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THE PETERSBURG VOLUNTEERS, 1812-1813

by LEE A. WALLACE, JR.*

WAR against Great Britain was declared on June 18, 1812, with a determination to conquer Canada. The first offensive was Brigadier General William Hull's advance into Canada from Detroit on July 12 with an army composed largely of militia. The outposts of Fort Malden at Amherstburg, where most of the enemy was concentrated, were contacted, but Hull, overestimating their strength by tenfold, hesitated to attack. Further unnerved by the British capture of Fort Michilimackinac, which guarded the entrance to Lake Michigan, he withdrew on August 8 to Detroit. On August 16 Hull, after offering less than token resistance, was bluffed into surrendering Detroit with the entire garrison. This humiliating capitulation left the British in control of Lake Erie and the Michigan Territory. Indignation over the surrender swept the country, and there was a general outcry against Hull.¹

On September 1 a requisition was made on Virginia for 1,500 armed militia infantrymen to march as soon as possible to the Northwestern Army in Ohio. The next day Governor James Barbour called for the quota to be drawn from the militia regiments in the counties of Brooke, Cabell, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hardy, Harrison, Kanawha, Lewis, Mason, Monongalia, Ohio, Preston, Randolph, Tyler, and Wood.² Point Pleasant, on the Ohio River in Mason County, was designated as the rendezvous where the militia-men would be organized into regiments and battalions under the command of Brigadier General Joel Leftwich of Bedford County.³ By October 12 there were 1,311 men encamped at Point Pleasant with marching orders to join the Pennsylvania militiamen at Wooster, in Wayne County, Ohio.⁴

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¹ A court martial found Hull guilty of cowardice and neglect of duty, and sentenced him to be shot. President James Madison, because of Hull's services in the American Revolution, spared his life. Hull was dropped from the army and spent his remaining years writing in defense of his campaign.

² William Eustis, secretary of war, to Governor James Barbour, September 1, 1812, Executive Papers (September 1812), Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia; *The Enquirer*, Richmond, Virginia, September 8, 1812. All of the named counties are now in West Virginia.

³ *Virginia Argus*, Richmond, Virginia, September 3, 1812. Leftwich was elected by the General Assembly, January 19, 1809, as brigadier general of the 12th Brigade, Virginia Militia (*Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts*, edited by William P. Palmer et al. [Richmond, 1875-1893], X, 43), which was composed of regiments in the counties of Bedford, Campbell, Franklin, Henry, and Patrick.

⁴ Brigadier General Joel Leftwich to Governor Barbour, October 12, 1812, Executive Papers (October 1812).

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In Petersburg, the organization of a company of volunteers was already underway. A public meeting was held in the town courthouse on September 8 with Nathaniel Friend presiding, which adopted a resolution providing for the appointment of a committee of twelve to raise funds for the benefit of the company by public subscription. Another resolution expressed the sentiments of the gathering: "That the town of Petersburg will ever hold in high remembrance, those Noble & Patriotic young men, who, unmindful of every other consideration, save love of country, have volunteered their services to retrieve the reputation of the republic, so shamefully, ignominiously and disgracefully sullied by the imbecile [if not treacherous] conduct of General Hull."⁵

Raised as a volunteer infantry company to be mustered into federal service for a period of one year, the Petersburg company was not a part of the quota requested of Virginia on September 1, 1812. The company was reported as having 75 enrolled on September 10, and that as soon as their uniforms were completed, they would march to Washington and tender their services to the president. It was expected that the strength would reach at least 100 before their departure.⁶ The company met on September 12 and elected its officers, Captain Richard McRae, First Lieutenant William Tisdale, Second Lieutenant Henry Gary, and Ensign Shirley Tisdale.⁷

The original plan for the entire company to march to Washington was abandoned, and about September 16 Captain McRae and Lieutenant Tisdale left Petersburg for the capital. In Richmond they visited Governor Barbour, carrying with them a letter of introduction from an M. Barbour of Petersburg, urging His Excellency "to pay them all due respect and giving them every facility in your power to accomplish their object in Washington."⁸ News of President Madison's acceptance of the company's services reached Petersburg before the return of the two officers on September 25.⁹ The company was under orders to march for Ohio as soon as practicable, and it was thought that they would leave about October 10.¹⁰

⁵ *Virginia Argus*, September 17, 1812. Nathaniel Friend was mayor of Petersburg, 1812-1813, and Edward Pescud, secretary of the meeting, served as mayor, 1818-1819.

⁶ *Virginia Argus*, September 10, 1812.

⁷ *Ibid.*, September 14, 1812.

⁸ M. Barbour to Governor Barbour, September 15, 1812, Executive Papers (September 1812).

⁹ Petersburg *Republican* quoted in *The Enquirer*, September 29, 1812; *Virginia Argus*, October 1, 1812. Captain McRae returned with the commissions of the company's four officers. The commissions were made out about September 21, but the compiled service records in National Archives Record Group No. 94 indicate that the appointments for these officers were back-dated to September 12, 1812, the day on which they were elected.

¹⁰ *Virginia Argus*, October 1, 1812.

Eulogistic press accounts left little doubt that the Petersburg Volunteers were the finest body of young patriots ever to be raised for the service of the country. They were credited with having the firmness of character, "which will ever command respect—that glow of patriotism, which is the presage of their future glory and renown in the annals of their country—and that nobleness of soul which disdains fear, and is a stranger to dishonor." They would, predicted the writer, become "as celebrated in the war of their country as the immortal band who defended the pass of Thermopylae."¹¹ One Petersburg correspondent, in a letter to the Richmond *Enquirer*, declared: "This company is composed not of the dregs of society, culled from the by-lanes & alleys of the town; but of the flower of our youth and the best blood of our country. . . . They have left the caresses of friends, and the soft repose of their private life, to tread the snows of Canada and the inhospitable wilds of the Savage."¹² Another letter, in the *Virginia Argus*, revealed that the men would march supplied with every comfort imaginable, and that the ladies of Petersburg had prepared the company's flag and were busily employed in completing the uniforms and knapsacks.¹³

Twelve of the fourteen men from Amelia County who had joined the Volunteers met on October 14 at the courthouse on their way to Petersburg. Among the crowd gathered to see them off were a number of Revolutionary War veterans, and it was said to have been "a proud scene, indeed, to see the soldier of '76 clasp the hand of the young soldiers of 1812, one by one, bestowing on them their thanks, their praises; the old soldiers then formed themselves in a line, and as the young patriots marched off, gave them 3 cheers."¹⁴

On October 16 the company of Petersburg Volunteers was enrolled in the service of the United States for a term of twelve months. Besides the officers previously elected, the company was comprised of the following: Sergeants—Robert B. Cook, John Henderson, James Stevens, Samuel Stevens; Corporals—George T. Clough, Joseph C. Noble, John Perry, Joseph Scott, Thomas G. Scott, Norborne B. Spotswood; Musicians—Daniel Eshon, James Jackson; Privates—Richard Adams, Andrew Andrews, John W. Bentley, Joseph R. Bentley, Thomas B. Bigger, John Bignall, Robert Blick, Daniel Booker, George Booker, Richard Booker, Edward Branch, Richard H. Branch, Edmund Brown, George Burge, William Burton, James Cabiness, James G. Chalmers, Edward

¹¹ *Virginia Argus*, September 14, 1812.

¹² Reprinted in the *Virginia Argus*, October 12, 1812.

¹³ *Ibid.*, October 12, 1812.

¹⁴ *The Enquirer*, October 23, 1812.

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The long-awaited day for the departure finally arrived October 21, 1812. At an early hour the company and citizens began to assemble on Centre Hill, and by ten o'clock the spacious ground was filled. An hour later a hollow square was formed for the flag presentation ceremony. The flag, made by the "fair hands" of Petersburg, was presented on their behalf to the Volunteers by Benjamin Watkins Leigh, an illustrious son of Chesterfield County, Petersburg lawyer, and civic leader, who was to become one of Virginia's most distinguished statesmen.¹⁶ In a "concise but eloquent and impressive harangue," Leigh told the Volunteers "to bear in sacred remembrance the

¹⁵ Compiled service records, Captain Richard McRae's Co., filed under "Major Alexander's Independent Battalion Virginia Volunteers (War of 1812)," National Archives, Record Group No. 94. The file heading is curious in that Alexander's battalion consisted of only one Virginia company, McRae's, and two from Pennsylvania. A roster of the company may be found in the *Petersburg Intelligencer*, October 23, 1812. A broadside in commemoration of the Petersburg Volunteers, 8" x 11½", of an undetermined date prior to 1845, in the Centre Hill Mansion Museum in Petersburg, features a roster of the company, with the omission, however, of Private John McClellan, who was enlisted between May 31 and October 16, 1813. The roster on the broadside was reproduced in Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston, S. C., 1845 [reprinted, 1969]), pp. 245-246. Another broadside, 13½" x 18½", in commemoration of McRae's company, printed by James Monroe Hamilton Brunet of Petersburg in 1849 is displayed at Centre Hill. It is similar, including the same roster, but more elaborate than the older one, and is printed on silk.

