors had been taken from ships under this pretext and impressed, or forced into service in the English navy.

To summarize, then, there were four main causes of war. The Expansionists desired more territory for the United States. Some people felt that the British in Canada might arouse the Indians against American settlers. The British refusal to allow American ships to trade in French ports was a major blow to American business. Finally, the impressment of seamen from American ships aroused strong resentment throughout the country. Upon President Madison's request, Congress voted to declare war against Britain on June 18, 1812.

The minority in Congress that voted against the declaration of war represented a large body of public opinion in the country. In general, the Republican Party was in favor of war, and the Federalist Party was opposed to it. Opinion in New York State was sharply divided, but the most violent opposition to the war was in New England. The Governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut refused the President's request that they call upon the State Militia for the defense of the country.

Besides the difficulties of recruiting men, the war effort was greatly handicapped by lack of money. Congress was unwilling to impose new

taxes, so it had to call for war loans. Although New England was the richest part of the country, it contributed only about \$3 million of a total of \$38 million raised for war loans in the country as a whole. Worse than this, the New England financiers lent large sums of money to England to carry on her war effort. Also, during the entire war, American suppliers shipped beef and other provisions to the British through northern New York and Vermont.

Although Congress voted to declare war, it failed to provide the necessary funds to carry it on with vigor. The organization of the War Department was hopelessly inadequate to cope with its war duties. There was neither provision to buy the necessary quantities of supplies for the troops nor means to transport them. Transportation costs were unbelievably high; the freight charge for carrying a barrel of flour from Philadelphia to Detroit was \$60.00. Pay for the soldiers often did not reach them until long past payday.

At the beginning of the war, the Americans had a Regular Army of about 10,000 men. Most of them, however, were needed to man the outposts where they were stationed. Many of their commanders were old and unfit for the responsibilities of a war command. Congress authorized the President to accept 50,000 one-year volunteers and to call on the States for 100,000 militia. The number of men who responded was far short of the call. The militiamen were enlisted for periods of a year, six months, or often as little as two months. With such short-term soldiers, little training or discipline was possible. Military operations had to be simple and objectives quickly achieved before the volunteers quit and went home. The militia commanders, while usually sincere and patriotic men, were often chosen for their political importance rather than for their military skill and experience.

More deaths resulted from disease and exposure than from bullets. The troops no sooner reached a camp than they began to fall ill, chiefly from dysentery, typhoid, and typhus fever.

For their part, the British also suffered from some major handicaps. The Canadians had a much smaller population and their resources were more limited than those of the United States. The mother country was engaged in a life-and-death struggle at home. She could spare neither ships nor soldiers to fight against the United States until Napoleon was defeated in 1814 and temporarily exiled to Elba. Although the British had the advantage of experienced and skillful commanders, the total number of men under arms in Canada was considerably less than in the United States.

Turning from the general war picture, let us consider the situation in 1812 on the Niagara Frontier.



Landing of General Harrison's Troops at Buffalo Creek, October 1813.

The Niagara River flows north for about thirty miles from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. For most of its length it runs through flat and fertile country. It can be crossed by small boats for all but seven or eight miles near the Falls. This fact was of great military importance during the war years. The peninsula between the lakes was a transferring point for food and supplies from one lake to the other.

The United States had acquired the east bank of the river after the Revolution. However, it was 1796 before negotiations were completed for Great Britain to leave Fort Niagara. There was a settlement of about 400 people at Buffalo, located at the eastern end of Lake Erie. A small force of militia was stationed there and at Black Rock, a few miles farther north. The land between this area and the Falls was sparsely settled. Fort Schlosser was located on the mainland near the northern end of Grand Island. There was also a small settlement called Manchester, now Niagara Falls. Seven miles farther north was Lewiston. Fort Niagara, the most important fortification on the river, stood near the point where the Niagara River empties into Lake Ontario.

