

The Historical Society of St. Catharines

P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre,
St. Catharines, Ontario L2T 4C4

Our mission and goal: to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and area. The Society was founded in 1927. Our Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

Our website is: <http://stcatharineshistory.wordpress.com>

October 2013 Newsletter

Lecture Program – September 26, 2013 through January 23, 2014

Program Subject to Change

Thursday, September 26, 2013 – Lecture by Paul Chapman on “The Electric Street Rail System in St. Catharines”. At the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. with lecture to follow. Refreshments after lecture.

Thursday, October 24, 2013 – Lecture by John Hewitt on “The Garden City Arena” – the arena opened 75 years ago this December 2013. John will tell us about the background, the opening and some of the events that have taken place there. At the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. with lecture to follow. Refreshments after lecture.

Thursday, November 28, 2013 – **Show and Tell and Christmas Social**. Members will bring their artifacts, old photos and collectibles and spend up to 5 minutes telling us about them. At the St. Catharines Museum. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Brief Society meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. with lecture to follow. Refreshments after lecture.

Christmas Break

Thursday, January 23, 2014 – Lecture by Richard Green to recognize Two Hundred Years of the Masonic Lodge in St. Catharines. One of the oldest lodges in Ontario, the lodge will be two hundred years old in 2014. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. with tour of the Lodge to precede the lecture. The Lodge is located on Court Street at the corner of Centre Street.

SOCIETY NEWS

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Society Notes

Condolences ... The Society extends its condolences to the family of Patricia French who passed away this July.

Membership Dues Reminder ... Your Society membership was due on September 1, 2013. We remind you to send in your dues if you have not already done so! If you wish to receive a membership card, contact Joe O'Brien at <jobrienhdsboard@gmail.com>. We will also start sending the newsletter to members by e-mail, so we ask that you provide your e-mail address on the membership form.

Upcoming Events at Salem Chapel, BME Church National Historic Site

March 10, 2013 marked the 100th Memorial Anniversary of Harriet Tubman's death. To commemorate the life of Harriet Tubman who is recognized as the most important figure of the 19th century Underground Railroad resistance movement, the Salem Chapel, BME Church NHS is continuing a year long commemoration with the following program titled "Remembering the Life & Legacy of Harriet Tubman" at the church, 92 Geneva Street, St. Catharines.

Saturday, October 19

Open House and self guided tours - 10:00 am to 4:00 p.m.; Lecture at 1:00 p.m. – Speaker: Donna Nicholson Ford, Chair of the Central Ontario Network for Black History. Topic: Freedom Seeker, Adam Nicholson and Others Who Lived in the Old Grantham Settlement by Donna Ford.

Saturday, November 23

Open House and self guided tours - 10:00 am to 4:00 p.m.; Lecture at 1:00 p.m. – Speaker: Brian Narhi, Vice-President of The Historical Society of St. Catharines. Topic: The Early Black Community and More.

Saturday, December 14

Open House and self guided tours - 10:00 am to 4:00 p.m.; Lecture at 1:00 p.m. – Speaker: TBA

Admission to the above is free! Food donations for Community Care would be greatly appreciated.

NEWSLETTER NOTES

The Historical Society of St. Catharines Newsletter is published up to four times per year. The purpose is to inform the membership of issues pertaining to the Society and items of historical interest. Comments and queries should be directed to the Society's postal address. Opinions and comments expressed in the Newsletter are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society. Subscription to the Newsletter is by paid membership only.

Submission Deadline for the December 2013 Newsletter is November 15, 2013

ALUN OWEN HUGHES (May 4, 1942-May 9, 2013)

By John Burtiak

With the passing of Alun Hughes, in May 2013, the local history community lost a valuable and dedicated historian whose research, writings and lectures contributed immeasurably to our knowledge and appreciation of our local history.

Alun was born in Wales and came to Canada in 1969, joining the Brock University Geography Department where he taught surveying, cartography and latterly geomatics (remote sensing, GIS and allied studies).

Alun was actively involved in professional organizations relating to his teaching and research, as a member, presenter of papers, leading tours and organizing conferences. He also had a deep interest in the Welsh language, history, culture and life, and was actively involved with related organizations, teaching courses, presenting papers and organizing conferences. He was suitably honoured for his contributions to these pursuits.

