



Electronic Delivery Cover Sheet

NOTICE WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

This notice is posted in compliance with
Title 37 C. F. R., Chapter II, Part 201.14

Old Dominion University Interlibrary Loan

ILLiad TN: 216863



Borrower: VPI

Lending String: VA@,VA@,*VOD,VWM,FDA

Patron: ;DEPT; ;STAT; Costa, Patrick

Journal Title: Journal of the Society for Army
Historical Research.

Volume: 61 **Issue:**

Month/Year: 1983 **Pages:** 22-29

Article Author: Society for Army Historical
Research (London, England)

Article Title: Robert Allen; The Bisshopp Papers
During the War of 1812

Imprint: [London] Society for Army Historical Res

ILL Number: 67183417



Call #: DA49.S6 vol. 61 1983-84

Location: Periodicals/Jrnls Floor 2
AVAILABLE

Charge

Maxcost: \$50.00IFM

Shipping Address:

ILL/Newman Library *

Virginia Tech

P.O. Box 9001

Kent St.

Blacksburg, VA 24062-9001

Fax: 540-231-3946

Ariel: 128.173.124.26

4

THE BISSHOPP PAPERS DURING THE WAR OF 1812

EXTRACTS EDITED BY ROBERT S. ALLEN

The Bisschopp Papers, MG24, F4, 1803-1813, in the Public Archives of Canada (Ottawa) contain a number of letters which provide a glimpse of the War of 1812, especially along the Niagara frontier of Upper Canada, as viewed first hand by two British officers serving in this outpost of empire during the Napoleonic Wars. For the most part, the letters in this small collection were written by an affable, affectionate and rather homesick young gentleman named Cecil Bisschopp, to his younger sister, Kate (Katherine Annabella). Born 25 June 1783 at Parham House, West Sussex, England, Bisschopp was the eldest son of Sir Cecil Bisschopp, 12th Baron Zouché, and Harriet Anne Southwell. Although heir to his father's estate and wealthy, young Bisschopp nonetheless devoted his life to service in the British military. In 1799 he joined the prestigious 1st Foot Guards and was commissioned Ensign. Eventually he succeeded to the rank of Major. Prior to the War of 1812, Bisschopp served as private secretary to Rear-Admiral Sir John Warren at St. Petersburg (1802); participated in the expeditions to Corunna, Spain, and Walcheren, Netherlands (January and July 1809); and was also a member of parliament for Newport from 1811 to 1812. In April 1805, he had married Charlotte Barbara, eldest daughter of George, 2nd Marquess Townshend. She died in 1807.

Appointed inspecting field officer of militia in Upper Canada on 6 February 1812 with the local rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, Bisschopp sailed for British North America three months after the outbreak of the War of 1812, and subsequently campaigned in the upper province until mid-July 1813 when he died of wounds received at Black Rock. During his few months at Montréal and in Upper Canada, Bisschopp wrote several letters to his dearest Kate or Kitten, three of which appear below. In these letters, the young officer describes or discusses such things as road and country conditions; the character and loyalty of the French Canadians; the plaguing desertions of British soldiers; and the general conduct of the war. Of particular note is that the letters reveal an almost absorbing interest in the campaigns of the Peninsular War, and the successes of the Duke of Wellington. Clearly, Bisschopp typified the general feeling of many British officers posted throughout the empire at this time, who longed for duty and the apparent glories of performing at stage centre in Spain. A final letter, written by Surgeon Hackett to Sir Cecil Bisschopp and Mrs. Bisschopp, graphically details the unique nature of battle in the War of 1812, and the last lingering days of the young, gallant and popular Cecil Bisschopp. The four letters reproduced in this article, apart from small omissions where the words were illegible, have not been altered in any way in regard to spelling, punctuation or syntax.

Cecil Bisschopp, aboard HMS Porcupine, reached Québec City about mid-October 1812. After suffering through a tough road journey of nearly three days he arrived at Montréal. Several days later, and with prophetic foreboding, he

departed for the Niagara frontier of Upper Canada and "amongst the Indians". He was determined, however, "to fight the Yankees".

Montreal
October the 19th 1812

My Dearest Kate

I arrived here last night and hope this letter will get in time to Québec to go with the *Porcupine*. I have had a very unpleasant journey up the Country. The Roads from the immense Quantity of rain we have had, and from the Melting of the Snow are intolerable, Pease porridge Road . . . the carriage they use in this Country is a Calash [sic] most of which are without any covering, I could not get one with a cover in Québec, I was fortunate enough to get a light fitted Waggon which they call a Stage for about 60 miles, it being very wet weather & raining the whole of the time.