On the Canadian side opposite Buffalo was Fort Erie, a settlement of about twenty houses besides the fort. Some sixteen miles down the river and two miles above the Falls stood a blockhouse at Chippawa. Opposite Lewiston lay the village of Queenston. Fort George stood as a protection to the Village of Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In 1812 the war party in Congress assumed that the American forces would be able to take over Upper Canada by a quick invasion. They expected to capture the key points of Malden, Niagara, Kingston, and Montreal. General William Hull entered Canada from Detroit shortly after war was declared. He quickly retreated, however, when faced by British forces at Malden. British General Isaac Brock, whose troops were reinforced with Indians under Tecumseh, pursued him to Detroit. There he secured the surrender of Hull's entire army on August 11,

1812. During the summer the British and Indians occupied all the outlying American posts beyond the Wabash.

There was a period of inactivity because of an agreement between the American commander on the Niagara Frontier, General Henry Dearborn, and the Governor of Canada, Sir George Prevost. Prevost hoped that the British repeal of the Orders in Council, which had taken place shortly after the declaration of war, would end the fighting. He agreed to an armistice — a temporary cessation of fighting. However, this hope proved vain. The American War Department ordered Dearborn to invade Canada immediately. The action commenced by the taking of the British brigs, *Calendonia* and *Detroit*, off Fort Erie on October 9th.

Three days later General Stephen Van Rensselaer, of the New York Militia, was encamped at Lewiston with a force then numbering about 3,000 men, including 800 Regular Army troops. He led an invasion across the Niagara River. He had hoped for the co-operation of General Alexander Smyth, commander of 1,650 U. S. Regulars on the frontier. However Smyth refused to work with him in spite of the fact that he had orders to do so.

Van Rensselaer's plan was to attack the British forces at Queenston on the opposite bank of the river. He hoped to ferry his men across in relays under cover of darkness. He launched the attack on the night of October 12th. The first landing party was discovered by a British sentry who gave the alarm. The village itself lay under the escarpment, but the British had mounted guns on the high ground above. An advance unit of Americans under Captain John E. Wool fought its way up the heights. They seized a gun which had been firing on the Americans crossing the river and held all of the high ground for several hours.

They broke up the British counter-attack led by General Brock, who had hurried from Fort George to lead personally the British defense force. Brock was killed at the head of his troops while urging them up the escarpment to re-take the gun seized by Captain Wool's men.

Further American crossings were opposed by the British battery at Vrooman's Point firing at boats crossing the river. However, it did not do much damage. By 2 o'clock in the afternoon some 700 or 800 of

Fort Niagara, about 1803, as viewed from Fort George.





British General Sir Isaac Brock.

Van Rensselaer's troops had arrived on the Canadian side, and many more were in position to cross. Victory appeared to lie in American hands.

However, General Sheaffe's arrival with troops from Fort George and Chippawa and a party of Indians quickly changed the situation. Lieutenant-Colonel Winfield Scott had now assumed command of the invading troops. General Van Rensselaer saw the large body of reinforcements for the enemy approaching. He tried to hurry more men and artillery across the river. But the New York militiamen lost heart at the sight of the British Redcoats and painted savages, flatly refusing to cross. The militiamen insisted that they had no obligation to fight beyond the borders of New York State. They remained on the safe side of the river and looked on while victory changed to defeat before the fierce attack of the British and Indians. Colonel Scott surrendered his forces to General Sheaffe before the day was over.

General Sheaffe was the British commander for most of the Battle of Queenston Heights. However, Canadians cherish most the name of General Brock, "the Savior of Canada," in connection with this battle.

After a winter of little military activity, the United States Lake Ontario Fleet transported a force of about 1,700 men to York on April 27, 1813. After a short battle in which the American loss was 320 men and the British loss 200, the Americans occupied the town. They remained in possession until May 8. During this period the troops did a considerable amount of looting and destroying of private property.