No doubt, after Alun joined the Niagara Peninsula History Conference team at Brock University, he became the consummate local historian, spreading the word that local history is good for you, and that it is fascinating and that it explains so much that is around us. This he did through his lectures, talks, field trips, walks, and publications in various media. He maintained that local history must be properly researched and documented, vigourously analyzed and evaluated, superbly written and meticulously edited. He unearthed so many new facts, corrected misinformation, deflated long-held assumptions and debunked supposed historical truths to the chagrin of perhaps not a few.

Alun talked and wrote about everything: early St. Catharines settlement, changing municipal boundaries, early Niagara surveys, the route and opening of the First Welland Canal, the evolution of Merriton, early automobile manufacturing in Thorold, a bicycle factory in Thorold, early mills in Niagara, the name Niagara, the early grape and wine industry, the War of 1812, the Laura Secord story, the Battle of Beaverdams, the Battle of Queenston Heights, to name just a few topics.

Above all, we will remember Alun's inimitable unbounded and infectious enthusiasm for local history. We will miss him. We will not soon meet his kind. We are fortunate that we had him in our midst.

Gordon Cline MERRITT - a Past President of The Historical Society of St. Catharines

Text and photos by Bill Stevens

Gordon Cline MERRITT was born in Beamsville in 1916. He was the son of Curtis James and Clare (nee WILCOX) MERRITT, both of whom were descended from Mayflower and United Empire Loyalist families. For the first few years of his life the family lived at the corner of Mountain Street and Fly Road just above Beamsville on the escarpment in Clinton Township. When Gordon was about four years old his family moved into the old "Sterling House" on Ontario Street in Beamsville. Gordon later moved to St. Catharines in around 1935 and lived there for 37 years prior to his passing in 1972.

Gordon's early employment was with the Merritt Brothers feed and grain mill in Beamsville and Port Weller. In about 1957 Gordon became a real estate broker and at the time of his death he was past president of the St. Catharines-Niagara Real Estate Board.

At the 1964 annual meeting of The Historical Society of St. Catharines held at Rodman Hall, Gordon was elected president. His wife was elected corresponding secretary at the same meeting. He held the presidency for three years: 1964, 1965 and 1966; the Society at that time was known as the St. Catharines and Lincoln Historical Society.

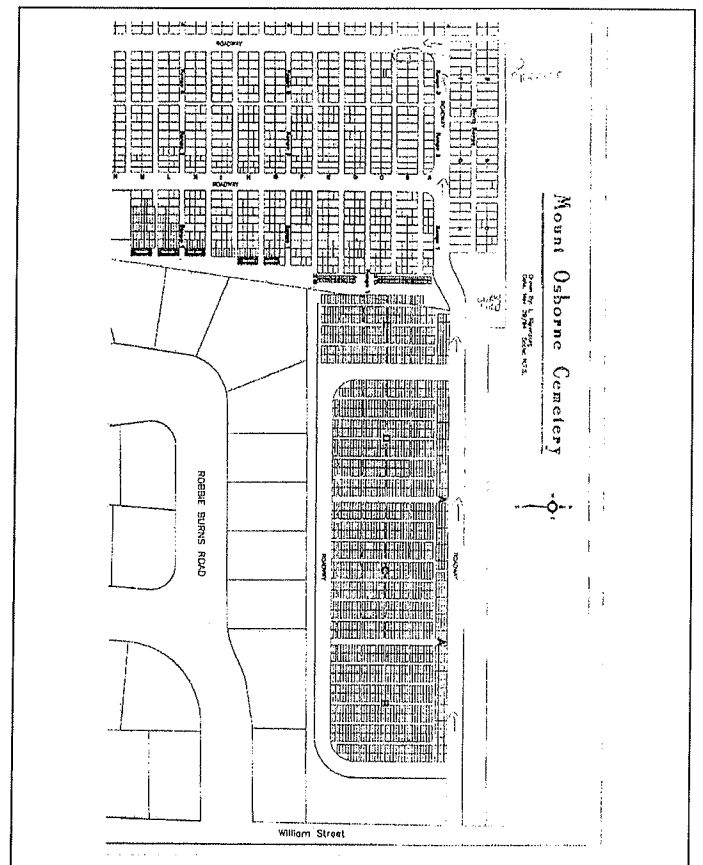
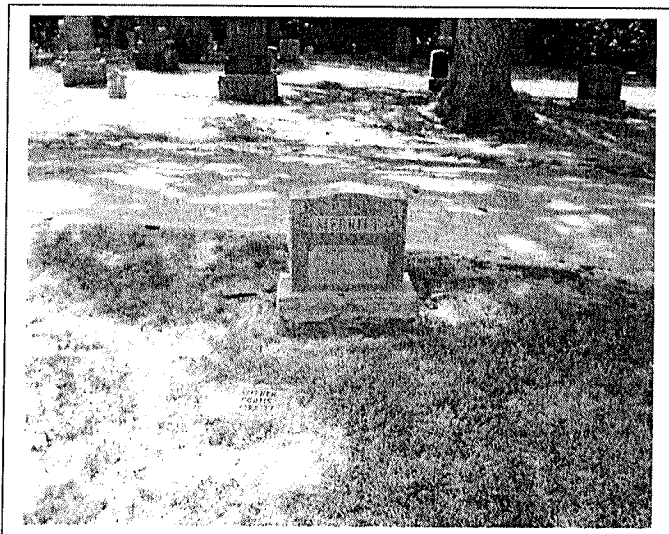
He had been a president of the John Howard Society. He was a member of Knox Presbyterian Church.