¹⁶ Benjamin Watkins Leigh (1781-1849) attended the College of William and Mary and in 1802 began law practice in Petersburg. He was first lieutenant of the Petersburg Republican Light Infantry from 1805 until 1807, when he was elected captain. Leigh had resigned by October 1812 (*The American Constellation*, Petersburg, Virginia, October 7, 1834). After serving in the House of Delegates, 1811-1813, he removed to Richmond.

fair donors and to preserve from hostile hands, this proud evidence of their regard for the honor and happiness of the company." Captain McRae, accepting the flag on behalf of Ensign Tisdale, who was absent, acknowledged the obligation the company was under to defend the flag at every hazard.¹⁷

Following the ceremony, the company formed in ranks and took up the line of march for their departure. Preceded by the militia cavalry, the officers of the 39th Regiment of militia, the Senior Volunteers, and the Petersburg Republican Light Infantry, the Volunteers, accompanied by carriages filled with ladies and followed by a large crowd of citizens, marched down Sycamore Street into Bollingbrook Street and across Pocahontas Bridge.¹⁸ As they passed over the bridge, a small cannon on the armed schooner *Washington* from New York acknowledged the Volunteers with a salute. When they reached Haxall's lane, leading to Violet Bank, the Senior Volunteers and some of the citizens turned back. The procession continued to Swift Creek, where there was a brief halt for refreshments provided by John Edwards and William Rowlett. Here the Republican Light Infantry and many of the citizens dropped out. The Volunteers, followed by the cavalry, militia officers, and people who had joined in from the countryside, continued the march to Ware Bottom Church, where they made camp for the night, probably in a grove of trees near the spring, which was a short distance from the church.¹⁹ A "plentiful dinner, and other refreshments," provided by citizens of Chesterfield County, was partaken, after which the cavalry and militia officers and others left the Volunteers for their first encampment.²⁰

The next day, as the company neared Richmond, they were met by the cavalry and other militia companies of the city, with several bands, and escorted to Capitol Square, where they were welcomed by Governor Barbour amid the cheering of an immense crowd. On Saturday, October 24, a public dinner, arranged by the officers of the 19th Regiment (City of Richmond) of militia, was given for the Volunteers at Buchanan's Spring.

¹⁷ *The Enquirer*, October 27, 1812. An ensign, the lowest commissioned rank in the infantry, was charged with carrying the unit's colors.

¹⁸ The Senior Volunteers, apparently composed of citizens over military age, was organized at the outbreak of the war as a home guard company and still existed in 1814. The Petersburg Republican Light Infantry, a volunteer militia company attached to the 39th Regiment (Petersburg), had been organized in 1805.

¹⁹ Ware Bottom Church was built in 1723 and has long since disappeared. A rough boulder marks the approximate site, south of the present road (Route 10) to Hopewell, about 300 yards east of the railroad overpass.

²⁰ *Petersburg Intelligencer*, October 23, 1812; *The Enquirer*, October 27, 1812.

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Over 600 attended, with the governor presiding. As it was also muster day for the 19th Regiment, the uniformed companies were present in full dress and armed. At the center and the largest of the five tables were officers of the Revolutionary War, the governor, and the Petersburg Volunteers. Seated at the next two tables were the Richmond companies, and the remaining two tables were occupied by citizens who had subscribed for the dinner. The *Enquirer* described it as "the most sumptuous and animated feast which we have ever seen."²¹

Soon after the Volunteers arrived in Richmond they were visited by the celebrated Methodist missionary and church historian, the Reverend Jesse Lee, a native of Prince George County, and a veteran of the American Revolution, who was eminent in the early growth of Methodism in Virginia.²² A member of the company, Alfred M. Lorrain, later to become a Methodist of considerable fame, recalled years later that Lee "recognized almost each soldier as the son of some highly esteemed friend."²³ The Volunteers solicited a sermon from Lee, and on the appointed day, the company marched to his church, which was soon packed with citizens and soldiers. The text of the sermon, directed at the youth of Richmond, was "Shall your brethren go to war, and ye sit here?"²⁴

There was considerable agitation in the Richmond newspapers for the organization of a volunteer company in the city. After praising Petersburg for its company, the *Virginia Argus* on October 12 asked: "Why does not

²¹ *The Enquirer*, October 27, 1812. Buchanan's Spring was west of the city, just north of Broad Street near Harrison Street.

²² Jesse Lee (1758-1816) was a Methodist zealot before he was drafted into the army in 1780. Refusing to bear arms throughout his three months of service, Lee served as a wagon driver, sergeant of pioneers, and acted as an unofficial chaplain. He labored for Methodism for the remainder of his life and has been ranked near Bishop Francis Asbury. Relations between the two were intimate, but they did not always agree. Lee was the author of *A Short History of Methodists in the United States*, published in 1810.

²³ Alfred M. Lorrain (1791-1863) was born in Chester Town, Kent County, Maryland, but while an infant, his family moved to Petersburg, Virginia. In 1804 he went to sea as a cabin boy and was a sailor for seven years, ending his nautical career as a second mate. After his service with the Petersburg Volunteers during the War of 1812, Lorrain was converted to Methodism and in New Orleans in 1822, he was licensed to preach. He moved to Xenia, Ohio, the same year and from 1824 to 1861 traveled on almost all of the Ohio circuits. He was a frequent contributor to the *Ladies Repository* and from 1854 to 1855 edited the *Western Seamen's Pilot*. At the request of the conference held in Springfield, Ohio, in 1861, he wrote his autobiography, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross: A Life Narrative*, published in 1862. He was also the author of two volumes of "sea sermons" (*Minutes of the Annual Conferences, M. E. Church, Cincinnati Conference, 1863*; William Coyle, editor, *Ohio's Authors and Their Books* [Cleveland, 1962], p. 395).

²⁴ Alfred M. Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross: A Life Narrative* (Cincinnati, 1862), pp. 100-102. The text is from Numbers 32:6.

Richmond follow her example? We can only sigh over the apathy which hangs over the metropolis." In complimenting the appearance of Captain McRae's company, the *Enquirer* on October 23 stated: "Richmond ought to have sent forth a compatriot band to have fought by your side; but *she* sleepeth in inglorious repose. Shame, shame, on the Metropolis of Virginia." The *Argus* of October 26 proclaimed its confidence in the raising of a Richmond company, and pointed out that "nothing is now wanting but the appearance of three or four distinguished young republicans, whom we could readily name, to raise the standard of their country—and hundreds of the flower of our youth would in one week join them and rally around it. Let but the experiment be made we can almost vouch for its success." The cries of the press were not in vain for in November the Richmond Washington Volunteers was organized.²⁵ The Reverend Mr. Lee's sermon reverberated in the announcement which appeared in the *Argus* on November 5: "A roll is opened in this City for a company of Volunteers. 50 enterprising spirits have already put down their names—Will you join them? Will you follow the glorious steps of Petersburg? Or 'while they go to the battle, will you sit here' in inglorious ease?"

Ordinarily the War Department furnished arms for volunteer organizations raised for federal service, but the expansion of the army had seriously depleted the government's stock. Aware of this, Captain McRae applied to the state for arms and cartridge boxes, which would be, in effect, issued on a loan basis to the federal government. The governor and Council agreed to grant McRae's request, but before arms could be carried from the state, there had to be assurances from federal authorities that the Commonwealth would be remunerated for any arms lost.²⁶ McRae sent two requests for these assurances to Washington, but there were no acknowledgements. Finally, on October 27, McRae, writing from Petersburg, where he had returned be-

²⁵ The Richmond Washington Volunteers under Captain Richard Booker (1790-1853) left Richmond in July 1813 and was subsequently attached to the 20th Regiment of U. S. Infantry, which participated in the St. Lawrence Campaign. On December 29, 1813, Major General James Wilkinson, commanding the Northern Army, with headquarters at Malone, New York, published orders expressing appreciation for the services of the Volunteers, and ordered them to march for Richmond to be discharged from service (*Virginia Argus*, November 19, 1812, July 15, 1813; *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 5-6; "Thanks in General Orders to the Richmond Volunteers, War of 1812," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, II [1894], 94-95; Certificate No. 11066WC, Mrs. Selma Booker, Pension Files, National Archives, Record Group No. 15). See also "War's Wild Alarm," *VMHB*, XLIX (1941), 217-233.

²⁶ Captain Richard McRae to Governor Barbour, October 11, 1812; Governor Barbour to Captain McRae, October 12, 1812; filed in the compiled service record of Captain Richard McRae, Alexander's Independent Battalion Virginia Volunteers (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94.

