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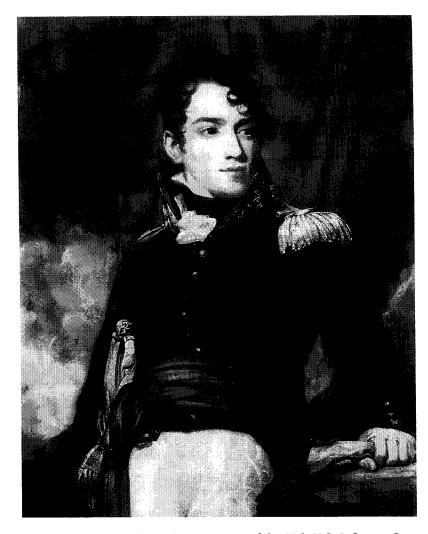
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Captain Jean T. David was the paymaster of the 15th U.S. Infantry. Captain John Scott commanded a company of men in this regiment for seventeen months. This portrait was painted by Thomas Sully in 1813. [Reproduced by courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust]

Notes & Documents

The Letters of Captain John Scott, 15th U.S. Infantry: A New Jersey Officer in the War of 1812

JOHN C. FREDRIKSEN

disruptive to the conduct of domestic affairs as the War of 1812. By declaring war on Great Britain without broad national consensus, the Jeffersonian Republicans inadvertantly stimulated a Federalist party revival in several states. New Jersey's October 1812 elections witnessed the abrupt end of longstanding Republican supremecy. The Federalists, whose fortunes had waned since 1803, swept both houses of the legislature by gaining three counties previously regarded as safely Republican. Through deft handling of the peace issue, they welded together a coalition of pacifist Quaker votes from West Jersey along with those of disenchanted merchants and industrialists from the eastern districts. After nearly a decade of decline, the elated Federalists appointed Aaron Ogden² governor, and proceeded to enact their anti-Jeffersonian, antiwar agenda. This, however, held unforeseen consequences.

From the onset Governor Ogden proved himself at cross-purposes with his party. Though opposed to the war in principle, Ogden was conscientious in the execution of his duties as commander-in-chief of state forces. He strove tirelessly to enhance New Jersey's defenses and forced the legislature to appropriate \$5000.00 for military expenditures. But here Ogden was stridently opposed by fellow Federalists who passed resolutions condemning the war as "inexpedient, ill-timed, and most dangerously impolitic." They resorted to obstructionist tactics and passed laws forbidding New Jersey's militia from participating in the possible defense of either New York or Philadelphia. This ideological impasse between the

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governor and his own party estranged and finally broke their delicate coalition. Mindful of these partisan excesses, the voters returned the Republicans back to power in 1813 under the aegis of William S. Pennington. Thus the War of 1812 marked the final high-water mark of the New Jersey Federalists and, within a decade of this self-inflicted debacle, they ceased to exist as a credible political force.⁴

Though far removed from the actual theater of operations, many New Jersey citizens sought active participation in the War of 1812, and a handful acquired national reputations. In fact, the Garden State enjoys a melancholy association with two of this conflict's best-known martyrs. The most famous, Capt. James Lawrence^b of Burlington, lost his life commanding the frigate U.S.S. Chesapeake in a savage duel with H.M.S. Shannon. His dying words, "Don't give up the ship!" have become enshrined in the panapoly of national slogans. The other notable fatality was Zeubulon Montgomery Pike⁶ of Somerset, a pioneer explorer who discovered the lofty Colorado peak that bears his name. Pike directed the April 27, 1813, expedition against York (now Toronto) in Upper Canada. The Americans were successful in this, the war's first amphibious operation, but Pike was killed in the explosion of a British magazine. A more fortunate individual was Commodore William Bainbridge⁷ of Princeton, who commanded the frigate U.S.S. Constitution in its December 29, 1812, victory over H.M.S. Java. Much feted, Bainbridge survived the war and subsequently became an influential member of the U.S. Navy Board of Governors. So despite a sometimes official recalcitrance towards the War of 1812, several New Jersey residents gained distinction by displaying the highest tradition of courage, skill, and sacrifice.

Although New Jersey had its share of national heroes, it must be recognized that thousands more rendered equally valuable, if less heralded, service in the ranks of the army, navy, and militia. An estimated 6,011 men served in this capacity throughout the war with little notice. A possible exception to this was the 15th U.S. Infantry Regiment, raised in New Jersey, which by this war's standards acquired an excellent combat record. Created by Congress shortly before the war, the regiment passed most of 1812 in upper New York and saw little action. The following year, however, it was closely engaged in the captures of York and Fort George, and the defeat at Chrysler's Farm. In 1814 the 15th participated in the illfated attack on LaColle Mill, and bore a conspicuous role at the October 19 battle of Lyon's Creek, the final confrontation between British and American soldiers in Canada. The unit's prowess in battle earned it the simple but flattering sobriquet as

the "New Jersey regiment." Unfortunately this unit, like all other contemporary formations, was hastily disbanded after the war and amalgamated into the regiments of a greatly reduced peacetime establishment. For this reason we know little of its combat proclivities beyond those recited in dour official reports and commentaries. Historians are fortunate, therefore, that the newly uncovered letters of Capt. John Scott shed new and valuable light on the career and accomplishments of a forgotten New Jersey regiment.

Scott, a native of Morris County, obtained his commission on March 12, 1812, and served for seventeen months. He accompanied the 15th U.S. Infantry throughout its movements in northern New York, and participated in the captures of York and Fort George. He resigned shortly thereafter and he later was one of the original commissioners of the Morris Canal and Banking Company. Scott left the company in 1832, when he became president of the Union Bank of Dover. He died in 1839, and his letters are the only surviving account of his regiment in the field. His correspondence is of particular value because it relates in great detail American operations along New York's Lake Champlain valley. 10 This strategic region was hotly contested by both sides and witnessed a large American offensive in 1813, and an even larger British invasion the following year. We are less informed, however, about the first aborted drive against Montreal in the fall of 1812, and Scott's correspondence offers fresh perspective on its preparations and progress. It is somewhat surprising to learn how well equipped and supplied the men of Scott's division were, especially in contrast with troops along other fronts. So despite the War of 1812's reputation as a logistical nightmare, perhaps quartermaster functions in this sector were not as incompetent as we are traditionally led to believe.11