Gordon was a very active member of Seymour Lodge No.277, A.F. and A.M. He was also a member of Plantagenet Preceptory No. 8, Knights Templar, and was a 32nd degree Mason, also being a member of Mount Moriah Chapter, Royal Arch Masons.

Gordon died suddenly on September 12, 1972 at the age of 56 years at the St. Catharines General Hospital after suffering a seizure at his home at 35 Rivercrest Drive, St. Catharines.

Gordon was survived by his wife Phyllis English (nee DEAN) MERRITT. He had three brothers: Roy Dean MERRITT of Beamsville, Bruce MERRITT of Port Colborne and Ralph; and one sister, Erma.

A memorial service was held under the auspices of Seymour Lodge No.277, A.F. and A.M. at the Hulse and English Funeral Home. Interment took place in Lot 6, block B, range 3, grave 1 of Mount Osborne in Beamsville. A large MERRITT family plot stone, but no individual marker, marks his burial location.



Canada's Heroes, Heroines and Saviours in the War of 1812: A Reconsideration

By Wesley Turner

Canadians celebrate heroes and a heroine from the War of 1812 but did those who are most celebrated-- Brock, Tecumseh, Secord and de Salaberry--really save Canada from American conquest? Before trying to answer that let us begin with a simplified dictionary definitions of hero and saviour. Hero is a person "distinguished for exceptional courage or bold enterprise, especially in time of war. One idealized for superior qualities or deeds." Saviour, in the context of this article, means someone who saved the Canadas from American conquest.

Major General Brock became known as the Hero of Upper Canada even though he died early in the Battle of Queenston Heights and in the war that continued for another 27 months. Tecumseh is recognized for his crucial role in the capture of Detroit. The victory there of Tecumseh and Brock gave Upper Canada security in the west for more than a year. Most of Tecumseh's subsequent combat was against Americans on United States soil in defence of native territory. After his death, in battle on October 5, 1813, most of his followers gave up resistance to American expansion.ⁱ Laura Secord did not receive heroic recognition until her story was told to the Prince of Wales in 1860 and until it was widely publicized in later historical writings. Although deserving recognition for bravery, it was not she who saved Upper Canada from conquest but native warriors who fought at Beaver Dams.ⁱⁱ Lieutenant Colonel Charles de Salaberry gained fame from one battle that stopped a much larger American force advancing towards Montreal. However, much stronger defensive forces blocked the way towards Montreal and the war continued for another fourteen months.

In my view this list of heroic persons falls short of explaining who stopped American attempts at conquest throughout the war especially in its final fourteen months. Let us see who else demonstrated "exceptional courage or bold enterprise" during this war.

A prominent leader of aboriginal forces who deserves more recognition than he has so far received is John Norton (Snipe, Teyoninhokarawen) who repeatedly risked his life in defence of Upper Canada. Before the war Norton had become "chieftain for diplomacy and leadership in war" of the Six Nations of the Grand River. On its outbreak, the Six Nations were deeply divided about whether or not to aid the defence of the province, support the Americans or remain neutral. Norton's position was never in doubt: he would serve with Brock.