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cause of illness, sent another letter, stating that he had been waiting for an answer "till patience ceased to be a virtue," and that the company, detained in Richmond since October 21 for want of arms, was "impatient to be on the march." A postscript noted that he had been advised that the Council of State would deliver the arms to the Petersburg Volunteers, "relying on receiving the sanction & assurance of the General Government."²⁷ About October 29 the Volunteers received an issue of arms from the state, and on October 31 the adjutant general in Washington notified McRae that the arms furnished to his company by the executive of Virginia would be returned by the federal government when called for.²⁸

On November 2 the Petersburg Volunteers marched from Richmond, escorted from the city by the volunteer companies of the 19th Regiment, the governor and other officials, and hundreds of citizens. "These men," commented the *Enquirer*, "have exhibited among us, an example of decorum and good conduct, which confers the highest credit upon them. . . . Blessings go with them! And may victory perch upon their banners." The company, it was reported, intended to camp for the night at a Mr. Williamson's eight miles from the city.²⁹

Throughout their journey westward, the company was graciously received and plied with an abundance of food and drink, to the extent that they passed almost through the state without having to purchase provisions.³⁰ Upon their arrival at Louisa Court House, they were treated to "a fine soldier's dinner," consisting of "a Good Beef, Mutton, Shoat and Bacon, together with whiskey and Country brandy." While encamped at Major Branham's place in Louisa County, one of the Volunteers wrote on November 8 of their reception there: "We met with the same marks of respect. Capt. Wm. Wash. of this county, sent a fine stalled Beef, Major C. Quarles a plenty of good Cyder, Major Branham and others Vegetables, Straw & Our company are in good health and high spirits."³¹

The Volunteers stopped at Monticello on November 9 for a visit with the sixty-nine-year-old former president, and as Lorrain remembered it:

²⁷ McRae to Thomas H. Cushing, Adjutant General of the United States, October 27, 1812; filed in the compiled service record of Captain McRae, National Archives, Record Group No. 94.

²⁸ *The Enquirer*, October 30, 1812; Cushing to McRae, October 31, 1812, filed in compiled service record of Captain McRae, National Archives, Record Group No. 94.

²⁹ *The Enquirer*, November 3, 1812.

³⁰ McRae to James Madison, July 5, 1814, Madison Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

³¹ *The Enquirer*, November 17, 1812.

We drew up, in military array, at the base of the hill on which the great house was erected. About half way down the hill stood a very homely old man, dressed in plain Virginia cloth, his head uncovered, and his venerable locks flowing in the wind. Some of our quizzical clique at once marked him as a fit subject of fun. "I wonder," said one, "what old codger that is, with his hair blowing nine ways for Easter Monday." "Why, of course," said another, "it is the overseer, and he seems to be scared out of a year's growth. I suspect he never saw gentlemen volunteers before." But how were we astonished when he advanced to our officers and introduced himself as THOMAS JEFFERSON! The officers were invited in to a collation, while we were marched off to the town, where more abundant provision had been made.³²

From Charlottesville the company pushed across the Blue Ridge, passed through White Sulphur Springs, and, by way of the Great Kanawha River, reached Point Pleasant on the Ohio River. Unable to cross the river because of the ice, the company went into camp near the village for about two weeks. Here Captain McRae, who had been absent because of illness since late in October, rejoined his company. One member wrote that the captain "was received with every testimony of joy, almost bordering on phrenzy," and that "the inhabitants thought we were taking leave of our senses."³³

As soon as conditions permitted the Volunteers struck tents and began the move across the river. About six of the company, impatient to reach the other side, commandeered a skiff belonging to a young inhabitant, who vigorously protested with a determination not to let the volunteers use his boat. A number of the villagers and about half the company collected at the scene, but the apparent beginnings of a brawl developed into a mutual admiration for the parties. The owner of the skiff long remembered his experience with the Petersburg Volunteers as a lesson in life, to the extent that he wrote of it in an article which appeared thirty-one years after the incident.³⁴

After a fatiguing march of about sixty miles from Point Pleasant, the Volunteers on December 22 reached Chillicothe, then the capital of Ohio. It was reported that "a finer company . . . or more elegantly uniform, has

³² Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, p. 103. Two contemporary accounts, however, state that the entire company, and not just the officers, were entertained by Jefferson (*The Enquirer*, November 20, 1812; *Niles' Weekly Register*, III, 202).

³³ *Petersburg Intelligencer*, quoted in *The Enquirer*, January 7, 1813.

³⁴ "Scene at Point Pleasant," *American Pioneer*, II (April 1843), 174-175. The article was published pseudonymously under "Clio," with an editor's note that "The gentleman who communicated the above, could not be induced to have his proper name inserted. He is a respectable citizen of Cincinnati at this time" (*ibid.*, p. 175). The Point Pleasant story also appears in Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia*, pp. 246-247.

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probably never passed through this place. They certainly do much honor to the state from which they came." The Volunteers were provided quarters in the statehouse, and on December 24 the Ohio legislature sponsored a Christmas Eve dinner for them at Buchanan's hotel. On the following day they were given another dinner, by the citizens of the town.³⁵

Appointed to the command of the Northwestern Army on September 12, 1812, Major General William Henry Harrison, with headquarters at Franklinton within the present site of Columbus, undertook laborious preparations for a campaign to regain Detroit and advance into Canada. The public clamoured for a winter campaign without delay, and Harrison optimistically began preparations for it, although much more time was needed to train undisciplined troops and collect supplies. His plan was to move the army in three "wings," and have them converge at the Rapids of the Maumee River, held by the British since the loss of Detroit. Typhus fever and a shortage of clothing and provisions forced the left wing, made up of General James Winchester's Kentuckians, to halt at the beginning of December and go into winter quarters. The center wing reached the Maumee, but failing to secure a lodgement, fell back to Fort M'Arthur, forty miles from the river. The right wing occupied Lower Sandusky (later Fremont), but could move no further. In short, by the time the Petersburg Volunteers reached Chillicothe, Harrison's campaign had pretty well bogged down because of the inability to transport badly needed supplies over the muddy and mostly impassable roads.³⁶

Ensign Tisdale, who had been sent ahead to contact General Harrison, rejoined the company at Chillicothe on December 23 with orders that they were to march for Upper Sandusky as soon as possible. The general, Tisdale reported, had known nothing of the company's coming, otherwise he would have sent pack horses to expedite the march.³⁷ As the Volunteers left Chillicothe on or about December 26, a northwester brought rain and then snow, which covered the countryside. Forcing their way through mud, ice, and snow, and across swollen streams, they reached Franklinton.³⁸ From there the march was continued over almost impassable roads, and on January 6, 1813, the company reached Worthington, where they were put up in the

³⁵ *The Supporter*, Chillicothe, Ohio, December 26, 1812; *Niles' Weekly Register*, III, 282; *The Enquirer*, January 5, 1813.

³⁶ Robert B. McAfee, *History of the Late War in the Western Country* (1816), (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1919), pp. 159, 182-191, 209-213.

³⁷ *The Enquirer*, January 7, 1813.

³⁸ Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, p. 107.

local taverns.³⁹ Here they found Captain Daniel L. Cushing's company of the 2nd Regiment of U. S. Artillery, also en route to Upper Sandusky, and experiencing great difficulty in making their way with two wagons heavily laden with ammunition and baggage. On January 8 the march was resumed by way of Delaware, which Lorrain described as being "a handsome village—the *ultima Thule* of American civilization, as far as our route was concerned."⁴⁰ Only one cabin was passed as the company marched forty miles through the cold, desolate, snow-covered country to Upper Sandusky, which was reached about January 10, after a march of 110 miles from Chillicothe.

Meanwhile, Winchester's command had broken camp and on January 10 was encamped at the Rapids of the Maumee, awaiting Harrison, who was expected on January 20. From the Rapids they would march against Malden. Soon after reaching the Rapids, Winchester received a request for help at Frenchtown (later Monroe) on the River Raisin in Michigan, thirty-five miles north of the Rapids and eighteen miles from Malden. On January 17 most of his forces left the Rapids and, after a sharp action the next day, captured Frenchtown. Winchester with the remainder of his army, excepting about 300, left the Rapids on January 19 and arrived at Frenchtown the next day. Although a victory had been gained, Winchester was now dangerously situated within enemy-held territory, far in advance of support by Harrison.