They blew up ships and naval stores, and burned the provincial offices, and buildings occupied by the Parliament. The British were very bitter over this destruction, which took place after the surrender of the town. In 1814 they retaliated by burning the city of Washington.

The fleet, commanded by Commodore Isaac Chauncey, left York carrying General Dearborn's command. It proceeded to a position near the mouth of the Niagara River. Commodore Perry, later of Lake Erie fame, took part in this operation. The troops were led by Colonel Winfield Scott, who had been paroled and exchanged by the British after his capture at Queenston Heights. Assisted by fire from Fort Niagara across the river, the American troops disembarked on May 26 and seized Fort George, which stood on the Canadian side close to the lake. Unfortunately, the British army commanded by General Vincent, escaped down the River Road and eventually arrived safely at Burlington Heights, overlooking the present city of Hamilton. Meanwhile, the British garrison at Fort Erie was ordered to withdraw and join General Vincent at Burlington. This left the Americans in possession of the whole length of the Canadian bank of the Niagara River.

However, their victorious situation was short-lived. As had happened before the battle of Queenston Heights, lack of co-operation between American commanders made difficulties. Vincent's army had escaped from Fort George to fight another day. Chauncey refused to allow his fleet to be used to try to overtake him. Therefore, the army had to move overland toward Burlington Heights in pursuit of the British forces.

On the night of June 5, some 1,400 of the American troops camped on the Burlington-Niagara Road near the mouth of Stoney Creek on Lake Ontario. Lieutenant-Colonel Harvey, under Vincent's command, led a surprise attack on the American forces and drove them out

Queenston Heights showing Brock's Monument, as it appeared in 1840.





Major General Henry Dearborn.

of their camp. A number of American officers, including the two commanders, Chandler and Winder, were captured in this engagement. Many guns and small boats were also seized. Pursued by British troops and a force of Indians, the Americans retreated to Fort George.

This disaster to the American forces was followed closely by another at Beaver Dams, about 15 miles from Fort George. There on June 24, a force of about 450 men under Colonel Boerstler was ambushed by Indians. In the thick woods the Americans were unable to see their enemies and suffered severe losses. Fearing the savagery of the Indians against the wounded and other captives, Colonel Boerstler surrendered his entire command to British Major De Haren, who had arrived on the battle scene. The Indians had won this engagement without any aid from the British and expected to be rewarded with all the possessions of their captives. When Major De Haven ordered that the American officers be allowed to retain their arms, horses, and baggage, the Indians were so resentful that they deserted.

The defeats of Stoney Creek and Beaver Dams came on the heels of the American victories which had won the entire western bank of the Niagara River from the British. They put the Americans on the defensive and shattered the hope for a quick conquest of the Niagara Peninsula. General Dearborn resigned and was succeeded by James Wilkinson.

Not only at Beaver Dams but consistently throughout the war the British used Indian aid in their military operations. A number of Iroquois had migrated to the Grand River region from New York after the Sullivan raids of 1779. These Indians proved to be helpful