He and a few warriors formed part of Brock's invasion force against Detroit. On October 13 along with William Kerr and John Brant, Norton led a small group of Iroquois warriors to the Heights above Queenston where for two hours or more they harassed the American invaders until Sheaffe could assemble his counter forces. By preventing the invaders from advancing inland along the escarpment as well as frightening many New York State militiamen into refusing to cross the river, there is no doubt that his warriors played decisive role in this phase of the battle.ⁱⁱⁱ

Norton and his warriors fought the American invaders at Niagara on May 27, 1813 and with a small number participated in the attack on American camp at Stoney Creek. His band followed the American harassing them on their retreat to Forty Mile Creek. After the Americans withdrew into Niagara and Fort George, Norton and his warriors skirmished frequently with their patrols and pickets. He joined Colonel Murray in the December attack on Fort Niagara.

In 1814, Norton continued to provide valuable service to the defence of Upper Canada. In July, he led some 200 warriors in the resulting battle of Chippawa. In this battle the native force suffered the heaviest casualties of the war thus prompting the majority to depart. Norton was sent to collect them but was only able to bring back about fifty, thus demonstrating that he would stick with the British despite defeat. In the battle of Lundy's Lane his force served on right flank of Drummond's army mainly as skirmishers.^{iv} He also participated in the subsequent siege of Fort Erie.

We must remember that very few if any of his followers had experience of actual combat which makes their achievements in early battles even more impressive. Most were young men who from childhood had "learned such hunting skills as stalking, mastering the ambush, survival techniques, proficiency with knife and hatchet, and good marksmanship." Young Iroquois males were brought up under the strong expectation that as adults they would be warriors. In summary, they were trained in warlike skills, physically fit and eager to prove their manhood by martial achievements.^v

Native society could not remain viable if suffered great losses in battle which goes a long way to explain why First Nations were reluctant to participate in this war. Furthermore, in fighting the Americans, native warriors faced greater risk than white soldiers or militia. The American attitude towards natives was much more hostile than towards white opponents. Natives on both sides of the border well knew the effects of relentless American expansion into aboriginal lands, the repeated violation of treaties, and recent fate of Tippecanoe. Native participation in defending Upper Canada must be recognized as heroic as well as essential.

The most dramatic example of aboriginal heroism was the battle of Beaver Dams described by Carl Benn as "a major aboriginal victory." Some 465 warriors from the Grand River and other reserves under Captain Dominique Ducharme ambushed an American force of about 500 men consisting of infantry, artillery, dragoons and mounted riflemen. After some three hours of fighting, the American commander, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Boerstler, surrendered. Aboriginal losses were heavy as many as: twenty killed and over thirty wounded. Their victory was in large part due to their skillful use of cover and movement. This victory contributed significantly to the security of Upper Canada by stopping a dangerous American thrust at an important post on the escarpment and by encouraging further decline of morale in the American forces occupying Niagara.^{vi}

Another individual who deserves to be better known for his participation in the war is Robert Dickson. He was a prominent fur trader west of Lake Michigan in the upper Mississippi River territory. He married the daughter of an influential Sioux chief which would become an important factor in his influence among aboriginal tribes in the area. In February 1812, Brock wrote asking Dickson what cooperation might be expected from "you and your friends" in the event of war. Dickson replied saying he would lead a force of 250 to 300 warriors to Fort St. Joseph. These would form part of the force that captured Fort Michilimackinac in July. Dickson continued throughout war "to rally Indians to the British cause." From being a civilian fur trader, Dickson became an important military leader as his biographer sums up, "The contribution of Robert Dickson during the War of 1812 is too little known. His efforts in recruiting Indian allies and dispatching the warriors to theatres of active military operations were vital to the successful defence of the Canadas."^{vii}

Consider the role of militiamen very few of whom had experience of combat or were properly trained to fight as infantrymen or artillerymen. When Upper Canadians learned of the American declaration of war, eighteen-year old William Hamilton Merritt believed, "The Country was well aware of the strength of the United States [and] turned out with a desire and determination of doing their duty, at the same time, were acting under the impression of being eventually conquered."^{viii} If this pessimistic

view was, indeed, widespread, it took courage for men to volunteer to serve whether in flank companies or incorporated militia or rifle companies or artillery or troops of horse.

When men volunteered to serve in militia flank companies they were taking on a serious personal risk as well as depriving their families of their presence. In the first year of the war, William Gray writes, "The role of the militia was considerable..." and concludes, "In all, about three of the five men under arms supporting the Crown...throughout the first campaigns were drawn from the local population."^{ix} As more regulars arrived in 1813 and 1814, less dependence was placed on the militia as a fighting force but its men provided essential services, such as, helping to garrison posts, assisting with artillery, transporting supplies on land and water, as well as working on roads and fortifications.