If Scott's letters are lucid in observing and narrating combat operations, they are especially useful to helping to gauge the life, living conditions, and concerns of the average soldier. We can discern from the tone of his correspondence that Scott was an ardent supporter of war, but he evinces growing frustration over the bungling and mismangement of American generalship. He quickly emerges as a strongly opinionated individual, frank in his estimation of fellow officers, and quick to judge them. Scott also fancies himself a small-town Lothario, judging from his constant reference to the "Ladies of Morris." The eight letters reproduced below are a kaleidoscope of emotions, opinions, and events which greatly enhance our knowledge of operations in this neglected region of the War of 1812. They certainly paint in bold relief the

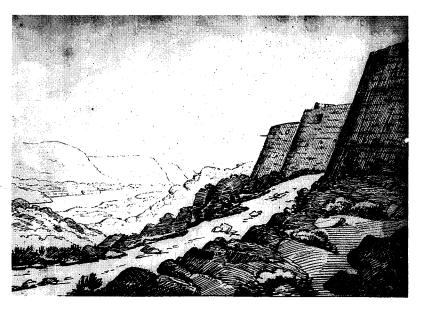
movements and accomplishments of the 15th U.S. Infantry, and place New Jersey's unique contribution to the war effort, heretofore seen as peripheral, in a more deserving context.

The original manuscripts are in the collections of the New Jersey Historical Society, and were addressed to David Thompson Jr., Esq. Written in a highly legible hand, the letters are transcribed almost exactly as Scott composed them. The only exceptions are the expansion of unfamiliar abbreviations, the correction of a few spelling and punctuation slips for the sake of clarity, and the rendering of several questionable words. In such cases, questionable terms are denoted in brackets, e.g., [], or [?], where Scott's hand is completely undecipherable.

Greenbush Barracks 2 miles from Albany on the east side of the Hudson River, 24th of August, 1812

Dear Sir,

I promised to write you when I left Morristown and at that time I expected I should have many leisure hours, but I can assure you I have not yet had time to write to any of my friends and now I am writing I have nothing new or interesting to inform you of. We started from Staten Island on Monday evening, the 17th of the inst. We struck our tents about sunset and marched down the hill in a body on board the sloops prepared to receive us. After getting on board 6 days provisions our fleet consisting of 8 sloops made sail about nine o'clock in the evening and came to anchor on the west shore of the battery at N. York about one o'clock at night where all lay until 1/2 half past two the next day. When we started for Albany there was nothing occured in the passage worth noticing. We stopped at West Point and went on shore to view the fortifications. My expectations were raised to see the place that withstood all the British force during the Revolution.12 We went back to the old fort, it is built of stone and stands on the top of a hill 600 feet above the level of the water and about 3/4 of a mile distant from the river. The situation is well calculated to defend the plain below. The venerable pile is now in a state of decay, the walls are falling down in several places a natural curiosity, there is a well of water in the middle of the fort, the water of which is about 2 feet below the surface of the ground—or rock, for it is one solid rock. We arrived at Albany on Friday night about one o'clock and Saturday, 10 o'clock A.M. began to march for Greenbush Barracks through mud about ankle deep on an average. The barracks are situated on the east side of the Hudson river about two miles from Albany. They are making large preparations for the army at this place.



This sketch shows the Revolutionary War fortifications of West Point. Scott noted that the walls had fallen into a state of disrepair. [Reproduced by courtesy of the West Point Museum Collections]

They have 4 barracks built about 250 feet long, each 22 feet deep and two stories high. They are placed in a line with about 30 or 40 feet space between them. They are framing four more of the same size which are to be placed about 200 feet in front of those already built. They have a piazi in front of the whole about 8 feet wide through which at proper intervals the stairs lead to upper stories. But we are not to enjoy the situation long, tomorrow we are to pitch our tents about 600 yards in front of the barracks, where we are to encamp in a line with the 6th Regt., about 600 [in] strength, 13th Regt. 650, part of the 23rd and 24th the strength of which I have not yet been able to learn. We muster about 750 effective men and expect about 100 more every day. How long we stay here is not known to me, but I judge not long. I have about 25 men under my command, all in good health and high spirits. What kind of figure they will make at the walls of Quebec I cannot say, but I think they will not disgrace the country from which they came. The troops above mentioned together with some cavalry and light dragoons stationed at this place amount to about 3000. My candle is going out and I have no other light. 12 o'clock at night, all is silent except the snoring of the men asleep, which I can assure you is pretty loud.

Good Night,

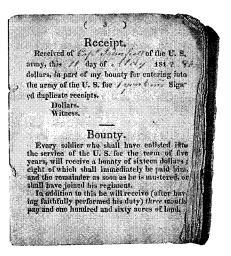
J. Scott

Tuesday morning, day light. Reveille is beating, I have just time to inform you that we have Rec'd orders to march the 3d of September to Plattsburgh with the 6th Regt. We shall pitch our tents today and remain in them until Thursday, the 3d September. 7 o'clock A.M. Capt. Hoppock by whom I send this to Albany will wait no longer. Write to me, you can judge where to direct as well as I can tell you. My love to the Ladies of Morris and respects to the Gentlemen, yourself in particular.

Camp at Plattsburgh, September 24, 1812

Dear Sir.

Your letter of the 10th instant came to hand this afternoon and as I am an officer of the front guard of our camp tonight and must be up all night, I sent for a tent immediately and had it pitched on the bank of the Lake of St. Lawrence and set me down after lighting my candle to have a little conversation with you, for if I should wait for leisure you will never hear from me until I returned in person. I do not recollect what time I wrote to you but I think from Greenbush-We marched to wit the 6th and 15th Regt. Infantry and 2 companies of flying artillery the 3d of this instant and arrived at Whitehall at the head of the lake the evening of the 8th and went on board 8 sloops and one steam boat the next morning and landed at this place the 11th, where we have since been joined by the 11th Regt. Infty and the 9th is expected to be here tomorrow. Our accommodations are such as soldiers must expect. We have provisions of sufficient quantity and such as are good. Our winter clothing arrived this morning, that is for the 15th, the 6th have theirs already, the 11th I see have a part of theirs and expect the remainder in a few days. Our Regt. has rec'd their pay to 1st of September. We have at this time about 2700 enlisted troops; the 6th, 750; the 11th, 650; the 15th, 700; the artillery, 100. Plattsburgh is 22 odd miles from St. Johns, which is the nearest fortification the British have to this place. The best information we can get from that place says that they have between 1500 and 2000 troops at that place and are repairing the old fortification and adding new ones. General Hull¹³ passed through the place, the 16th instant, in company with 8 officers of the army who are all going home on parole of honor. I did not see him but am informed he dined with General Bloomfield14 and a number of detached militia officers. Col. Pike15 did not dine with him, but saw him the next day and had a considerable conversation with him on the subject of his surrender. G. Hull states that the armistice for 30 days enabled the British to turn force that way. He stated the forces opposed him were greatly superior to his own and were daily increasing, I do not recollect the number, and that his supply of provisions and ammunition were nearly exhausted, and had no prospect of any more supplies, and had he not surrendered as he did the whole army must have been destroyed to a man by the Indians. Also says the Regular troops had as much as they could do to keep the Indians from massacring the Americans. On another of his, Hull's, proclamation, when he first crossed the lines, in which he shows no quarter [?]. This is Hull's statement. After he left town some of the