News of Winchester's move to the Rapids reached Harrison at Upper Sandusky on the night of January 16, and the next day he started for the Rapids by way of Lower Sandusky to order up the troops stationed there. Orders were given directing the Petersburg Volunteers and other units at Upper Sandusky to proceed to the Rapids using the new road by way of the Portage River, a distance of sixty miles.⁴¹ All were expected to depart on January 18, but as a lieutenant of Cushing's artillery wrote a few days later: "From one dam'd thing & another, being out of order & wanting repairs, we have not got started as yet."⁴² On the morning of January 21 the march began, with Major Robert Orr of the Pennsylvania line in command. There

³⁹ Harlow Lindley, editor, *Captain Cushing in the War of 1812* (Columbus, 1944), p. 76. This publication includes Cushing's Orderly Book, several letters, and a roster of his company; cited hereinafter as Lindley, *Cushing*.

⁴⁰ Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, p. 107.

⁴¹ Alexander A. Meek to General John S. Gano, January 18, 1813, in "Selections from the Gano Papers, III," *Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, XVI (1920), 28.

⁴² Meek to Gano, January 25, 1813, "Selections from the Gano Papers, III," *Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, XVI (1920), 33.

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were, besides the Petersburg Volunteers, Captain Cushing's artillery and six companies of militia. With them were twenty pieces of artillery and a large quantity of military stores and baggage transported on wagons and sleds. After marching for nine miles, they went into camp for the night by a "little stream of very good water."⁴³

On the morning of January 23 news was received of Winchester's capture of Frenchtown, but later in the day a courier arrived with the sad tidings that the British and Indians had recaptured Frenchtown, that most of Winchester's men had been killed or captured, and that Harrison expected an attack on his position at the Rapids. Major Orr was ordered to leave one company as guards for the artillery and baggage, which had to be left behind, and march at once to the Rapids with the remainder of his men. Camp was made early in the evening, and a heavy rain was falling at dark as Major Orr held council with his officers to make preparations for the next day's forced march to join Harrison.⁴⁴

Before daylight on January 24, Orr's troops were on the road. In the lead was a train of 450 pack horses laden with salt and flour. A continual rain softened the snow into mud, which the animals churned into what Cushing described as a "bed of mortar about a foot deep."⁴⁵ His artillery, save one 6-pounder, had been left behind, and those of his company who were not struggling with it through the mire marched through the swamp beside the road. One of the Petersburg company, writing of the grueling experience, declared:

That day I regretted being a soldier. On that day we marched thirty miles, under an incessant rain; and I am afraid you will doubt my veracity when I tell you, that in 8 miles of the best road, it took us over the knees and often to the middle. The Black Swamp (4 miles from the Portage river, and 4 miles in extent) would have been considered impassable by all but men determined to surmount every difficulty to accomplish the object of their march. In this swamp you lose sight of *terra firma* altogether—the water was about 6 inches deep on the ice, which was very rotten, often breaking through to the depth of four or five feet.⁴⁶

Moving along the same road General Hull had used the summer before, they reached the Portage River. There they learned that Harrison had left the

⁴³ Lindley, *Cushing*, pp. 77-78.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁶ Letter from a private in McRae's company to a friend in Petersburg, March 28, 1813, published under "Picture of a Soldier's Life," in *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 166-168.

Rapids and had fallen back seventeen miles to the Portage. It was still raining when they camped for the night, their clothing was drenched, and the tents had been left behind. Fires were built with considerable difficulty, and although they had no cooking utensils and but few provisions, the Petersburg Volunteers managed a fairly decent supper. Flour was procured from the nearby packhorses and baked into bread in ashes. A hog was killed, butchered, and the pork broiled on the coals—"a sweeter meal I never partook of," was the opinion of at least one volunteer.⁴⁷

When reinforcements could be collected, Harrison proposed a return to the Rapids. Meanwhile, an attack on the position at the Portage was not held improbable, and for several nights, wrote one of the Petersburg Volunteers, "we went to sleep with our muskets in our arms, and all our accoutrements fixed for action."⁴⁸ Delayed on his march from Lower Sandusky by heavy rains which began on January 24, General Leftwich with his Virginia brigade, a regiment of Pennsylvanians, and a considerable amount of artillery, reached the Portage on January 30.⁴⁹ With his forces now at about 1,700, Harrison moved up to the east side of the Maumee River, and on February 2 established camp at the foot of the Rapids. The arrival of more Pennsylvania troops nine days later raised Harrison's strength to slightly over 2,000.

Work soon began on the construction of a strongly fortified position with eight blockhouses, elevated battery emplacements, powder magazines, and a palisade 2,500 yards in circumference. Five 18-pounders, six 12-pounders, six 6-pounders, and three howitzers were placed in position as the fort's construction progressed.⁵⁰ Daily the men were set to work cutting trees, splitting logs, digging, and in other endless tasks necessary for the completion of the fort, which was named for Ohio's governor, Return Jonathan Meigs.⁵¹ It was an unusually severe winter, and the frozen ground required the most strenuous use of the spade and wielding of the mattocks and pickaxe. Alfred Lorrain recalled that: "This season of fatigue was replete with hardships, as it was in the depths of winter, and we suffered from many priva-

⁴⁷ "Picture of a Soldier's Life," *Niles Weekly Register*, IV, 167.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ McAfee, *History of the Late War in the Western Country*, pp. 259-260.

⁵⁰ "Journal of the Northwestern Campaign of 1812-13, . . . Bvt. Lieut.-Colonel Eleazer D. Wood, Capt. Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army," in George W. Cullum, *Campaigns of the War of 1812-5, against Great Britain, Sketched and Criticised; with Brief Biographies of the American Engineers*, (New York, 1879), pp. 370-373; cited hereinafter as Wood's "Journal."

⁵¹ The origin of Governor Meigs's singular name is discussed in Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812* (New York, 1868), p. 255n.

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tions. However our bodies and minds were actively employed which rendered our condition far preferable to what followed."⁵²

The Petersburg company was sent out with a detachment of about 600 on the evening of February 9 to attack an estimated 200 Indians reported to be some fifteen miles down the Maumee. Marching on ice for most of the way, they reached the area in which the Indians were supposed to be about 4 o'clock in the morning, and in battle order they quietly advanced. "I could hear the men cocking their pieces," wrote one of the Volunteers, "our company to a man, were even at that moment cheerful and gay! fear was far distant from our ranks." Much to their disappointment, the Indians had left, and after a pursuit of about eight miles, the detachment gave up and returned to Fort Meigs.⁵³ Again, on March 4, Captain McRae's company was sent out, this time with a party which was to cover the retreat of an unsuccessful expedition fitted out from the fort on February 26 to burn the British brig *Queen Charlotte* at Malden. They met the expedition at the mouth of Lake Erie, and returned with them to the fort on the following day.⁵⁴

In late January the Petersburg Volunteers and two companies of twelve-month volunteers from Pennsylvania were organized into a battalion under Major John B. Alexander, who was promoted from captain of the Greensburgh Riflemen, a small company of about twenty-three.⁵⁵ The other company was Captain James R. Butler's Pittsburgh Blues, which had a total strength of about thirty-nine.⁵⁶ The two Pennsylvania companies, both of which had seen action at the battle of Missinaway, November 18, 1812, did not reach Fort Meigs until March 18.⁵⁷ Major Alexander, wrote one of McRae's company, "is as fine a fellow as I ever knew—The most perfect

⁵² Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, p. 124.

⁵³ Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 87; "Picture of a Soldier's Life," *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 167.

⁵⁴ Lindley, *Cushing*, pp. 89-90; "Picture of a Soldier's Life," *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 167.

⁵⁵ Greensburgh (Pennsylvania) *Gazette*, quoted in *The Enquirer*, February 9, 1813; Pittsburgh *Gazette*, January 29, 1813; compiled service record of Captain John B. Alexander, Alexander's Independent Battalion Volunteers (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94; Muster Roll, Captain John B. Alexander's Company, Volunteer Riflemen (Pennsylvania), December 31, 1812, National Archives, Record Group No. 94 (Entry 55, Muster Rolls of Volunteer Organizations: War of 1812).

⁵⁶ Muster Roll, Captain James R. Butler's Company Light Infantry (Pennsylvania), January 18, 1813, Alexander's Independent Battalion Volunteers (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94 (Entry 55). For a history of the Pittsburgh Blues, see John H. Niebaum, "The Pittsburgh Blues," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, IV (1921), 110-122, 175-185, 259-270; V (1922), 244-250.