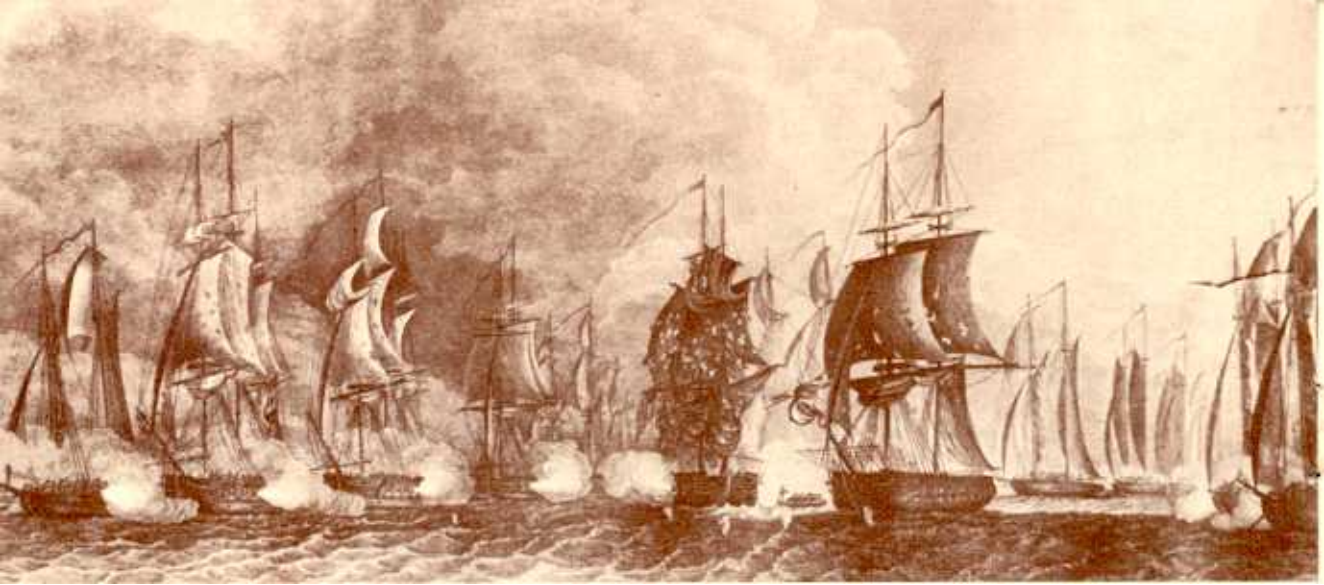


*A view of Fort George, Upper Canada, from Fort Niagara
—1812. American flag can be seen flying from Fort Niagara.*

allies. Their mere presence with the enemy had a demoralizing effect on the poorly-disciplined American troops. This was not all due to imagination, for the Indians frequently demonstrated their ideas of how to treat fallen foes. The British, however sincerely they tried, could not always persuade them to abide by the niceties of “civilized warfare.”

The British commanders found themselves in continual difficulties with their Indian allies. It cost more to keep a warrior in provisions than it did a British soldier. General Drummond reported in April 1814 that he was providing his Indian allies with 1,200 barrels of flour each month. The Indians expected a large amount of booty after every victory. In July 1813, Major General De Rottenburg issued orders declaring that a captive ceased to be an enemy upon the moment of his surrender. He also offered the Indians \$2.50 for each wounded American and \$5.00 for each unharmed American prisoner brought to headquarters. These offers presented an attractive alternative to the pleasure of taking scalps.

Unlike the British, the Americans did not encourage Indian allies at the outbreak of war. It was July 1813 before much use was made of the friendly tribes. During that month a party of British crossed the river and raided the American camp at Black Rock. Thirty or forty Indians, led by Farmer’s Brother, joined General Peter B. Porter when he led an opposing force out of Buffalo. The British retreated across the river after



Battle of Lake Erie.

having ransacked the navy yard fortifications and set the barracks at Fort Tompkins afire. General Porter then invited the Indians to join his army and put a number of them on his payroll. Farmer's Brother was made a colonel and was paid \$40 a month, as was the Seneca, Cornplanter, called "Colonel Obeal" in Porter's letters.

The best-known of the Frontier's Indian allies was Red Jacket, a great orator. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army at a salary of \$30 a month. This famous Seneca chief had sided with the British during the Revolution and later opposed the advancement of white settlers into Indian lands.

In the wilderness country of Canada the supply lines had to follow the waterways. For that reason military experts believe that the Americans could have conquered Upper Canada if they had been able to establish control over Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

Lieutenant Oliver Hazard Perry captured the British fleet in the Battle of Lake Erie in September 1813. This was the occasion of his famous report, "We have met the enemy and they are ours!" His naval victory made possible the land victory of General William Henry Harrison at the Battle of the Thames in October. This was the same Major General Harrison who later became the ninth President of the United States. Through this battle, the Northwest was restored to the United States, and the British threat to the Niagara Peninsula from the west was removed.