The soldier's pocket book of Cornelius Vanderhoof shows that he enlisted in John Scott's company on May 11, 1812. He received eight dollars for a term of one-and-a-half years. The thirty-two-year-old laborer signed at Morristown. [NJHS]

officers that came with him did not hesitate to say he sold or betrayed the army, that they could at the time he surrendered made their retreat good. You are not mistaken as to the troops of Col. Miller¹⁶ com'd. They were brave at the Wabash, 17 he himself at the time did not behave quite so bravely, he stayed behind under pretense of indisposition at a small fortress which gave his enemies room to say some things-but he since behaved brave in Canada. He is now, I am informed, transferred to the 6th Regt. under Col. Simons. Our Northern Army, as it is called, Viz. the troops at Albany, Long Hill, and on the road to Canada, amount to about 8000 regular or enlisted troops, Volunteers, and militia, I do not know the number-there are no doubt many contradictory reports respecting the army, its clothing and provisions. Those opposed to the war measure are making use of all those things to lower the minds of the people—our army draws regularly per day of each man 1 1/4 lb good beef or 3/4 lb pork, 18 oz. bread or flour, and one gill of spirits, which they have always got regular each day as yet, & clothing and blankets in plenty & cash in abundence. One of my men has sent home to his family at one time 30 dollars in cash & the only thing that appears to be scarce is cartridges and powder, but I understand that 40 thousand cartridges arrived at Burlington last night for use of the army. Let those who think the army is ill-provided for compare this with provisions for the armies of Europe, where they allow them from 18 to 20 ounces of flour per day and no meat or spirits and then say if they dare our army is not well provided for. I do assert that no army on Earth was better fed, clothed and paid than ours has been thus far. I have again lighted my candle and mended my pen. What next? Oh, you want my opinion of Hull's surrender. I think it was a dam'd cowardly action and one that will enact a stigma on his character while he lives. 18 I for my own part am fully of the opinion that there was an understanding between Hull and General

Brock, 19 who is a brave fellow, and they say in this country he was formerly from Morris County. I do not know any in the county of that name. However, if he is from that county, we will, I trust, take him back to see some of his old acquaintences—it is a fact that he has married one of his sons to the daughter of a British major. My candle blows out every few minutes and what I have wrote has been done on my knee as we have not one table in our camp yet. We have but 4 captains with our Regt. which are with us. Give my compliments, respects with anything else you please that will suit the Ladies of Morris, if they have not all forgot me. I have just attempted to read what I wrote and cannot. But you are a better scholar than I am and so I shall send it for you to read.

I am yours &c.
Iohn Scott

I think you will hear from me again but in the meantime I wish to hear from you. Howel is well, Capt. Reynolds is at home, he left us at Greenbush.

Camp near Plattsburg Septr 25, 1812

Dear Sir.

I attempted to write you last night which I intended to put in office this morning, but was prevented by the arrival of my brother William, by whom I shall send, which is a great consolation to me as the information it contains would be very pitiful compensation for the postage. But under present circumstances I do not care much about it. I do not recollect what I stated as to the lines and troops, but I have this morning been talking to a gentleman who is acquainted with the country. He states as follows. From Plattsburgh to the Canada lines the nearest route is 24 miles, 42 miles to Isle Aux Noir, the nearest fortification to this place, St. Johns, is about 50 miles distant from this and about the same distance to L'Acadie, Chambly, Sorel, and 3 Rivers. [These] are the principle places where troops are between here and Quebec—Quebec is about 280 miles from Plattsburgh. It is impossible for us to ascertain the number of troops, but my informant, who appears to be intelligent, says 1000 Indians at or near the lines, 1200 regular troops at Isle Aux Noir, & 800 at St. Johns, 4000 regulars at Quebec and 8000 just arrived. There appears to be but one opinion as to the surrender of General Hull, you will no doubt before you see this have a statement made by one of the officers of the Ohio Volunteers, Col. Cass.²⁰ Hull had 1000 regular troops fit for duty and between 3 & 600 militia or Volunteers when the whole force white. black, and red of the British amounted to 1000. The shameful surrender has filled every breast with indignation. Our troops are in fine spirits and tolerable health, a number of them have a sickness, but none dangerous. There has but one man died since I joined the Regt. I am still in a hurry, Wm waits whilst I write of the old proverb out of sight out of mind holds good with the sweet Ladies of Morris. Do not mention my name but if anyone should have any recollection of such a being as I give my respects to them. I say my sincere respects for the many happy hours I spent in their company has left a lasting impression on my mindmy respects to the Drs. Pierson. Both of them with all the rest of my friends and to yourself, though last not least.

Farewell, John Scott

Camp near Plattsburgh Octo. 28, 1812

Dear Sir.