⁵⁷ Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 88; Niebaum, "The Pittsburgh Blues," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, IV (1921), 261.

harmony exists between the Pittsburg company and ours . . . a generous emulation exists among them, . . . officers and men mingle together; we visit each others tents of an evening, sing, tell stories, play music, and drink grog, when we can get it; which by-the-bye, is not often the case, suttlers not being permitted to sell spirits in the camp."⁵⁸

Soon after their arrival at the Rapids the Volunteers suffered their first loss, Private Andrew Andrews, who died from "diseases of a severe climate."⁵⁹ Conditions within the camp were far from healthful, with mud and water covering the ground, even within the tents. Worse still was the lack of wood for fires. As the timber had been cut for a long distance around the fort, wood had to be collected and hauled in by teams, for which there was "not a bushel of forage." On March 8 Private Edmund S. Gee died, and a companion who was present wrote: "I saw him breathe his last—we consigned him to his mother earth with all the decency our circumstances would permit. . . . All the battalion attended the funeral—likewise general Leftwich, who requested the chaplain to perform a funeral service, a thing not done on any similar occasion."⁶⁰ Corporal James Stevens died on March 17, and two days later Captain Cushing noted in his journal: "Our men are very sickly; no wonder lying in mud and water and without fire; not less than two or three men died every day, and I expect the deaths to increase unless the weather changes very soon."⁶¹

The advance to Malden set for early February was abandoned, and with the departure of the Kentucky and Ohio militia, whose terms of service had expired, there was no hope for a campaign until spring. Harrison left on March 5 to make arrangements for more troops, and, on the same day, his engineer officer, Captain Eleazer D. Wood, went to superintend the building of fortifications at Lower Sandusky. General Leftwich, now in command, was charged with completing Fort Meigs, but Wood, who returned on March 18, found that "this phlegmatic, stupid old granny, so soon as General Harrison left camp, stopped the progress of the work entirely, assigning as a reason that he couldn't make the militia do anything," and that Leftwich had even permitted the timber brought in for building blockhouses to be used as fuel.⁶²

⁵⁸ "Picture of a Soldier's Life," *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 167.

⁵⁹ Letter by Richard McRae, April 20, 1854, filed with the compiled service record of Private Andrews, Captain McRae's Company, Alexander's Independent Battalion Virginia Volunteers (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94.

⁶⁰ "Picture of a Soldier's Life," *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 167.

⁶¹ Lindley, *Cushing*, pp. 91-92.

⁶² Wood's "Journal," pp. 378-397.

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The strength of the garrison was seriously depleted on April 2, when Leftwich and his brigade, with most of the Pennsylvania militia, left for their homes, their terms of service having ended. Wood wrote, "And away went every Virginian belonging to the drafted militia, without the least concern as to what became of those they left behind, or caring whether the enemy or ourselves were in possession of the camp, so long as they could escape from the defense of it."⁶³ With Leftwich's departure, the command of Fort Meigs devolved upon Major Amos Stoddard, 2nd Regiment of Artillery, veteran of the American Revolution, lawyer, and former acting governor of Louisiana.⁶⁴

A fifteen-gun salute on April 12 welcomed the return of Harrison with 200 regulars and militia. More arrived later, and by April 23 the garrison had an effective strength of about 1,600.⁶⁵ Work continued feverishly on completing the fort and readying it for the siege, which was now more than a possibility. It had been known for several weeks that Colonel Henry Proctor was collecting his forces at Malden and Detroit, and on April 18 word came that the attack would be in about twelve days.⁶⁶ The forces which embarked at Malden on April 24 numbered slightly over 2,000, including 413 of the British 41st Regiment of Foot, 468 Canadian militiamen, and about 1,200 Indians.⁶⁷ Landing at the mouth of the Maumee, they moved up the north bank of the river, and established their main camp about two miles below Fort Meigs. While battery positions were being prepared nearly opposite Fort Meigs, the Indians crossed the river and surrounded the fort in the rear and on the flanks.

Inside the fort Harrison put his men to work throwing up the "grand traverse," which could be erected only after determining the location of the enemy batteries. It was an earthen embankment twelve feet high and extended through the middle of the fort, where the tents of the garrison were pitched, and parallel with the batteries across the river. The tents which had been left to conceal the construction of the traverse were removed,

⁶³ *Ibid.* Letters were received from Harrison on March 29 urging the Virginia and Pennsylvania brigades to stay a few days longer, and Cushing, who does not appear to have shared Wood's harsh opinion of the Virginians, wrote: "These calls and invitations will not do; the government has not been punctual enough in paying their troops for them to stay longer" (Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 94). In February 1822 Leftwich was appointed major general, 1st Division, Virginia Militia (*Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, X, 502). He died on April 20, 1846.

⁶⁴ Stoddard was wounded during the siege, and died on May 11 of tetanus.

⁶⁵ Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 125.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 100.

⁶⁷ Alexander C. Casselman, editor, *Richardson's War of 1812* (Toronto, 1902), pp. 165-166.

and bombproofs were dug in its base on the sheltered side. As the men were completing the traverse and removing the tents, the batteries played on the surrounding Indians with grape and canister and bombarded the British at work on their emplacements across the river.⁶⁸

The British on the night of April 30 towed a gunboat up the river to a position near the fort, and after firing thirty rounds, which were ineffective, withdrew before daylight. Late on the morning of May 1 the batteries on the opposite shore opened and during the day expended about 250 rounds, but without much injury to the fort. Not more than two were killed and four wounded. During the night the firing was just enough to keep the garrison from rest. A heavy fire from all four of the enemy's batteries began on the morning of May 2, and, with the Indians firing from the treetops nearest the fort, continued all day. Harrison's losses were four killed and seven wounded.⁶⁹

Working largely at night, the British established a battery consisting of a light gun and a mortar on Harrison's side of the river in a broad ravine about 300 yards on the right of the fort. With these pieces and the batteries across the river, Fort Meigs was subjected to a galling cross fire. Some 516 rounds were discharged at the fort on May 3, but the garrison suffered few losses. On May 4 Harrison refused Proctor's demand for a surrender, and late that night he received the good news that General Green Clay's Kentucky brigade of 1,200 would soon arrive.⁷⁰ With the day there came a loss to the Petersburg Volunteers, Second Lieutenant Gary, who died after a long illness.⁷¹

May 5 was the momentous day of the siege and is the date upon which the fame of the Petersburg Volunteers largely rests. On Clay's arrival 846 of his brigade, under Colonel William Dudley, landed on the north side of the river and captured the enemy's batteries, which were without the support of infantry. Instead of returning to the fort after spiking the guns as ordered, the Kentuckians lingered about, some going in pursuit of the fleeing Indians. Three companies of the 41st Regiment, some Canadian militia, with Tecumseh and his Indians, rallied and drove in between Dudley's men and the

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⁶⁸ Wood's "Journal," pp. 389-390; Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 102.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

⁷⁰ Green Clay (1757-1826), a native of Powhatan County, Virginia, migrated to Kentucky about 1777. He had little schooling, but with a knowledge of surveying, and by acquiring land, accumulated a fortune. He served in both houses of the legislature and became a major general in the Kentucky militia at the outbreak of war in 1812.

⁷¹ *The Enquirer*, June 4, 1813.

⁷² McAfee,
⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.
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river, killing and capturing the entire force save about 170 who managed to escape to Fort Meigs.⁷²

While the British batteries were being spiked, the remainder of Clay's brigade on the south bank of the river fought their way to Fort Meigs, arriving in time for three companies of the Kentuckians to join a sortie on its way out to engage the Indians on the left flank of the fort. A detachment from Alexander's battalion, comprised of McRae's company and the Pittsburgh Blues, was included in the sallying party. The Indians were driven back into the woods a half a mile or so, but the pursuing troops, becoming reckless and overconfident, very nearly experienced a disaster like that suffered by Dudley's men on the north bank.⁷³

Harrison ordered a sortie against the battery in the ravine on the right of the fort. In support of the battery Proctor had the grenadier and light infantry companies of the 41st Regiment, two companies of Canadian militia, and Tecumseh with some 500 Indians; in all, about 850.⁷⁴ Under the command of Colonel John Miller, 19th U. S. Infantry, the sortie consisted of detachments from seven companies of the 19th and 17th U. S. Infantry regiments, Captain Uriel Sebree's company of Kentucky militia, and Major Alexander's battalion of volunteers. The Petersburg Volunteers was the largest of the battalion's companies, with 64 men under First Lieutenant Tisdale, who commanded in the absence of Captain McRae, who was ill as were many others in the company.⁷⁵ The Pittsburgh Blues, led by First Lieutenant Matthew Magee in place of Captain Butler, who was indisposed, numbered about 25.⁷⁶ No more than a dozen or so of the Greensburgh Riflemen, under Lieutenant Peter Drum, participated.⁷⁷ In all, Miller had about 350 men.

The troops were assembled in a small ravine just beyond the southeast wall of the fort, out of the enemy's sight. Lieutenant Tisdale, nicknamed

⁷² McAfee, *History of the Late War in the Western Country*, pp. 291-295.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 288-289; Niles' *Weekly Register*, IV, 210; Niebaum, "The Pittsburgh Blues, Part III," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, IV (1921), 261; Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, p. 133.

⁷⁴ McAfee, *History of the Late War in the Western Country*, p. 290.

⁷⁵ *The Enquirer*, June 4, 8, 1813; see also Muster Roll, Captain McRae's Co., May 31, 1813, Alexander's Independent Battalion Volunteers (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94 (Entry 55).