I was in great luck—I found my French of the greatest service to me, as all the drivers I get could not speak one word of English except the first from Québec . . . and glad enough I was when I found myself in Montréal [being] Knocked and Jolted about during the whole of the way first out of one hole into another and so into a third that my Sides I believe are nearly Black & Blue . . .

I do not the least know yet what is to become of me whether I am to be sent to Upper Canada amongst the Indians or to remain at this place amongst Christians, the latter I should rather prefer. I suppose I shall know in a day or two—The American Army I understand has not gain[ed] strength in our's, are on the Frontier about 10 leagues from them. I have however been here too short a time to form any opinion, as to whether they are likely from any information I could get to muster strength enough to attack us. Sir G. Prevost¹ has I understand determined to remain entirely on the Defensive until he procures orders how to act from England . . . like this place much, better from its appearance than Québec. The country round it seems more lively & the Climate is much more moderate, it is [astounding?] the difference there is in the Vegetation between this & 100 miles lower down the River, the Cold weather came on so early this year that the Snow was on the ground when the Wheat and the oats in many places was not cut & still on the ground. This is Shocking for the Poor People, they appear however to be a very happy Race and very much attached to the British government. The Militia turn out with the greatest alacrity, and altho they abominate the War they hate the very name of an American, and from every appearance will when called upon to [do] their duty will act with great Bravery & courage, they are a strong sturdy Race of Men, but

¹ Bisschopp Papers, Bisschopp to his sister, Kate, HMS Porcupine at the Entrance of the River St. Lawrence, 9 October 1812.

² Sir George Prevost, Captain General and Governor-in-Chief of British North America, 1811-1815.

very ill clothed. There are some red Coats among them but those are very few, they wear the Belt & [?] over their own Clothes, the officers have most of them Red Coats & Different Facings. . . . I am now placed all of a sudden in a most difficult situation for I find everybody wishes me at Devil for coming out to this Country . . .

Adieu My Dear Kitten I beg you will not show this letter to any body out of the family.

Dear Kitten

Montreal October 22d 1812

Enclosed I send you . . . the account that arrived here last night of our success against an attack of the Americans at Queenstown 12 miles above Niagara, M. Gen. Brock is universally lamented, as he was an excellent officer, and at this moment when we have scarce any Generals at all and almost without any regular troops. His loss is [irreparable?] I only hope that we shall have a Regt. or two before the St. Lawrence is Frozen up. A Regt. of Dismounted Cavalry if Government would pay the allowance for Horses [as] they do in England would be of the greatest service, & we could have the very best Horses this Country possesses—The Troop of Yeomanry Cavalry is Grand in appearance to any regular Regt. They are well mounted, and have a most intelligent Officer to command them—I had the Honor this morning of Commanding all the troops here to fire a Feu de Joie on Lord Wellingtons success which accounts have only just arrived here—I had four pieces of Artillery—the Kings Regt [8th] a Regt of Fencibles and three Regt. of Volunteers—we fired three rounds the Artillery giving seven guns at commencement of each round of small arms, we afterward marched by & I was surprised to find I got thro a General Officer's command so well before I had a day in Command even of a Batt.—In consequence of the Death of Gen. Brock I am however ordered to be off tomorrow with a Detachment Stores etc. to Niagara to place myself under the command of General Sheaff who commands in the Upper Province—

. . . If the Americans attack us again, this General shall have a responsible command but I can have no doubt but the militia will act as they have done in this last action. Poor General Brocks last words were Send forward the York Volunteers, a Regt of Militia which will now be under my charge—It is a Beautiful Country I am going to, Plenty of Provisions very cheap—

Adieu My Dear Kitten

Following his arrival in the upper province, Bisshopp, an "active intelligent officer,"³ was given command of the British and Canadian troops from Chippawa to Fort Erie along the Niagara River. At Frenchman's Creek (28

³ W. C. H. Wood, ed. *Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812* (3 vols., Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1920-28), Vol. 1, p.650.

November 1812), he moved "with great celerity"⁴ to repulse a large American invasion force. His official report on this event reflected an individual of efficient military bearing and professional enthusiasm. In his letter to Kate, however, he could not conceal his excitement for his personal triumph.