I embrace the earliest opportunity of giving you information of the smallest success that attends American arms. On the 23rd instant a party of New York militia under the command of Major Young, stationed at French Mills, surprised a party of the British of the [] Corps at Saint Regis, captured 2 Captains, 2 Lieutenants, 2 Sergeants, and 35 privates, killed 1 Ensign, 1 Sergt, 2 privates and took two stand of colors and a quantity of arms, ammunition, scalping knives, and about 400 blanketswhich were intended as a present for the Indians.21 They were so completely surprised that only one Lieut. was able to escape, an Indian squaw paddled him off in a boat—the militia did not lose a single man nor any wounded, though General Bloomfield has made the militia a present of all they took. I should have wrote you yesterday, but awaited to see the prisoners as they were to come to this place, but they have not yet arrived 12 o'clock noon. It will take a few more enterprises like this to reinstate them, the militia, in my good opinion. Col. Pike was at General Bloomfield's last night and they made a calculation of the troops in his command. They are as follows:

The 6th Regt. Infy com'd by Col. Simons	622
The 9th by Major Aspinwall ²² in the absence of Col. Larned	166
The 11th commanded by Col. Clark ²³	671
" 15 " Col. Z.M. Pike	
" 16 " Col. Pierce ²⁴	773
" 21 " Lieut. Col. Ripley ²⁵	340
" of " The Color of the Color o	335
" 25 " Lieut. Col. Cutting	342
" 1st Regt. Militia	404
" 3d do	429
N. York Militia	1000
Vermont on the other side of the lake	700
Light Artillery Regular troops	150
Heavy Artillery	
	100
Dragoons, regular troops mounted	100
which taken altogether makes a handsome army in my oninian	771

which taken altogether makes a handsome army in my opinion. There is a general whose name I do not now recollect will be here tomorrow and take command of our brigade as this army is divided in 2 brigades, and General Bloomfield of the other. Genl. Dearborn²⁶ has ordered that the 9th Regt. and the 21st should form part of the brigade for Genl. name forgot—and the other he, Bloomfield, will form his own brigade leaving what he thinks proper for the other. The 15th, 16th, and 6th I think will form part of Genl. Bloomfield's brigade, how further I have not been able to learn. It is expected that we shall know tomorrow when we shall move from this place. For my own part I swear I can form no

Zebulon Montgomery Pike (1779–1813) commanded the 15th Infantry from July 1812 until March 1813, when he was promoted from colonel to brigadier general. He was born in Lamberton, New Jersey, and was killed during the Battle of Fort York. [NJHS]



opinion whatever satisfactory to myself what will be done. I will endeavor to let you know as soon as possible when we move. I am induced to believe that our brigade moves towards the line first, if any moves. Will you please give my best respects to the fair Ladies of Morristown, who may think it worth while to enquire. You for yourself please accept my warmest wishes for your health and prosperity—you will see by my writing that I am now in a hurry.

J. Scott

Please speak to Mr. Mann to send his paper by the Post Office. I cannot hear what is doing in Morris County. I will order Wm. to settle with him for it. When shall I hear from you?

Plattsburgh November 17th, 1812

Dear Sir,

'Tis with pleasure I acknowledge the receipt this day of your letterdated the 8th instant. Many of my friends before I left the state wished me to write them. I have wrote several and they have not even deigned to acknowledge the receipt of them. I expect they are more profitably and pleasingly employed. I wrote to Wheeler's mother or brother immediately after his death and enclosed 5 dollars, all the money he had at the time he died, and also informed them, if my memory serves, that he enlisted but for 18 months and therefore was not entitled to any bounty of land as none are entitled to land but those who enlist for 5 years. I also informed them that there was about one month's wage due him at the time of his death, which can only be had from the Secretary of War on proper vouchers, the sum being so small and I have been so engaged that the certificates necessary for to receive the pay I have not yet made out, and it will cost more than it will come at any rate. As for his clothes. all he had were what he received from the Public and they always remain with the Commandant of the Company for the benefit of the company. All those who by unavoidable accident lose or have their clothes destroyed, we give them such as we may have on hand of those who died, &c. So much for Mrs. Wheeler. Ensign Dickerson I think would be as comfortable at home in a feather bed with his wife as he is like to be for

a short time. I have to inform you that the whole army marched from this place this morning, I believe with a view to cross the lines or rather to move the lines before us. They marched and left all their tents standing and all their baggage behind except what they carried on their backs. They left two officers in each Regt. to have the tents struck and put in the public store and the officers have left all their trunks & baggage in the stores and houses in the village. Owing to a violent attack of fever I have had I was obliged to remain behind, but I am so far recovered that I shall start tomorrow in company with Captain Hoppock, who has also been unwell. We shall overtake them at Champlain before they enter the British Dominions. General Dearborn arrived at this place the 15th inst. he followed this afternoon. You wished a description of Dearborn. He is a large man, rather corpulent, about 60 years old I should judge, has a brave open contenance, walks on foot as smart as any man his age and size. General Bloomfield has been confined to his bed all day today and has been unwell for several days. The old man is not healthy although I believe he feels hearty in the cause. I think I gave a list of the different Regts. and their strengths in my last, since which we have been joined by 180 dragoons and one company arrived here this morning. They have not got arms for only about half of them. I think friend David ere you receive this we shall have some fighting. 100 men volunteered from Perue and passed through the camp the day before the army marched with axes to clear the road through L'Acadie Woods, which have been fill full of timber and trees by the Indians and British. Jacob D. Howell is not promoted. Lieutenant Barton has been promoted to a captain, this promotion has not been made without keeping an eye to merit for in my opinion there is not a first lieutenant in the Regt. who was not as fit if not more fit to be a captain. Jacob D. H. as usual employed in making acquaintances with the ladies of the neighborhood. I think he has the best faculty of forming acquaintances with Ladies of any man I ever knew. I have heard him speak of Miss Mary and expect he had wrote to her. Of Miss Condit I have not heard him speak-I must employ the remainder of the evening in packing up my baggage for a march which will consist of 2 calico shirts, 2 blankets, 1 pair moccasins, and 4 pairs of stockings. You see we are determined if the British get us they will have paid a fair price for us as they will get no plunder. Oh, I forgot to tell you—one third of our Regt. is armed with pikes 11 or 12 feet long. We form in ranks of three deep and the pikemen form the rear rank. The shape of the pike is as near as I can describe is like this [] drove in the end of a handle 10 or 11 feet long, made of ash timber. The men who carry the pikes have had their muskets cut off about 18 inches which they sling on their back and are very handy. Those pikes when we charge bayonet will reach 1 foot in front of the bayonets.27 I should like to meet with our Regt., as small as it is, the 49th British Regt. on some plain.²⁸ I think we should have a pretty hard fight or a foot race in a few minutes. I think the Jersey troops, if they have an opportunity, will prove themselves worthy of the name. Good night.