⁷⁶ Niebaum, "The Pittsburgh Blues," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, IV (1921), 181-182; Muster Roll, Captain James R. Butler's Co., February 28, 1813-May 31, 1813, Alexander's Independent Volunteer Battalion (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94 (Entry 55).

⁷⁷ Muster Roll, detachment of Volunteer Riflemen under command of Lieutenant Peter Drum, May 31, 1813, Alexander's Independent Volunteer Battalion (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94 (Entry 55).

"Old Bluefoot" by the men, paced back and forth in front of the company, urging them to rush forward with a tremendous shout. Harrison, after passing through the ranks offering encouragement, took a post at a nearby battery to observe the attack. The word was given, and moving out of the ravine at trail arms, they advanced up a hill in full view of the enemy. As they reached the top, the companies of the 41st Regiment opened fire but inflicted few casualties. Miller's lines moved out on a plain some 200 yards in width, and after advancing about 50 yards, halted, closed ranks, and, with the Petersburg company on the right flank, charged, firing as they went. The Indians, firing from the woods with considerable effect, came very near turning the right of Miller's line and getting into the rear, which could have been disastrous. As they were driving the enemy back in confusion and spiking the gun and mortar in the battery, Sebree's company, outflanked by the enemy, became locked in a hand-to-hand struggle, which ended when Harrison sent in a company of regulars. About noon the fighting ceased, and Miller, his objective accomplished, returned to the fort with 42 prisoners.⁷⁸

The casualties of the sortie were reported as 30 killed and about 90 wounded, of whom Alexander's battalion had two killed, both members of the Pittsburgh Blues, and 29 wounded.⁷⁹ Seventeen of the Petersburg Volunteers were wounded, most of the wounds were slight, but three proved fatal. On May 10 Nicholas Massenburg died, George Booker died on May 12, and George Clough on May 18.⁸⁰ The company's number of casualties was largely attributed to its exposed position on the right flank during the assault.⁸¹

Harrison wrote of the "intrepidity" of the Petersburg Volunteers in his report of May 9, and Captain Wood noted in his journal: "The company of volunteers from Petersburg (Virginia) particularly distinguished them-

⁷⁸ Wood's "Journal," pp. 399-400; Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, pp. 133-136.

⁷⁹ *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 192; Wood's "Journal," p. 400.

⁸⁰ Muster Roll, Captain McRae's Co., Alexander's Independent Battalion Virginia Volunteers (War of 1812), February 8-May 31, 1813, National Archives, Record Group No. 94 (Entry 55). Two others wounded in the sortie were Sergeant Herbert C. Lofton (promoted March 17, 1813); Corporals Joseph Scott, Thomas G. Scott; Musician Jackson; and Privates Blick, Cooper, Chives, Drummond, Leigh, Thomas Perry, Stith, Thomas Scott, Samuel Williams, and John F. Wiley. The muster roll does not substantiate the wounding of the following as indicated on the broadsides in the Centre Hill Mansion Museum: Musician Eshon, and Privates Edmund Brown, Joseph Mason, and Samuel Stephens. An ode to the memory of George Booker by "J. T. W." of Amelia County, June 30, 1813, appeared in the *Virginia Argus*, July 8, 1813.

⁸¹ *The Enquirer*, June 3, 4, 8, 1813.

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selves by their intrepid and cool conduct, while approaching the batteries under a heavy fire of musketry."⁸² No lesser tribute, however, was paid the Volunteers by an unknown post rider, who declared that they "fought like devils."⁸³

Sergeant John Henderson of the Petersburg Volunteers had charge of a battery served by others of his company. One of them, John Shore, who was said to have been largely responsible for the organization of the company, was wounded by a splinter and died of lockjaw on May 8. A letter to his brother in Petersburg disclosed that the battery was "manned by the Petersburg Volunteers—a Battery, my dear sir, that did more execution among the enemy than any other at Fort Meigs."⁸⁴ Harrison in his report on May 9 wrote that "The battery managed by Sergt. Henderson was as the enemy confessed—managed with peculiar efficacy & effect with respect to the sorties which were made on the 5th inst." Henderson, recommended for promotion by Harrison, was commissioned a lieutenant in the 2nd Regiment of Artillery. In July one of the fort's batteries was named in his honor.⁸⁵

The end of the siege on May 9 left Fort Meigs with 81 killed and 189 wounded. Along with the many who were too sick for active duty, the wounded suffered much from the extreme wet and cold. Many of them lay on rails to keep above water until they could be placed in the blockhouses converted into temporary hospitals.⁸⁶ Dysentery prevailed in the fort, and on May 20 it was said that not more than twenty of the Petersburg Volun-

⁸² Niles' Weekly Register, IV, 211; Wood's "Journal," p. 400.

⁸³ The Enquirer, June 4, 1813.

⁸⁴ The Enquirer, May 29, 1813. "Captain Jack Shore," wrote Lorrain, was "the darling of our crew," and as a kinsman of General Harrison, "had more than once taken tea with his distinguished cousin, 'sub rosa,' in the grand marquee" (*The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, pp. 138-139).

⁸⁵ The Enquirer, June 8, 1813; Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 47; compiled service record of John Henderson, Captain McRae's Co., Alexander's Independent Battalion Volunteers (War of 1812), National Archives, Record Group No. 94. Henderson was described by the *Petersburg Intelligencer* as a "true honest son of Hibernia," who had "served for many years in the floating dungeons of Britain," and had "migrated to this land of liberty, in search of those blessings and privileges denied of him in the country of his nativity. He entered the ranks here with all that zeal and devotion so characteristic of the Irish" (*Virginia Argus*, May 31, 1813). He was commissioned on June 20, 1813, but his career in the regular service was not especially commendable. At Fort Meigs, July 21, 1813, he was tried, but acquitted on six charges which involved "Unexemplary & disorderly conduct, . . . being in a evident state of inebriety" (Lindley, *Cushing*, pp. 52-53). Henderson was dismissed from the service on April 2, 1818 (Charles K. Gardner, *A Dictionary of the Army of the United States*, 2nd edition [New York, 1860], p. 224), and is believed to have been the John F. Henderson who died in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1858 (Petersburg, Virginia, *Daily Express*, June 5, 1858).

⁸⁶ Wood's "Journal," pp. 401-402.

teers were fit for duty.⁸⁷ Cushing wrote on May 22 that several of the sick had died, and "not more than could be expected, considering the fatigue and the badness of the weather they have experienced for the last thirty days."⁸⁸ At the end of the month the rolls of the Petersburg company noted 41 men as sick. John Cureton died on June 13, Corporal John Perry on the 14th, and three days later, William Lacy and George P. Raybourne died. On June 16 Captain McRae, who seems to have been sick for much of his time in service, with several of his company, Lieutenant Magee of the Pittsburgh Blues, and some from Cushing's artillery company left for Cleveland where it was hoped they would regain their health.⁸⁹

On July 21, Proctor, now a major general, returned for another try at Fort Meigs, then under the command of General Clay, and found the fort stronger than before. A ruse to draw the garrison from the fort into the open to be ambushed failed, and on July 28, the "second siege" was lifted. Proctor then moved down the Maumee, along Lake Erie, and up the Sandusky River, to attack Fort Stephenson at Lower Sandusky, ten miles from Harrison's main supply depot at Seneca Town. Harrison moved his forces closer to the depot, leaving in command of Fort Stephenson twenty-one-year-old Major George Croghan, 17th U. S. Infantry, who had distinguished himself in Miller's sortie at Fort Meigs.⁹⁰ Croghan had only 160 men and one iron 6-pounder to defend the fort, which was attacked on the first of August.

A severe cannonade by the British on the first day had little effect. The 6-pounder occasionally replied, and was shifted about to give the impression of more artillery. Late on August 2 the 41st Regiment advanced 400 strong, with an assault column coming within 50 yards before it was discovered. Musketry sent their lines into confusion, but they rallied and swarmed into the ditch just outside the palisade. A masked port was opened, and the 6-pounder sent forth a deadly fire of grape and slugs into the ranks of the redcoats. Another assault was attempted and again with the same result. Proctor gave up and left that night for Malden with almost 100 casualties. In the fort there had been one killed and seven slightly wounded. Petersburg's link with the determined defense of the fort and the 6-pounder, later dubbed

⁸⁷ *Virginia Argus*, June 3, 1813.

⁸⁸ Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 108.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 112. The Richmond, Virginia, *Daily Compiler*, June 29, 1813, reprinted a notice from the Petersburg *Republican*, which stated that John Perry had died on June 10.

⁹⁰ George Croghan (1791-1849), a Kentuckian, attended the College of William and Mary, 1809-1810. At the battle of Tippecanoe he served as a volunteer aide-de-camp to Harrison, who recommended his appointment as captain in the regular army.