In 1812 when militiamen volunteered to follow Brock towards Amherstburg those men must be considered brave because they did not know whether or not they faced great or little danger. At Queenston Heights militia units from Lincoln and York faced their first experience under fire. Merritt's relief at surviving the battle is evident, "It would be impossible to describe the feelings of our young Soldiers...having entered the action with the idea, even if successful of a least two thirds being killed or wounded. In 10 Minutes, to have all the Enemy that were not killed, in our possession, with a loss on our part of not more than 12 or 13 Men. It was a most fortunate Circumstance for us, giving new life to every thing around us." After noting that the militia comprised slightly more than fifty percent of the British force engaged, Couture writes, "evidence indicates that the militia soldiers fought with skill and determination."^x

The militia were present at every major action of the war on the Niagara frontier and Paul Couture claims there is "no evidence that any Lincoln flank company ever failed to obey an order or do its duty in the face of the enemy." Merritt's troop of militia dragoons provided important services and his journal records numerous journeys of investigation, sometimes involving skirmishes with the enemy. Victor Suthren sums up, "By the last year of the war, competent Canadian militia, speaking in accents indistinguishable from those of Vermont or Ohio, would stand in the battle line with regular British infantry against invading American forces, and would fight well...the war and the depredations of the American military would make it clear to these former Americans who they were not, and in defence of their new homeland they would fight with formidable determination—" ^{xi} This survey of the militia's role is not an endorsement of the "hardy myth" that Upper Canada's militia successfully defended the province with little help from British regulars and native allies.

Civilians who worked their farms, mills and shops also had to contend with harassment and looting by both enemy invaders and by defenders as a few examples will show. During the American occupation of the Niagara area in 1813, New York state militiamen searched ardently for loot. Mary Secord reported that when they "burst into her home, 'there was rush for the pictures and bric-a-brac. One soldier seized something that he said he would take to his wife, another to his sister or sweetheart....riotous looters got at the stores, cut open feather beds and pillows and flung with yells the feathers to the winds.'" ^{xii} Sometimes the defenders were the culprits as in December 1813, when Isaac Wilson wrote from Yonge Street, to his brother, "The people who live near where any part of the British Army is stationed suffer very much in their property; the foot soldiers breaking into their houses and plundering them of every article that suits them, of provisions money and wearing apparel;...The Indians are not nearly so bad as the soldiers by all accounts they only helping themselves to a few provisions now and then." A particularly serious, incident was an assault on a Canadian family by soldiers of the 19th Light Dragoons which resulted in serious injuries to Captain Meyer, his wife and a neighbour. ^{xiii}

The burning of Port Dover in 1814 and other raids in western Upper Canada during that year caused great damage to a prosperous area of the province. Private McMullen, an American volunteer, described what happened, "An order from [American commander Lieutenant Colonel John B.] Campbell to set fire to the houses was now executed...A scene of destruction and plunder now ensued, which beggars all description. In a short time, the houses, mills, and barns were all consumed, and a beautiful village, which the sun shone on in splendor that morning, was before two o'clock a heap of smoking ruins. The women and children had remained in the village and were permitted to carry out the valuable part of their moveable property. A party of sailors...killed the hogs in the streets, and severing them in the middle carried off the hind parts, while the head and shoulder were left in the street." The Americans proceeded a little further and coming across "a fine English cow" shot "both its fore legs" while the farm family looked on fearfully and helplessly.^{xiv} Civilians who faced such disasters yet persisted in remaining and rebuilding certainly demonstrated "exceptional courage" in time of war. This group also includes women, aside from those attached to the British army or navy. In other words, the heroism of wives and other female relatives of male civilians deserves recognition.