John Scott

Camp on Saranac river 3 miles above Plattsburgh (December, 1812)

I have been waiting these 8 days in hopes we would get our huts before I wrote. I think I wrote to you last from Plattsburgh, the day I started to join the Regt. at Champlain. I arrived at Champlain on the evening of the 18th of November, stayed in the village that night, and went into camp the next morning in spirits but rather weak from the ill turn I had on the evening of the 19th. At tatoo beating the 15th in company with about 100 militia, dragoons, 70 in number, and 40 or 50 Volunteers from the 16th Regt. marched towards Odletown on the road leading to L'Arcadie swamp-when we turned to the S.E. and marched 3/4 of a mile on the road we were halted (I forgot to mention that the detachment was under the command of Col. Pike and Brearley) with a large thick pine swamp on either side of us. We were informed that there was an encampment of 3 or 400 Indians on a ridge in that swamp, and the guide we had employed said 2 miles distant. We then filed to the right from the left flank of platoons and began to enter the swamp we were to scower. We marched on for one hour and came to an old cleared field where we expected to find them and found nothing but a piece of clear ground where there had not been a human being in 10 years to all appearance. We then formed and marched for another Regt. in the swamp which we found in the same situation as we did the first. But to get out of the swamp after marching 3 hours, sometimes climbing over trees from one to 6 feet high that had been blown down or fallen from age and sometimes half a leg deep in mud, water and ice. We came to the public road about 1/2 past one o'clock in the morning when we immediately took our line of march for the river LaColle, which is about 5 or 6 miles beyond Odletown, where we were informed there were between 3 and 400 Indians half a mile from where the bridge had formerly crossed the River LaColle, which had been destroyed by the British, we found some trees felled across the road. We marched on until we came within 3 or 400 yards of where the bridge had been. We found the road full of trees and logs and the timber which was very heavy felled on both sides. Here we made a small stop and on examining found there was a tree that had been felled across the river, the militia immediately commenced crossing and the regulars followed after. Crossing the river, we had to climb a bank nearly perpendicular 8 or 10 feet high. As soon as we arrived on the bank we saw the fires of the enemy burning not more than 100 yards distant from us. When about 2/3ds of the regulars has crossed, which took some time (notwithstanding many of the men plunged in and waded through the water). We marched towards the fires of the enemy, here we also had trees and logs to clamber over that had been cut down. When we arrived within about 20 or 30 yards of the first light we were fired on, we immediately fired & charged bayonet and, on entering the first Shantee, as they call them, we found it deserted. We pressed forward to the others for there were four of them and found them all deserted. Then we advanced to a log house 40 yards further that stood in the edge of a piece of cleared ground where we expected they would

make a stand. During this time there was a considerable firing kept up. We were again disappointed and found the house deserted. We formed the line in order as we expected the main body would soon attack us. While forming the line there were some shots fired at us from the chamber of the log house. We immediately fired 2 or 300 balls through the roof and gable ends of the house. After standing in this situation for 1/2 an hour we saw no enemy approach and we set fire to the house and shanties and returned by the same route we came over the river. We had 6 men wounded, one of which has since died, the rest are all slight wounds. We killed an Indian that we saw dead and burnt 2 or 3 in the house. We found 5 or 6 knapsacks, 2 or 3 tomahawks, one red coat belonging to a British officer which I think he had thrown off after being wounded to prevent his being discovered, as inspection of the coat justifies this opinion. I have been thus particular in giving you a description of this little affair as there are many false reports in this place such as our men killing each other and that there was no enemy there. There was sufficient room in the house and shanties for 400 men in all of which there were fresh fires when we found them. General Bloomfield has returned to New Jersey. General Dearborn has returned to Greenbush. Col. Simons has gone to Washington to attend to the recruiting and clothing for his Regt. next year. The 6th, 15th & 16th Regt. of Infantry are at this encampment. The 9th, 11th, 21st & 25th Regts. have gone to Burlington & Pittsfield in Massachusetts. Col. Pike has command of this brigade. We are building huts . . . which we will have finished in 3 or 4 weeks. I am writing this at the root of a large pine tree with a few sticks set up to keep off some of the winds, and a fire to put my feet to at night. This with my blanket defends me from the weather. We have not one tent in our Regt. I wish you could see the style in which we live. The snow is 6 inches deep. When I get a little more comfortably suited, which I expect I shall be when I get in our huts, you shall hear from me. In the meantime I wish you to write to me as often as you have leisure. The most trifling things from the county where I was born at this distance is interesting. Give my respects to all my friends, particularly the Ladies, if I have friends among them.

I am Sir with rspt yr fr-

John Scott

N.B. We have had a great many men sick and have lost some but they are getting better. I have been more fortunate in my company than any other in the Regt. with sickness and death.

Cantonment Saranac January 16, 1812

Dear Sir.

I intended to write to you by Ensign Dickerson or Lieut. W. D. Howell, but they started so much sooner than I expected that I was not able. J. D. Howell was taken ill the 20th of Decr., the day after we had been at the River LaColle, and has had a very severe turn of sickness. He has been reduced as low as a man can be and live and in consequence of his ill state of health the Colonel has concluded to let him go home to attend