The story was different on Lake Ontario. The American fleet there was commanded by Commodore Isaac Chauncey and the British fleet by Sir James L. Yeo. The fleets of both nations continued to operate throughout the war but avoided a battle. This meant that the British fleet was able to support land operations and protect supply lines.

The capture of Fort George in May 1813 had placed the Americans in control of both banks of the Niagara River. However, during July

and August most of the garrison of the fort was withdrawn to take part in an unsuccessful campaign to capture Montreal. The fort, under the command of General McClure, was left with a handful of troops which grew smaller as their terms of enlistment expired. In December, the General learned that he was threatened with the advance of a British force of 500 men under Colonel Murray. Believing that an attempt to defend Fort George was hopeless, he decided to destroy the nearby village of Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake, so that the British troops could not live there during the winter.

Newark consisted of about 80 buildings housing some 400 women and children. Most of the village men were in the British army or were American prisoners of war. The inhabitants were given two or three hours to save what belongings they could. They were then driven out into the bitter winter weather while almost the entire village was put to the torch. One of the strangest things about this deed is that McClure did not at the same time destroy items of military value such as the heavy guns, the fortifications, and his own army tents at Fort George. These all fell into the hands of the enemy.

The burning of Newark caused indignation on both sides of the border. General McClure, hooted on the streets of Buffalo, complained that he was the victim of gross insults. President Madison disclaimed responsibility for the act through his commander, General Wilkinson. Wilkinson termed it a "deed abhorrent to every American feeling." In spite of these implied apologies, the British armies and their allies inflicted a terrible revenge a few days later when they laid waste the American side of the river.

British Colonel Murray, in a surprise night attack on the 18th, led his forces across the Niagara from Fort George. They bayoneted the entire detachment of 40 American soldiers on sentry duty at the outpost of Youngstown. Then, still undetected by the forces at Fort Niagara, the colonel led his men right up to the walls of the fort. Due to the absence of the commanding officers and negligence on the part of the American troops, the British entered the main gate when it was opened for the changing of the guard. They quickly overcame the slight opposition that was offered and took strategic Fort Niagara with the loss of only six men killed and five wounded during the entire operation. They had not fired a shot! American losses were 65 killed, 14 wounded, and 344 taken prisoner.

The seemingly senseless loss of Fort Niagara was a disaster to the United States. Huge quantities of arms, ammunition, and supplies valued at about a million dollars were lost.

While Colonel Murray's troops were attacking Fort Niagara on the morning of December 19th, General Riall had crossed the river. He

approached Lewiston with a large force of British Regulars and Indians. The attacking Indians soon scattered the American militia and their Indian allies who were stationed there. Then followed a day of horror, death, and destruction. The attacking Indians somehow obtained a supply of liquor. Intoxicated, they lost any veneer of civilization they might have had while sober.

With blood-curdling whoops they fell upon the houses in the village and set them afire. The terrified inhabitants — men, women, and children — were routed from their beds without warning. Those who were not tomahawked and scalped immediately tried frantically to escape by the Ridge Road towards Genesee Falls. All who were caught, regardless of age or sex, were slaughtered without mercy.

The massacre quickly spread to the surrounding countryside. For a distance of six to eight miles along the river and on the Ridge Road every house except one was burned. Very few of the inhabitants escaped, although there is a record of about twenty women and children being saved from the Indians by British troops.

The British themselves completed the work of destruction by burning the remaining buildings in the area as far as Tonawanda Creek. In four days Youngstown, Lewiston, Manchester (now Niagara Falls), Fort Schlosser, and all outlying farm buildings were burned.

While the Americans were still reeling from this series of disasters, the British commander, Lieutenant-General Gordon Drummond, determined to strike immediately at Buffalo. He ordered his second in command, General Riall, to cross the river from Fort Erie to launch an attack on Buffalo and Black Rock.

