

On the James Street and Church Street corner of St. Catharines City Hall stands a military statue placed there to honour St. Catharines native Alexander Watson. In the Society Newsletter of May 1997 there was a picture of Alexander's funeral cortege proceeding down Ontario Street. Alexander was mortally wounded on May 12, 1885 while participating in the Federal government's effort to suppress Louis Riel and the Northwest Rebellion. He died three days later on May 15, 1885, and his body was returned to St. Catharines and he was buried with full military honours in Victoria Lawn Cemetery.

The following are the inscriptions on the monument in Victoria Lawn:

Alexander / son of / David & Isabella / Watson / wounded at / Batoche N.W.T. / May 12, 1885 / Died / May 15, 1885 / Aged / 28 years / called home / WATSON

(on other side) David Watson / Born / Nov. 11, 1822 / Died / Aug 8 / 1900 / A Native of Scotland / Isabella / wife of / David Watson / Died / July 23, 1897 / Aged / 63 years

(on other side) Bella / dau. of / David & Isabella / Watson / Died at New York / Apr. 3, 1889 / Aged / 33 years.

In an undated newspaper clipping titled "Watson's Death Noted in Winnipeg Newspaper" and attributed to the St. Catharines Historical Museum, there is a picture of Watson and the following is extracted from it (additional information in brackets): Private Watson served in the 90th (Winnipeg) Battalion (Rifles) ... On the day Pte. Watson was wounded the troops reached the bluffs and began to attack the Metis who were without ammunition. The Metis were then forced to retreat from the bluffs across a large, open ploughed field to the protection of the village homes. When the Canadian troops advanced across the same field, many were

picked off by Metis marksmen who were hidden in the houses of Batoche. The Canadian troops, however, managed to overpower the Metis. The battle lasted only four days and was the breaking point for the Metis who had run out of ammunition ... Riel was seen as the villain 100 years ago (thus the article was likely written in 1985) and Pte. Watson was the hero of this area. In September 1886 the City of St. Catharines paid for a monument that represented a Canadian volunteer in the at-ease position. Major General T.D. Middleton, Pte. Watson's commanding officer unveiled the statue. The (limestone) monument was erected in memory of Pte. Watson, yet was to represent all volunteers who fell in the northwest Rebellion. The limestone statue was made in 1886 by James Munro's Marble and Granite Works at 193 St. Paul St. In August 1886 St. Catharines city council had a special meeting and granted permission to the Watson Monument Memorial Committee to place the statue on the grounds in front of the old city hall building. The original intention was to have it in the cemetery. Then, in September 1886 the monument was unveiled on a Tuesday afternoon. The Thorold Post reported that it was the largest crowd ever seen in the City of St. Catharines and that General Middleton was a big attraction for the people. In 1936 the statue was moved to its present location in front of the new city hall building where it faces Church and James streets. Over the years the statue deteriorated and was in need of repair. In 1971, after much debate by city council, it was restored and three bronze plaques were added. (the article continues with an explanation of the rebellion.)