the recruiting service under Lieut. Col. Brearley. Ensign Dickerson has also obtained leave of absence or rather is ordered on recruiting. Dickerson, ever since we left Staten Island, has always been coughing and grunting, and has never done but very little duty except at the table where I think when you see him you will say he is industrious. This conduct did not escape the observation of Col. Pike & as he was not likely to be of much service to the Regt. this winter, by repeated solicitation he obtained leave to go home on the recruiting service. I wish you to understand that this is only my opinion as the Colonel has never said anything in my hearing on the subject. He certainly has been of little service and it is my opinion that he will never join the Regt. again when he once more enjoys the comforts of a feather bed with his wife. I believe I did not inform you that the night we crossed the British lines and went to LaColle he was sick and did not go with us. I do not know that anyone doubts his courage. I have just mentioned this as most likely they may tell some things I have never seen or heard of. If my memory serves me I gave you some sort of description of the little affair at LaColle. I see there is a tolerably correct account of the affair in the Paladium printed at Morristown, the 31st Decr. 1812—I am at present the only officer with my company. My 2d Lieut. Abm. Perlee has been acting Deputy Quartermaster, but has resigned that and also tendered his resignation of his office in line to Col. Pike, who has not accepted it, but refers him to Genl. Dearborn at Albany, where he has sent 7 men who are sentenced to serve the remainder of their time of enlistment on Governor's Island with a ball and chain to their legs. With this party, Ensign Dickerson, Lieut. Howell & Lieut. Piatt have gone as far as Albany & from thence will proceed home on the recruiting service. You have seen by the newspapers the way the army is disposed of for the winter—we have moved into our huts the 1st of January although they were not near finished, nor have we got any chimneys in half of them yet. There are 4 rooms, 20 ft. square, allowed to each company, one of which the officers of each company occupies at present. There is nothing done towards the officers huts yet the Col. excepted which is nearly finished. We will begin ours in a day or two. It will take some time before they will be fit to move in. The days now are so short and the weather so cold men can do but little in a day. We have nothing new at this place, our time is all occupied in getting wood and endeavoring to finish the huts. Col. Pike has had a severe attack of the pleursey as I should call it, but the Doctors give it a name I don't remember or understand. He left camp 4 weeks ago yesterday & he is so far recovered as to be able to ride to camp today and expects in 6 or 8 days to move into camp again. The militia that was stationed at Champlain all left there 1st of January when their time expired. Captain Peter Vanmerlingburgh of the 6th Regt. has gone there with 100 men. He has 2 block houses. The night before last the patrol fell in with a patrolling party of Canadians. They exchanged 3 shots & the Canadians retreated. Our party consisted of a Sergt. and 5 men, the enemy about 20. We had none wounded and have not heard as they had—this is a handsome command for a captain as he may have an op-



This blockhouse guarded an approach to the town of York (later Toronto) Canada. [NJHS]

portunity of signalizing himself if attacked, but I should not be disappointed if they should all be taken, as the British have considerable force in L'Arcadie woods, about 10 or 20 miles distant, & it is 22 miles from this which is the nearest reinforcement our troops could possibly get. It is talked and whispered about that we will take the Isle Aux Noir this winter when the ice serves. I can not yet believe we will attempt it for if we succeed in taking it I have not the least doubt but we should have to continue fighting all winter to keep possession of it, and I think our commanders have seen by this time the folly of crossing the lines until they have a sufficient force & I swear for I am sometimes angry I am afraid we shall not be prepared as early in the spring as we ought to be to cross the line. I form my opinion from the men who are sent recruiting, for we ought not attempt to cross with anything less than 10 thousand men and a reinforcement near if necessary. What is all this high talk and noise about 10,000 in [the] old peace establishment and the additional force of 25 thousand when I tell you what perhaps you know that they altogether have not more than 12 thousand regular troops. I might say between 8 and 12 thousand for the militia. I think we must all be satisfied by the time we can place no reliance on them. I hope in God the Government will take some measures to have the campaign opened with vigor—only give us man for man with their regular troops and one or two of their militia and I do not fear the result—there you have all my fears at once-there has been but one resignation in our Regt. of the officers that have joined it. That was Lieut. Whitehead and he was under

arrest at the time. But the Col. gave him leave to resign—he crossed the river LaColle with us, when we were about 1 mile from the river we made a short halt for our advance guard to report. When they returned and reported the enemy in sight on the other side of the river. Whitehead placed himself between two of the men and said "Stick close to me boys or the Indians will kill you," and stuck close to them and when we were about to return the Col. inquired for a subaltern to take command of the rear guard. He asked him to take command of it, he answered he could not, that he was spent. What his motives were for not taking it I leave you [to] guess, as it certainly was the most honorable command a subaltern could have—Some officers say they found him behind a tree when we were firing &c. I was induced to give you this information from hearing some reports he spread when he got back to Newark. Those are facts and more of a similar nature might be stated, but perhaps what I have already said might as well be kept to yourself for should they be public they would hurt the feelings of his father. Lieut. Piatt I think you & me heard Ias. Stansburry speak of him, his opinion was that he would make a good officer. He only thought he would be obliged to fight a duel or more from his ungovernable temper—he makes a great splutter to do a little business, and as for his fighting duels, I think from what has been offered him, he has coolness enough. I think his friends need not be uneasy on account of his being killed in single combat. I thought you said, "Scott, you are making use of the officers names too freely and handling their characters rather rough, so as to endanger your own scalp with a shot, but it is out and you have it." The rank of the officers in our Regt. is not yet established. I see by a law passed this session there is to be 2 majors to each brigade. There will be promotion for some of the captains, those who have the most friends, I think, stand the best chance as they must be appointed by favor, for none have had an opportunity to show merit if they had it as we have had no fighting to do. Let me know when Howell and Dickerson arrive and what report they make of the army. I have filled my paper and given you no information at last. Before Howell and Dickeron went home I had a prospect of seeing you and the rest of my friends, but now I have given up the idea for this winter. We have good sleighing here since the 1st of Decr. There have been one or two days that it has thawed any. The days are cold and the nights much colder. My respects to all my friends, I have not room to particularize their names & if I had you know them perhaps better than I do. I do not know whether any of the Ladies of Morris come under that description, but if they should, make them what I never could, one graceful bow and charge it to my account.

John Scott

Cantonment Saranac February 15th, 1813

Dear Sir,

I embrace the earliest opportunity of informing you of every movement and circumstances respecting the Northern Army and particularly on the present occasion as I am conscious every advantage any part of

the army (however trifling it may be) obtains over our enemy gives you real satisfaction. Captain Forsyth²⁹ (Who I think you saw at Governor's and Staten island) is stationed at Ogdensburg about 100 miles west of this on the river St. Lawrence. He has the command of his own company, consisting of 100 Riflemen and about 200 militia and Volunteers—he crossed the river a few nights ago with about 150 men, surprised and took one major, two captains, two lieuts. and 58 privates with 134 stands of arms, being a part of the very muskets that the British got by the shameful surrender of Hull-and returned to his own quarter in the morning without any loss and with only one man wounded. He let the officers return to Canada on their parole of honor. The second night after which they returned his cap, Forsyth's piquet [picket] guard was attacked by some of the enemy which they repulsed without any loss. Capt. Forsyth was informed by two British deserters next day that the officers he let go on parole were at the head of the party that attacked the piquet guard. I see by papers printed at Ogdensburg that there were 58 deserters from the British arrived at that place in one week in spite of all the exertions of the troops. There is considerable property crossing the lines both waysthere is no doubt some in Canada that do not feel better disposed to the British government than they ought to, but the mass of them are loyalif the people of the U.S. were half as faithful to the administration and would exert themselves half as much to conquer Canada as the inhabitants of those provinces do to oppose us I think by the 1st of December next the whole of the British provinces would be subject to the laws of the U.S.³⁰ But under present circumstances I must confess I cannot form any opinion what that time will be.