Fort Erie Upper Canada
March 21st 1813

Dear Kitten

Your never say one word about [?] or Lord Wellington

It is a very extraordinary circumstance that on the very day that you were writing to me [28 November 1812] in Stratford Place, I was engaged with the Enemy and gained a partial success which if it is estimated in England as it is here, will no doubt give my [father?] his Peerage, the day I received your letter here I had just succeeded in Silencing the Enemys Guns after a heavy Cannonade of a whole day and a night from the American shore. My Official report left here on the 19th inst. I am happy to say I had only one man Killed and seven wounded. The enemy who are Three Fourths Irish thought they would make an attempt on St. Patricks day, but like all other three former Efforts on Upper Canada, I am still writing from Fort Erie. I can not help mentioning this to you, as I hope it is only a [?] to my doing a real service to my Country, but the numbers opposite to us, I fear will be so numerous that unless reinforcements arrive from England very soon, the Keeping of this Country is out of the Question . . . I have had a hard set to deal with the 41st Regiment have plagued me to Death numbers deserting to the Enemy, don't mention this, but the Americans hold out such inducements to our men to come over besides the getting of their liberty which is perhaps not so much to be wondered at. The two little Books you are good enough to send by Quebec will only be of use in Lower Canada as we all speak John Bulls language in this part of the world, at Detroit and Amherstburg they speak French again—I have not received the advertisement in *The Times* Paper, I have only two letters from home since I have been in the Country, the one dated the 4th of October received the 25th of Feb' announcing the Dissolution—the other dated the 28th of November from you about [?] received the 19th of March—Pray give my love to Dear Dear Harriett and her beloved spouse [Hon. Robert Curzon] . . . Do let me know all the News of every sort & [when?] You can send out the Edinbrg [?] & Quarterly Review Army List & Navy List for there is complete [?] & was it not for the cal [?] command I have and the quantity of business I have to do, I should [?] myself the Country cynics [?] very evile, & if it was not for the late unpleasant news I have heard from England I should be very happy—I must now conclude my letter by wishing you every happiness

⁴ Ibid., p.651; and PAC, MG11, Q Series, Vol. 317, pp.14-22, for Bisshopp's Report, 1 December 1812.

this world can give you . . .

Adieu Believe me,

My Dearest Kitten

Ever your Affectionate, Brother Cecil Bisshopp

As for the [?], The whole Country & every thing else; I [shall?] never give myself any more trouble about the more one does the less one is liked. I wonder what you will all say of the 28th of November & what People think of it in England.

The Americans captured Fort George toward the end of May 1813, and forced the British troops, including Bisshopp at Fort Erie, to withdraw to Burlington Heights (near Hamilton, Ontario). Subsequent successful British sorties at Stony Creek (6 June 1813) and the Forty (8 June 1813) coupled with the Indian victory at Beaver Dams (24 June 1813) convinced the American invaders to confine themselves to Fort George where they assumed a tight laager mentality. This allowed the British to undertake the occasional foray against American positions across the Niagara River. In particular, Bisshopp was entrusted to lead a raid against the village of Black Rock (near Buffalo, N. Y.), opposite Fort Erie. Initially, the operation was a success, and the British and Canadians calmly removed public stores, some ordnance and 123 barrels of salt "a most scarce and valuable article" in Upper Canada. During the proceedings, an American prisoner wrote a brief description of the general scene, and noted in part that the British commander, Bisshopp, was a "mild humane-looking man . . . rather tall and well made and a man of exceeding few words."⁵ Suddenly and most unexpectedly, a group of New York Tuscarora Indians, members of the Iroquois Confederacy of Six Nations, traditional allies of the King, fired several volleys at the raiders from the surrounding woods. The British and Canadians were forced to return to the Canadian side in a precipitate manner. Their casualties were about 15 killed and 20 wounded. Cecil Bisshopp had suffered three wounds.⁶

Village of St. Davids Upper Canada
July 20th 1813

Sir

Feelings it might be acceptable to you & to Lady Bisshopp as well as to the friends of the late much lamented and gallant Col. Bisshopp to have some detailed account of his illness & subsequent death, as well as of the transactions that led to it, I will therefore endeavour to give that melancholy detail as accurately as is in my power intreating your indulgence for any inaccuracy

⁵ E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *Documentary History of the War of 1812* (9 vols., Welland: Tribune Office, 1896-1908), Vol. 5, p. 230. Recollections of James Sloan.