Women were frequently left on their own with the burden of looking after homes farms, and businesses along with family members including sick or wounded male relatives. While Laura Secord is the best known heroine in Canada, there were others both known and unknown.^{xv} One who received an accolade, unusual in the documents, was Mary, the wife of Dominick Henry: "He kept the light house at Niagara, and was extremely meritorious; his wife was very active in assisting the troops on the 27th May, giving them refreshments during the battle, quite a heroine, not to be frightened." In June, Lieutenant Fitzgibbon encountered two American soldiers in a house near Lundy's Lane and during his struggle with them, one who had seized Fitzgibbon's sword, was preparing to stab him "when the woman of the House, Mrs. Julia Duffield, who was standing at the door with a Child in her Arms, kicked the sword out of his hand. He stooped down to recover it, she threw the Child on the floor, ran out and wrenched it completely from him, hiding it in the House." With Mr. Duffield's help, they subdued the Americans and Fitzgibbon led off two prisoners. Later in that year, Merritt mentioned leaving his mother and sisters "by themselves, however they did not mind it; they had become quite old Soldiers to Alarms and disturbances."^{xvi} They were not the only women who could take a soldierly role.

In a separate category is Rev. John Strachan whom Donald Hickey sees as "Canada's great unsung civilian hero of the War of 1812" because he constantly promoted an aggressive defensive policy, provided a great deal of help to sick and wounded militiamen, and demonstrated fearlessness during the American occupation of York when he demanded that they protect civilian property and lives.^{xvii} He was a civilian, untrained for military service and unarmed when facing his opponents.

The commanders who followed Brock--Major General Roger Sheaffe, Major General Francis Baron de Rottenburg and Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond—were brave, capable and contributed to the survival of Upper Canada. None acted in the heroic manner of Brock--although Drummond came close--or gained fame as a great hero. Yet, their contributions to the preservation of Upper Canada were more significant because more lasting than was Brock's heroic death.

After Brock' was killed at Queenston, Sheaffe commanded the forces that defeated the American invaders. He relied on methodical leadership rather than dramatic or dashing action John Beverley Robinson, a militiaman in the battle, described Sheaffe's conduct as "cool though determined and vigorous,"^{xviii} When the Americans attacked York in April 1813, Sheaffe's generalship proved inadequate in fighting a defensive battle. He seems to have decided on his own to withdraw his regulars from a losing battle, leaving civilians to negotiate a ceasefire with the invaders. Retreat eastward to

Kingston “was a sound military decision” and certainly this was the opinion of the American Secretary of War, John Armstrong writing to General Dearborn, “we cannot doubt but that in all cases in which a British commander is constrained to act defensively, his policy will be that adopted by Sheaffe—to prefer the preservation of his troops to that of his post, and thus carrying off the kernel leave us only the shell.”^{xix} However, Sheaffe had abandoned the provincial capital where lived many prominent, influential and articulate military officers and officials. Deciding to remove Sheaffe from command of Upper Canada, Prevost informed Colonial Secretary Lord Bathurst that Sheaffe had “lost the confidence of the Province” which was certainly true, but his removal also diverted any blame for the disaster at York away from the Governor in Chief.

Sheaffe was succeeded by Major General de Rottenburg who, in turn, was replaced in December by Lieutenant General Drummond. He unleashed a campaign on the American side of the Niagara River that showed that he was a more aggressive commander than his predecessors. He also demonstrated at the battle of Lundy’s Lane and during the siege of Fort Erie, that while leading in combat he was not afraid to take serious personal risks. Drummond, however, did not receive the affection and respect of the rank and file soldiers or of the civilian population to anything like the degree accorded to Brock.

WAS THERE A SAVIOUR OF CANADA?

Let us turn to the idea that Brock or some person was the “saviour” of Canada. Here is an example of that sentiment on a plaque on the Brock family house in St Peter Port, Guernsey, “Maj Gen Sir Isaac Brock K.B. Who Saved Canada for the Empire. Lived here...” In June 2012 the Hamilton *Spectator* newspaper featured a headline “A Canadian Hero” referring to Isaac Brock and continued, “Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, who was killed early in the War of 1812, is regarded by Canadians as the “Saviour of Upper Canada.”^{xx} Other writers have referred to Brock as the “saviour” of Upper Canada or of Canada. More extravagant is the opinion of author W.R. Nursey, in his 1908 work on Brock where he writes in “A Word to the Reader” “That Isaac Brock is entitled to rank as the foremost defender of the flag Western Canada has ever seen, is a statement which no one familiar with history can deny.”^{xxi} Statements of this sort stretch the evidence far beyond reasonable bounds.