The law for raising 20 thousand men for one year has pass—the intention of the supporters of that bill I do not doubt, but I am convinced that they are not acquainted with the nature of organizing and disciplining an army—I think I may say that it is the opinion of the best disciplinarians that 3 years is a period short enough to organize, discipline, and accustom men to the camp. But suppose those men as soon as enlisted were disciplined by the time they can be sent to this or any other part of the British lines, their terms of enlistment will nearly or have expired and we shall still be left without any army and a tolerable bill of expense to pay for men who have never been any benefit to us as soldiers. In 9 months we shall lose from 1/4 to 1/3 of the present men in our Regt. whose time of enlistment will be expired. This is a kind of policy I must confess I do not understand, but expressing my opinion in this manner perhaps might be construed as sedition and cause my

While I am speaking of arrests, let me tell you that there were six officers of the brigade under arrest last week-Capt. Zacariah Rossell, Lieutenant George McGlassin, Lieut. George Henry & Ensign Birch of the 15th Infy., Ensign Sherman, Adj. of the 6th, and Lieut. Caldwell of the 16th. Capt. Rossell, Lt. McGlassin, Ensign Birch & Ensign Sherman have had their trials and the first 2 named were by sentence of a courtmartial cashiered, and the other two repremanded by the commandant,

but the commandant, Col. Pike, though proper to return the swords to the gentlemen cashiered on the recommendation of the court and ordered them to return to their Regt. Lieut. Henry has resigned by permission and Caldwell will resign today or be cashiered and dismissed from the service in 2 days. Our men are getting their health again, we have not lost more than three men in 25 days from our Regt. and have none dangerously ill at present. It has been a very unhealthy season among the inhabitants, they died more in proportion to their numbers than the soldiers. We have had good sleighing here since the latter end of November, and flour and provisions are getting very scarce in Canada. Flour is 22 to 25 dollars per barrel, corn 2 to 2.25/100 per bushel, wheat 4.50/ 100 per bushel. Corn at this place sells for \$1—wheat, the best, for \$2. Wheat, pork, corn, tobacco & leather are the principle articles wanted in Canada at this time—if they were not to receive any of those articles from the U.S. The inhabitants, many of them, must suffer very much in a short time, but the vast extent of the line and the inclemency of the weather renders it impossible to prevent some of these articles [from] crossing the line. The parties that are on the lines bring in some smuggled goods every week.31 That all the good things of the season with agreeable company to enjoy them may be your lot is the sincere wish of your friend &c.

John Scott

My compliments to all the Ladies if they have not forgotten that they ever saw me. Let me know what J. D. H. and Ensign Dickerson are doing. They both promised to write to me but I have heard from neither since they left here. I saw a young Lady a few days ago who has been acquainted with Lieut. Howell and I think will remember him as long as she lives, if she never be so fortunate as to see him again.

Notes

¹Rudolph J. Pasler and Margaret C. Pasler. The New Jersey Federalists (Rutherford, N.I., 1975), 147.

²Aaron Ogden, 1756–1839. Details on his political career are in *The Autobiography of Aaron Ogden of Elizabethtown* (Paterson, N.J., 1893), and J. Owen Grundy, Col. Aaron Ogden: Biographical Compendium (Jersey City, N.J., 1977).

³Walter R. Fee, The Transition from Aristocracy to Democracy in New Jersey, 1789–

1829 (Somerville, N.J., 1922), 188.

⁴Complete overviews of this period are in Alfred M. Heston, South Jersey, A History, 1664–1924, 5 vols. (New York, 1924), 1:449–554; Irving Kull, ed, New Jersey, 4 vols. (New York, 1930), 1:567–73; Francis B. Lee, New Jersey as a Colony and as a State, 4 vols. (New York, 1902), 2:79–113; and John O. Raum, The History of New Jersey from its Earliest Settlement to the Present Day (Philadelphia, 1877), 383–99.

⁵James Lawrence, 1781–1813. See Albert Gleaves, James Lawrence, Captain, United States Navy, Commander of the Chesapeake (New York, 1904), and Hugh F. Pullen, The Shannon and the Chesapeake (Toronto, 1970).

⁶Zeubulon Montgomery Pike, 1779–1813. See John U. Terrell, Zeubulon M. Pike: The Life and Times of an Adventurer (New York, 1968), and Milo M. Quaife, The Yankees Capture York (Detroit, 1955).

William Bainbridge, 1772-1833. See David F. Long, Ready to Hazard: A Bi-

ography of Commodore William Bainbridge (Durham, N.H., 1981).

¹⁸ For a complete listing consult New Jersey Adjutant General's Office, Record of Officers and Men of New Jersey in Wars, 1791-1815 (Trenton, N.J., 1909).

Regiment, an elite unit. Several complete officer rosters are given in William H. Powell, List of Officers of the Army of the United States from 1779 to 1900 (New York, 1900), 61, 81, 124. The present-day 15th Infantry is not a lineal descendant of the old New Jersey regiment, having been raised in 1861. See H. R. Brinkerhoff, "The Fifteenth Regiment of Infantry," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 13 (1892): 1256-74.

¹⁰The most recent and scholarly review of affairs in this region is Allen S. Everest, *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1979). Dated, but still useful is Wallace F. Lamb, *The Lake Champlain and Lake George Valleys*, 5 vols. (New York, 1940), 1:309–23. For a Canadian perspective, consult Ernest A. Cruikshank, "From Isle Aux Noir to Chateauguay: A Study of Military Operations on the Frontier of Lower Canada in 1812 and 1813," *Royal Society of Canada Proceedings* 7 (1914): 129–79.

¹¹See Erna Risch, Quartermaster Support for the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775–1939 (Washington, D.C., 1962), and Glenn A. Steppler, "A Duty Troublesome Beyond Measure: Logistical Considerations in the Canadian War of 1812."

(M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1974).

¹²Details on this famous fortification are in Dave R. Palmer, *The River and the Rock: The History of Fortress West Point, 1775–1783* (New York, 1969), and Gerald C. Stowe and Jac Weller, "Revolutionary West Point: The Key to the Continent," *Military Affairs* 19 (1955): 81–95.