Meanwhile, there was fear and confusion among the American forces. General McClure had turned his command over to General Amos Hall and had left the frontier. Hall had a force of 2,000 men at Buffalo and Black Rock, including some Indians but few regular troops. About 800 of these men vanished upon the appearance of the enemy.

General Riall led his raiding party across the river on the night of December 29, landing near Black Rock. General Hall collected his Indians and such other troops as he could and attempted to stop the British advance. Since the British troops were largely veterans and the Americans were untrained militia, the American lines broke and fled. General Hall rallied two or three hundred men and made a stand in Williamsville. The British burned every building in Buffalo except the jail, Mrs. St. John's home, and David Reese's blacksmith shop.

Governor Prevost issued a proclamation in January 1814 following the destruction in the Niagara region. He deplored the necessity for the total war his army had been waging. Prevost expressed the hope that "future measures of the enemy" would not compel him again to resort

to it. Surely, the burning of Newark was avenged!

After this the British did respect private property for a time until an American raiding party burned Port Dover on Lake Erie in Canada. In May a party of 800 regular troops, militia, and seamen advanced on the village. Troops plundered and burned the houses, destroyed industries and wiped out supplies. This was followed in July by the burning of St. David's. General Brown immediately punished the commander of the detachment responsible for this outrage.

However, Governor Prevost in great indignation requested the admiral of the British fleet in the Atlantic to carry out suitable retaliatory measures. In August the admiral burned a portion of the city of Washington, including the White House. Although private property seems to have been spared in this engagement, the action was condemned by the outraged Americans.

In the spring of 1814 the badly-led, poorly-trained American troops on the frontier were at last given a real leader. Jacob Brown succeeded General Wilkinson as commander. Brown was intelligent, active, and determined to make a good fighting force out of his ragtag troops and to use them effectively. Brigadier General Winfield Scott, who had been rapidly promoted in spite of being only 27 years old, was given the job of training his troops. Using his one copy of Napoleon's *Army Regulations* as a textbook, he gave his officers an intensive course in the fundamentals of military science. They in turn taught their men.

In July 1814, General Brown crossed into Canada with a force of about 4,000 men. The army included Scott's brigade of Regulars, 1,800 militia, and about 600 Indians. The Indians were led by General Peter B. Porter, who had recruited them with the help of Red Jacket. Scott's brigade quickly captured lightly-defended Fort Erie, then advanced north with Chippawa as the first objective.

General Riall, leading a force of British Regulars and Indians, made a stand on the south bank of the Chippawa River near the Niagara. The field was open and level, an ideal battleground for traditional



Major General Jacob Brown.



Brigadier General Winfield Scott

fighting. When Scott's brigade appeared, the British charged. To their astonishment the Americans did not break and scatter but fought back with courage and skill. It was the British line that broke and retreated across the Chippawa.

This victory over British Regulars gave a much-needed lift to Americans' pride in their fighting men. Scott's men were clothed in gray uniforms, since he had not been able to obtain enough cloth of the traditional army blue in Philadelphia. That first "long, gray line" that formed at Chippawa still lives on in tradition on the parade ground of West Point. In honor of the victory, the War Department ordered, in 1815, that henceforth the dress uniform of the West Point cadets was to be made in the style and color of Scott's Brigade.

After the Battle of Chippawa, General Brown planned to march to Lake Ontario and, in co-operation with Commodore Chauncey's fleet, to attack the British at Burlington. But Chauncey refused to allow his fleet to take part in such a venture. Brown then decided to march overland to Burlington. However, on July 25th his plans were changed when his army met the British in the fierce Battle of Lundy's Lane not far from the falls of the Niagara River.