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"Good Bess," is found in Harrison's report of the action, which in part read: "A young gentleman private in the Petersburg Volunteers, of the name of [Edmund] Brown, assisted by five or six of that company and of the Pittsburgh Blues, who were accidently in the fort, managed the six pounder which produced such destruction in the ranks of the enemy."⁹¹ Another of the Petersburg company with the 6-pounder was Edward Mumford.⁹²

After Fort Stephenson, Harrison began organizing his forces for an offensive against Malden by water, the success of which depended upon the control of Lake Erie. The garrison of Fort Meigs was reduced in size, and leaving 300 men there, including about twenty of the Petersburg Volunteers under Lieutenant Tisdale, General Clay on August 18 marched with the balance to Harrison's headquarters at Lower Seneca Town.⁹³ There, on August 28, Alexander's battalion was broken up when the Pittsburgh Blues and the Greensburgh Riflemen were discharged, their terms of enlistment having expired. Within a period of three weeks, when the Petersburg Volunteers were at Fort Meigs and Camp Seneca, the ranks of the company were reduced by the deaths of Samuel Miles, William Lanier, William P. Rawlings, and Samuel Williams, who had been among the wounded on May 5.

The Petersburg company was now attached to Lieutenant Colonel James V. Ball's squadron of about 400 "chosen men," selected to be the first to land on the Canadian shore. In a letter from Camp Seneca on September 10 one of the Volunteers said: "I now write you for the last time (in all probability) from this place, as we shall move from this post in four or five days for Malden. . . . Our troops, throughout the whole camp, are in high spirits, and pant for the moment when they shall encounter the enemy." Another of the company wrote: "I merely wish to inform you, the time has at last arrived, when we have to march for Canada . . . should I come off even as well as at Fort Meigs, I would be contented."⁹⁴

Tisdale's detachment left Fort Meigs on September 7 and on the 11th rejoined the company at Lower Sandusky. En route, on Lake Erie, they had

⁹¹ *Niles' Weekly Register*, IV, 389.

⁹² General Orders, Headquarters, Seneca Town, August 8, 1813, in Lindley, *Cushing*, p. 55. Since 1850 "Good Bess" has occupied a position on the site of Fort Stephenson in the heart of Fremont, Ohio; see Julia M. Haynes, "Fremont in History," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications*, X (1901-1902), 49-66, and Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, p. 507n.

⁹³ *Virginia Argus*, September 8, 1813.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, September 27, 1813.

been within a short distance of the two fleets during the famous battle of September 10, in which Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry defeated the British and opened the way for Harrison's invasion of Canada. At least three of the Petersburg company had answered to the call for volunteers to serve with the fleet. Private John H. Smith was one. Another was one of the two Harrisons, but which of them, William or Nathaniel, is undetermined. Former Sergeant John Henderson, then a second lieutenant in the 2nd Artillery, also volunteered and was posted in the tops with a musket. All three escaped injury.⁹⁵

The army embarked on September 20 for the rendezvous points at Put-in-Bay Island, Bass Island, and Middle Sister Island, about twelve miles off the Canadian shore. On board Perry's ship, the schooner *Ariel*, late in the evening the officers, having dined, were on deck enjoying the cool breeze. Major John Chambers, volunteer aide to General Harrison, and future governor of the Iowa Territory, was approached by one of the Petersburg Volunteers, who asked if it would be possible to obtain a cup of coffee, saying that he was still weak from malaria and had been unable to eat the cold and coarse rations issued to the company. Chambers felt powerless to grant the request, but within a half an hour, and to his gratification, the entire company was relishing an excellent hot supper, thanks to Commodore Perry who, after overhearing the conversation, had ordered its preparation.⁹⁶

Late in the afternoon of September 27 Harrison's army landed about three miles below Malden, which was occupied the same day. Sandwich and Detroit, just across the river, were entered on September 29. With his forces increased by the arrival of Colonel Richard Johnson's Mounted Regiment of 1,000 Kentuckians, Harrison went in pursuit of the enemy. The victory at the Battle of the Thames, 56 miles east of Detroit on October 5, ended in the disgrace of Proctor and the death of Tecumseh, but, more important, it brought to an end the fighting in the Northwest. The Petersburg Volunteers, in the rear guard, did not arrive in time to share in the fighting. "I for one was right glad of it," Lorrain recalled, "for our time of service was now expired, and the word[s] 'home, sweet home,' seemed to gather additional charms every day."⁹⁷ The release of the volunteer troops in the

⁹⁵ John Cook Wyllie, editor, "'Observations Made During a Short Residence in Virginia,' In a Letter from Thomas H. Palmer, May 30, 1814," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVI (1968), 409; *Virginia Argus*, September 30, 1813.

⁹⁶ James Cooke Mills, *Oliver Hazard Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie* (Detroit, 1913), p. 174.

⁹⁷ Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, p. 153.

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army began soon after their return to Detroit. There on the public parade ground the Petersburg company was discharged by the following order:

General Orders

Head-Quarters Detroit—17th October, 1813

The term of Service for which the Petersburg Volunteers were engaged, having expired, they are permitted to commence their march to Virginia, as soon as they can be transported to the South side of the Lake.

In granting a discharge to this Patriotic and Gallant Corps, the General feels at a loss for words adequate to convey his sense of their exalted merits. Almost exclusively composed of individuals who had been nursed in the lap of ease, they have, for twelve months, borne the hardships, and privations of Military life in the midst of an inhospitable wilderness, with a cheerfulness and alacrity which has never been surpassed. Their conduct in the Field has been excelled by no other Corps; and whilst in Camp, they have set an example of Subordination and Respect for Military Authority to the whole Army. The General requests Captain M'Rae, his Subalterns, Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates, to accept his warmest thanks—and bids them an Affectionate Farewell.

By Command,

ROBERT BUTLER,
Acting Assistant Adjutant General⁹⁸

Muskets were turned in and the company began its long journey homeward. They waited for about a week in Cleveland, expecting to receive their final pay, but when the paymaster, James G. Chalmers, a member of the company, failed to appear, the Volunteers broke up into "little social bands, in different routes," Lorrain recalled, for Petersburg.⁹⁹ A number went to Pittsburgh, still hoping to meet Chalmers, but after about ten days they started for home. Lorrain and three of his intimate friends, who do not appear to have been with the group at Pittsburgh, traveled to Petersburg by way of Winchester and Fredericksburg. From Petersburg on November 12 it was announced that three of the company had arrived on the 9th and "nearly all the rest, we understand, are on the way, by different routes, and may be shortly expected to arrive. With the exception of Captain McRae, the Members of the Company generally . . . enjoy good health."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *The Enquirer*, November 16, 1813.

⁹⁹ Lorrain, *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross*, p. 154. Chalmers was alleged to have lost the money gambling. Finally, forty years after the Petersburg Volunteers had been discharged, Congress, on March 3, 1853, appropriated \$10,334.31, to be paid to the survivors, or their heirs. The provision was included in the act making an appropriation for the support of the army for the year ending June 30, 1854; see George Minot, editor, *The Statutes at Large and Treaties of the United States of America. From December 1, 1851, to March 3, 1855*, X (Boston, 1855), 217.

¹⁰⁰ *Virginia Argus*, November 14, 1813.

The firing of cannon at dawn and sunrise on January 8, 1814, opened the festivities honoring the returned Volunteers. Three guns fired at noon brought the militia companies, the Volunteers, and many citizens to Centre Hill, where after salutes were rendered to the company, the procession left for Poplar Spring, within the grounds which later became known as Poplar Lawn. There Postmaster Thomas Shore, brother of the lamented John Shore, who died at Fort Meigs, delivered the oration, in which he declared: "The pride of Sparta were the heroes of Thermopylae, the pride of Virginia the heroes of Fort Meigs." Appropriate selections were rendered by the band, and all joined in the singing of patriotic airs. The hall in which the dinner was held that afternoon was bedecked with a variety of flags, "among which waved conspicuously the war worn banner of the heroes of Fort Meigs."¹⁰¹ This was not the only observance that year in connection with the Petersburg Volunteers. A number of the veterans who had removed to Richmond borrowed two field pieces from the state, and on May 7, the *Enquirer* reported: "We understand that the National Salute fired in this city on Thursday [May 5] was to commemorate the Anniversary of the Sortie from Fort Meigs."¹⁰²

Traditionally, President Madison reviewed the company on its way home in 1813, and at the time conferred upon Petersburg a sobriquet, "The Cockade City of the Union," which is usually shortened to "The Cockade City." Madison, searching for something complimentary to say, possibly thought of the leather cockade ornamenting the soldiers' hats. Thus, Petersburg in furnishing the volunteer company which had served so well at Fort Meigs, was the ornament, or cockade, of the Union. There seems to be some historical basis for this cherished legend, but contemporary evidence as to exactly *when* the incident occurred is lacking. As the Volunteers traveled homeward in separate groups Madison could not have reviewed the company in its entirety, but it may have been that some of the returning soldiers stopped to see him in Washington. Another possibility is that the sobriquet was conferred at the time McRae was in Washington during July 1814 settling accounts with the War Department.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *Virginia Argus*, January 17, 1814; *The Enquirer*, January 11, 1814.