Brock did not win the battle of Queenston Heights nor subsequent battles or campaigns. The memory of his leadership and heroic death may have provided inspiration for Canada’s defenders, but it was the living leaders using all the means available who fought off repeated American incursions. They were helped enormously by the invaders’ shortcomings in planning, leadership and execution of plans. Furthermore, American invasions and occupations did not destroy the defenders’ armies or lead to permanent control of Upper Canadian territory aside from a limited occupation of part of western Upper Canada, a situation that had slight effect on the course of the war and none on the final peace settlement. American defeats at Chateauguay and Crysler’s Farm cannot be credited to Brock. In 1814, again despite American battle successes on Upper Canadian soil, they had no lasting effect on the outcome of the war.

Another candidate for the role of “saviour” is Sir George Prevost. Thirty years ago a biographer held that “Prevost’s preparations for defending the Canadas with the limited means at his disposal had been energetic, well conceived and comprehensive, and in the most taxing, hazardous circumstances he had achieved the primary objective of preventing an American conquest.”^{xxii} A few scholars have also advanced this favourable view of Sir George’s role, but most have been highly critical.

While Prevost deserves—and has received—credit for providing his subordinates with means to defend the colony, a lot of that credit must go to the British government for its willingness to bear the enormous costs of defending the Canadas while burdened with war in the Peninsula, subsidies to allies,

and maintaining a huge navy.^{xxiii} There is no evidence that Prevost had more influence on that government's decision than any other Governor in Chief would have had. To a large extent, when seeking aid from Britain, Prevost was pushing at an open door. Reinforcements from Britain were sent in 1812, more in 1813 including seamen, "but the dribble of 1813 would become the flood of 1814" when over the year sixteen regiments arrived at Quebec.^{xxiv}

Prevost made an important contribution by winning strong support for the war among the French-speaking population of Lower Canada, but Upper Canada was a different story, for Prevost had little acquaintance with its people and there is scant evidence that they had respect for his leadership. Indeed, lack of confidence was more prevalent perhaps because their expectations were so high. Prevost first visited the upper province in March 1813 and again from May to September. His purpose was to inspect troops and fortifications as well as to assess the general situation. In August he ordered a "general demonstration" against Fort George to gain information about the strength of the American position and what he would need for a successful assault. His return to Kingston without taking any further action disappointed not only civilian Upper Canadians but even officers of the army.^{xxv} It was not Prevost's concern to please the people of Upper Canada and they may not have understood the difficulties of the tactical situation, but his standing in their eyes was not improved.

While Prevost and Brock held different views of the best strategy to respond to the American declaration of war, they both contributed to the effective defence of Upper Canada. In accordance with his orders from London, Sir George wanted to concentrate strictly on defence and keep the final option of a retreat to Quebec City rather than launch offensive operations. Nevertheless, although he knew that Brock favoured an active defence, he sent troops, officers, weapons, and money to Upper Canada, measures that could be seen as unspoken encouragement to Brock to act.^{xxvi} Months before the outbreak of war, Brock began working to strengthen his province's defences. In December 1811 he reviewed Upper Canada's defences, writing of the need to upgrade its fortifications, increase the Provincial Marine's naval forces, add to the number of regular troops, and provide for the militia force's various needs.

No one man could win or lose the war in British North America. The outcome would be determined in Europe by how the war against Napoleon proceeded and by the decisions of the Madison administration. All these decision-makers were influenced by the outcome of various campaigns including Perry's victory on Lake Erie, Drummond's capture of Fort Niagara, his apparent victory at Lundy's Lane, the continued British hold on the Northwest, Prevost's failure against Plattsburgh, and the successes as well as setbacks of the British army and navy in Chesapeake Bay. A very strong case can be made that the saviour of the Canadas was not commanders of land forces but rather the officers and men of the British navy and merchant ships. As the authors of one naval history put it, "It was a war won at sea." If we look inland, naval control of the lakes was important but it was Lake Ontario that was crucial and, in George Stanley's view, Yeo "by keeping his fleet intact...never allowed complete and undisputed supremacy on Lake Ontario to pass to his rival. In so doing Yeo saved Canada;" Bob Malcomson writes, "Among the events in the War of 1812, the British acquisition of supremacy on Lake Ontario during June and July of 1813 was one of the most significant."^{xxvii}

It seems it is time to reconsider established concepts of the heroes, heroines and saviours of Canada in the War of 1812. I suggest there are others who deserve recognition because they demonstrated "exceptional courage or bold enterprise."

For more information on the sources used and the endnotes relating to this particular article, you may contact Wesley Turner at "wturner@brocku.ca"