The British forces occupied a position on a hill when General Scott led the attack against them late in the afternoon. Brown came up later with American reinforcements. By 11 p.m. the Americans had forced the British to retreat and were in possession of the battlefield. However, the Americans had suffered severe losses, and both Generals Brown and Scott were badly wounded. They had to withdraw to their camp at Chippawa for rest and food. In the morning General Ripley

returned to the battle scene to remove the British guns that had been taken the night before. He was too late, for the British had returned first and had re-occupied the battlefield. Both armies were too exhausted to start the fight again. The Americans were forced to abandon the field and to withdraw to Fort Erie, while the British remained.

The fort to which the Americans retreated had been built by the British in 1764. It provided a harbor and trading post for lake travelers until 1812. The fort was weak. It offered its defenders little protection until the Americans made substantial improvements on it after their retirement from Lundy's Lane. On August 1st General Drummond brought up a force of 4,000 men to lay siege to the fort. He sent a raiding party across the river to Black Rock, hoping to defeat the troops there and destroy their stores. The Americans at Black Rock defeated the British and drove them back to the Canadian bank. This setback was balanced a week later when the British succeeded in capturing two small armed schooners and driving off a third.

A determined attack was launched against Fort Erie by the British in the early morning of August 15th. The Americans were expecting the attack and fought back fiercely. However, in the darkness a party of British, using scaling-ladders, succeeded in seizing one bastion and turning its guns against the fort. The Americans were unable to drive them off because of the narrowness of the passageway leading to the bastion from the inside. Suddenly the ammunition stored underneath exploded, blowing up the bastion and the detachment of 300 or 400 British troops who occupied it at the time.

The attack was over, but the siege continued. The British were reinforced to make up for their losses. General Brown called for volunteers to strengthen his garrison at the fort. About 1,500 New York militiamen were persuaded to cross the river on September 10th to join the American defenders. The newly-arrived militia took part in a sortie against the British besieging force on September 17th.

This sortie knocked out the British guns that had been bombarding the fort. The British lost nearly 1,000 men in casualties, while the American loss was slightly over 500. The losses, as well as much illness and a shortage of supplies, induced General Drummond to lift the siege and withdraw his forces to Chippawa.

At this stage in the war the British held all of the war-torn Niagara Peninsula except Fort Erie. The Americans made a feeble effort to break this hold when Major General George Izard arrived from Sackett's Harbor and collected a force of 6,000 men. He had a minor skirmish with Drummond's army at Chippawa in October and then gave up and withdrew to winter quarters across the river at Black Rock. Fort Erie,

the prize that had cost so many lives, was abandoned.

By the end of 1814 both countries were anxious to end the conflict. At first the Americans had won some amazing victories on the sea, but after October 1813 the British maintained an effective blockade of the Atlantic coast. The defeat of Napoleon on the continent had released thousands of veterans to fight in Canada; sixteen thousand of them had arrived by the autumn of 1814. New England, unco-operative throughout the war, seemed actually ready to secede from the Union if the war should be continued. Canada and Florida were still unconquered. The United States Treasury was empty.

The English, also, had good reasons for wanting to end the fighting. The war in America had been unpopular with many Englishmen from the first. Britain needed to have her hands free to face new troubles on the Continent. The need for impressing seamen and seizing ships was now ended, since Napoleon seemed to be conquered.

So in August 1814 peace negotiations were begun at Ghent, Belgium. The Americans started by demanding Upper Canada and an end to the impressment of seamen. The British demanded an Indian territory in the northwest to serve as a buffer state between the United States and Canada. However, the treaty as finally signed on December 24th contained no mention of impressment, blockades, or Indian states and conceded nothing in the way of territory to either side. The national boundaries were left as they had been before the war. The treaty was ratified in Washington on February 18, 1815.

Peace returned to the Niagara Frontier. The burned villages were rebuilt and the scarred battlefields plowed and planted. A century and a half of friendship has buried the memory of the old enmity. Now Canadians and Americans work and play together on the two great lakes and on the picturesque Niagara River. Where once raiding parties rowed silently across the river with bayonet and firebrand ready, mighty bridges carry an endless flow of traffic between the two nations. Canada and the United States are now allies, bound together by strong ties of friendship.

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