¹⁰² Executive Papers (May 1814), Virginia State Library.

¹⁰³ The Madison Papers (Library of Congress) include two letters written by McRae while in Washington in 1814, but there is no evidence that he met the president. It is plausible that the sobriquet was conferred *before* the company left for the war, when McRae and Tisdale visited Washington in September 1812, at which time they did see Madison. Had the company been reviewed at any time by Madison, it is unlikely that Alfred Lorrain would have failed to record the event in *The Helm, the Sword, and the Cross: A Life Narrative*.

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Whatever may have been the circumstances of its origin, the sobriquet does not seem to have come into general usage until several decades after the war. On March 14, 1817, General Harrison, upon special invitation by the citizens of Petersburg and the veterans of the Volunteers, was honored with a public dinner at Poplar Spring. Many toasts were given, but nowhere in them, or in the lengthy press accounts of the occasion, do we find mention of "The Cockade City of the Union."¹⁰⁴ Lafayette visited Petersburg on October 29-30, 1824, and at the ball following the banquet given in his honor on the first night "A crowd of the Canada volunteers from Petersburg, were by name introduced to him. He received them with a soldier's hand, and looked upon them with a soldier's eye." Another dinner was given him at Niblo's Tavern on the second night, and immediately after a toast was drunk in his honor, the 67-year-old general rose, and gave the following: "The Petersburg Volunteers and the Petersburg Canada Company in the late war."¹⁰⁵ Again, in the newspaper accounts of these events covering two days, we find no mention of the "Cockade City." There were other occasions where, seemingly, Petersburg's appellation would have been mentioned. Finally, on July 4, 1838, a toast was drunk to the town of Petersburg: "The Cockade of the Union, a proud cognomen won by her gallantry in the late war; may she maintain it to the last moment of her existence."¹⁰⁶ The sobriquet, "The Cockade of the Union," was phrased the same in 1843, 1846, and in 1848, and throughout this period there were references to the "Cockade Town" in the press.¹⁰⁷ "City" first appeared in the sobriquet after 1850 when Petersburg became a city, and to this day it has continued as "The Cockade City of the Union."

Interestingly, it is "The Cockade City of the Union" on the monument to McRae and the Petersburg Volunteers erected in Blandford Cemetery in 1857. Apparently, no one questioned the inscription.¹⁰⁸ The story of this imposing monument begins with the tragic death of McRae, who had left Petersburg for Washington on May 29, 1854. On June 1, after a squall, his

¹⁰⁴ *The Enquirer*, March 25, 1817.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, November 5, 1824.

¹⁰⁶ *The American Constellation*, July 6, 1838.

¹⁰⁷ *The Republican*, June 26, 1843, December 4, 1846, August 9, 1848. *The Little Cockade*, a newspaper edited by Supple and Ellyson, appeared in January 1841, but was short-lived. A copy dated January 26, 1841 (Vol. I, No. 3) is in the collections of the Petersburg Public Library.

¹⁰⁸ The inscriptions on the monument, now weather-worn and barely legible in places, are fortunately recorded in M. Clifford Harrison, *Home to the Cockade City* (Richmond, 1942), pp. 32-34.

body was found floating in the Potomac at the mouth of Aquia Creek. There were wounds about the head and foul play was generally suspected, but the mystery has never been resolved. He was interred in Blandford Cemetery with military honors on June 4. Funds for a monument were raised by popular subscription in 1856, and on January 12, 1857, the marble shaft was erected, not only to honor McRae but as a memorial to his company. The gilded eagle with spread wings on top of the shaft and the iron fence ornamented with military trophies were added a little later.¹⁰⁹

Superlatives for the Petersburg Volunteers would have to include John F. Wiley, Thomas Bell Bigger, and Reuben Clements. Wiley, who had been among the wounded at Fort Meigs, represented Amelia County in the House of Delegates, 1835-1837, 1840-1841, and in 1843 was elected councillor of state. He was re-elected in 1846, and as senior councillor in 1848, Wiley was lieutenant governor. In 1849 he was elected again, and served until the expiration of his term in 1852.¹¹⁰

Thomas Bigger removed to Richmond after his return from the war. In 1844 he was appointed postmaster and served until his resignation in 1862. He joined the Richmond Light Infantry Blues in 1820 and was captain of the company from 1832 until 1839, when he was commissioned as lieutenant colonel of the 19th Regiment, Virginia Militia. He was later made colonel of the regiment and in 1845 resigned his commission. Bigger was among those who accompanied the remains of Captain McRae from Richmond to Petersburg in 1854. When he died at the age of 86 on May 5, 1880, the 67th anniversary of the sortie at Fort Meigs, the *Daily Dispatch* declared him as the last survivor of the Petersburg Volunteers.¹¹¹ This was erroneous for in Petersburg a former corporal of the company, Reuben Clements, was still very much alive and quite active.¹¹²

On August 5, 1848, Clements and Captain McRae, the only survivors of the company then left in town, had been guests of honor at the dinner given for Petersburg's two companies just returned from Mexico, and among the many toasts was one to them as "The representatives of another age, and

¹⁰⁹ *Daily South-Side Democrat*, Petersburg, Virginia, June 2, 1854; *Daily Richmond Enquirer*, June 5, 6, 7, 1854; *Daily Express*, Petersburg, Virginia, May 19, June 17, 1856, January 13, 1857, March 3, 5, 1857; James G. Scott and Edward A. Wyatt, IV, *Petersburg's Story: A History* (Petersburg, 1960), p. 128.

¹¹⁰ Earl G. Swem and John W. Williams, *A Register of the General Assembly of Virginia 1776-1918* (Richmond, 1918), pp. 139, 141, 149; *The Republican*, August 9, 1848.

¹¹¹ *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 6, 1880.

¹¹² Clements was promoted to corporal sometime between May 31 and October 16, 1813 (Compiled service record, Reuben Clements, Alexander's Independent Battalion Virginia Volunteers [War of 1812], National Archives, Record Group No. 94).

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other scenes—an age and scenes that won glory to our country. . . .”¹¹³ Clements was custodian of the flag carried by the Volunteers, and in 1854 he loaned it to Captain Joseph V. Scott of the Petersburg Grays to be carried in a parade. It was a tragedy, to say the least, when the flag was destroyed in a fire which swept through Scott’s room on Bollingbrook Street.¹¹⁴ In 1861 Clements saw companies of Petersburg youth march away for the second war since his own, 49 years before. Not long after the death of Bigger in Richmond, the old veteran had a fall and suffered complications which eventually led to his demise on October 7, 1881, at the age of 91 years. On Sunday, October 9, the Petersburg Grays, Petersburg Artillery, Old Grays Association, and the Association of Mexican War Veterans turned out to bury in Blandford Cemetery with military honors the remains of the last known survivor of the Petersburg Volunteers.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *The Republican*, August 9, 1848. The Brunet broadside lists twelve survivors of the Petersburg Volunteers, July 4, 1849: Richard McRae, Reuben Clements, Petersburg; Thomas B. Bigger, John Bignall, Richmond; John Wiley, Amelia County; Edward H. Cogbill, Chesterfield County; John H. Saunders, Powhatan County; Alfred O. Eggleston, Cincinnati, Ohio; Shirley Tisdale, Thomas Clarke, Alabama; Nathaniel H. Wills, Tennessee; and Anthony Mullen, whose residence was unknown. Alfred Lorrain, however, was still living in Ohio, and John Henderson is believed to have been still alive. Pension files in the National Archives (Record Group No. 15) show that Saunders left Powhatan County in 1852 for Richmond, where he died on April 23, 1861; Thomas Clarke died in Marengo County, Alabama, on February 3, 1851; and Nathaniel H. Wills died on December 6, 1857, at Jonesboro, Tennessee.

¹¹⁴ *Index-Appeal*, Petersburg, Virginia, October 8, 1881. Joseph V. Scott, son of Joseph Scott, who was wounded at Fort Meigs, and died at the age of 60 on March 16, 1846, served as captain of the Petersburg Grays, 1847-1860. In April 1861 he was elected captain of the Cockade Rifles, which became Co. E, 3rd Regiment of Virginia Volunteers (1861-1865). He was promoted to major on November 6, 1861, to lieutenant colonel on April 27, 1862, and was mortally wounded on June 30, 1862.

¹¹⁵ *Index-Appeal*, October 11, 1881.