¹³William Hull, 1753–1825. Hull was previously a distinguished Revolutionary War veteran and governor of the Michigan Territory. See William L. Jenks, "William Hull," *Michigan Historical Collections* 40 (1929): 25–41, and Mrs. Maria Campbell, *The Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull* (New

York, 1848)

¹⁴Joseph Bloomfield, 1753–1823. Bloomfield was another Revolutionary War veteran and former governor of New Jersey. For an early view of Bloomfield, see L. Q. C. Elmer, Reminiscences, Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society, 7 (Newark, N.J., 1872): 114–37. Standard references are the biographical essay "Gentleman-Republican" in Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin, eds., Citizen-Soldier: The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield, Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society, 18 (Newark, N.J., 1982), 1–33; and Carl E. Prince, "Joseph Bloomfield," in Paul A. Stellhorn and Michael J. Birkner, eds., The Governors of New Jersey, 1664–1974: Biographical Essays (Trenton, N.J., 1982). Bloomfield's millitary correspondence and letterbooks are in the Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Manuscript Department, New York Historical Society, New York; and the Lloyd W. Smith Collection, Morristown National Historical Park Library, Morristown, New Jersey.

¹⁵Zeubulon M. Pike was commissioned colonel of the 15th Infantry on July 6, 1812, and commanded it until his promotion to brigadier general on March 12, 1813. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the U.S. Army* (Washington, D.C., 1903), 864. Letters by Pike during this period are housed at the Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; the Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts; and the Oneida Historical Society, New York.

¹⁶James Miller, 1776–1851. See Robert J. Holden, "James Miller, Collector of the Port of Salem," *Essex Institute Collections* 104 (1968): 253–302.

¹⁷This encounter is better known as Tippecanoe, fought on November 7, 1811. Despite these assertions of questionable behavior, Miller subsequently distinguished himself by capturing British batteries at Lundy's Lane and Fort Erie in 1814.

¹⁸Modern historians are less harsh in their condemnation of Hull because he was placed in an impossible situation by the government. See John G. Van Deusen, "The Court-Martial of General William Hull," *Michigan History* 12 (1938): 668–94, and Alec R. Gilpin, "General William Hull and the War of 1812" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1950).

¹⁹Sir Isaac Brock, 1769–1812. Scott is badly mistaken on both counts. Brock was a native of Guernsey, England, and a life-long bachelor. See W. Kaye Lamb, *The Hero of Upper Canada* (Toronto, 1962), and Wesley B. Turner, "The Career of Isaac Brock in Upper Canada" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1961).

²⁰Lewis Cass, 1782–1866. Cass was by turns soldier, Indian Agent, U.S. senator from Michigan, and secretary of state. See Andrew C. McLaughlin, *Lewis Cass* (New York, 1909), and Willard C. Klunder, "Lewis Cass, 1782–1866: A Political Biography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1981).

²¹A youthful participant in this rare militia victory was William L. Marcy, who subsequently served as secretary of war during the Mexican War. See Henry B. Dawson, *Battles of the United States by Land and Sea* (New York, 1858), 2:173–

²²Thomas Aspinwall, 1786–1876. After the war Aspinwall served as American consul in London for a record thirty-seven years. See C. Charles Smith, "Memoirs of Colonel Thomas Aspinwall," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 3 (1891): 30–38.

²³Isaac Clark, 1749–1822. Clark was a former member of the Continental Congress and a noted partisan raider of the Champlain Valley. Collections of his War of 1812 papers are at the Bailey Library, University of Vermont, and the Feinstein Library, State University of New York, Plattsburg.

²⁴Cromwell Pearce, 1772–1852. See John C. Fredriksen, "A Poor but Honest Sodger': Colonel Cromwell Pearce, the 16th U.S. Infantry, and the War of 1812," *Pennsylvania History* 52 (1985): 131–61.

²⁵Eleazar Wheelock Ripley, 1782–1839. Ripley ended the war a brevet-major general, which made him the highest-ranking New England soldier of this conflict. For details of his controversial military career, consult Nicholas Baylies, *Eleazar Wheelock Ripley and the War of 1812* (Des Moines, IA., 1890), and Charles R. Corning, "General Eleazar Wheelock Ripley," *Granite Monthly* 17 (1894): 1–13.

²⁶Henry Dearborn, 1751–1829. Like Hull and Bloomfield, Dearborn was another previously distinguished veteran of the Revolutionary War dismissed for incompetence. See Richard A. Erney, *The Public Life of Henry Dearborn* (New York, 1979), and Harry H. Cochrane, *History of Monmouth and Wales, Maine* 2 vols. (East Winthrop, Me, 1898), 1:59–91.

²⁷According to Colonel Pearce, "After the recovery of Colonel Pike, his regiment (the 15th) was organized and disciplined in three ranks. The rear was armed with short muskets slung over the shoulder, and a pike 8 feet long. Several hundred snowshoes were procured to accustom the soldiers to walk on the snow. These experiments were tried and found not to answer the purposes anticipated." Fredriksen, "A Poor but Honest Sodger," 155.

²⁸The nickname of this famous British regiment was the "Green Tigers" owing to the facing color of their collar and cuffs. See F. Lorraine Petre, *The Royal Berkshire Regiment*, 49th/66th Foot (Reading, Eng., 1925). It was present both

at the surrender of Detroit and the battle of Queenston Heights where General Brock, though victorious, was slain at their head.

²⁹Benjamin Forsyth, 1760?–1814. Forsyth was a notorious raider throughout the St. Lawrence region. See Sarah Lemmon, *Frustrated Patriots: North Carolina and the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1973).

³⁰A useful account of American collaboration with the enemy is Harry F. Landon, "British sympathizers in St. Lawrence County during the War of 1812," New York History 35 (1954): 131–38. Additional insights are in J. McKay Hitsman, "David Parrish and the War of 1812," Military Affairs 26 (1962): 171–77.

³¹Details on contraband trade in this region are found in H. N. Muller III, "A Traitorous and Diabolical Traffic: The Commerce of the Champlain-Richilieu Corridor during the War of 1812," *Vermont History* 44 (1976): 78–96, and Harvey Strum, "Smuggling in the North Country, 1808–1815," *NAHO* 15 (1982): 12–17.