⁶ Details of the raid on Black Rock, 11 July 1813 can also be gleaned from: W. C. H. Wood, ed., op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 176-79. Lt. Col. Thomas Clark, Second Reg't. of Lincoln Militia to Lt. Col. John Harvey, Chippawa, 12 July 1813; E. A. Cruikshank, ed., op. cit. Vol. 4, pp. 225-33; and Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, *A Veteran of 1812; The Life of James Fitzgibbon* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1894), pp. 10-11.

that may appear in the statement which devolves on me to make. Mr. Barnard's letters doubtless will inform you of the enterprize entrusted to the Col.'s Command, viz to destroy the Barracks, Stores, Gun boats & all Public Property that might be found at the Enemy's strong post at Black Rock, nearly opposite Fort Erie in which he succeeded to the *very letter* of his instructions having completely routed & surprised the Enemy, capturing many boats & removing the whole of the portable stores & every thing that could be of use without the loss of a *single man*, & was it not for his meritorious anxiety for the removal of a large quantity of salt a most scarce & valuable article in this Country & much wanted by the Commissariat for the troops the enterprize would have been completed without being clouded with the loss of *one* British Soldier, much less the invaluable life of its deeply lamented & intrepid leader—The attack was made about three o'clock in the morning of the 11th instant; after four hours had elapsed during which time the whole of the stores were removed in safety to the Boats, the Enemy rallied, attended by a number of Indians, a Circumstance most unexpected as we had every reason to suppose, may every assurance from them, they would not unite with the Americans, whence this truly unexpected & unseen Enemy, opened a most destructive fire on our people whilst the American's made a Shew of advancing by the road; but let it not be imagined that it was for want of improper foresight or that every precaution had not been taken to guard against a surprise that this circumstance occurred; the known hostility & hatred of the whole Indian tribes to the United States added to the assurance given only a few days before by the Indians in Council from the opposite of the river to those on our side, lulled every suspicion & put to rest every fear that one solitary individual of them would ever be got to act against us, indeed as the poor Col. expressed himself to me he would as soon have expected to see a body of Cossacks, as this force opposed to us. The majority of the party even now ordered to retreat to the boats whilst the Col. advanced to meet the Enemy on the road & Cover the retreat with a small detachment thus employed & ascending a hill, he received a wound in his left thigh which fractured the bone, the Soldiers by whom he was universally respected & beloved, ran in the midst of the galling fire from these Savages to his assistance—"Oh my Lads, said he, dead or alive do not leave me here" the men assured him they would not, & as flattery at such a moment was entirely out of the question, they may be credited when in the midst of fire, of danger & of falling comrades, many swore they would rather have lost limbs, & life sooner than he should be hurt. These traits I mention to you to prove the estimation he was held in by the Soldiery, in conveying him to the boat he received a ball in his left wrist, & when in the boat received another wound in the right arm high up near the right shoulder, many of the poor fellows who had been employed in conveying him had already suffered—On his arrival at Chipawa a post of ours, he wished much for my attendance & desired I might be permitted to remain altogether with him. I found him suffering more mental than bodily

pain—confessing to his great uneasiness that a single Soldier should have been hurt, which appeared very much to annoy him; the wound of his wrist I found of little consequence, as the ball had penetrated merely the skin & took its course immediately under it & lodged near the elbow, his thigh must have been struck by a spent ball, tho' the bone was fractured the skin was merely broken without the wound penetrating further;—The right arm suffered most, the bone was much shattered, but no blood vessel of any consequence injured, this was the only wound that excited in my breast any apprehensions but considering his being a very young man with an unbroken constitution tho' apparently delicate yet I entertained the most sanguine hopes of being able again to restore him to a profession to which he was much attached & which his commencement promised so much he would adorn as well as to his friends relatives, & Country but alas! The Constitution was not equal to the Shock it had received, his wounds looked healthy & well the symptomatic fever never ran high, pain had subsided, the prospect was cheering was animating, on Wednesday after a good nights rest he was particularly cheerful & conversed with me much about home, expressing his regrets at what You Sir, & Lady Bisshopp would suffer on his account wished much I should accompany him home & hoped we would arrive in a very short period after your having heard of his misfortune—the first part of that night he rested well, but about one o'clock in the morning got restless & uneasy, which increased till day break, he then slumbered a little, but afterwards I found a change, an alarming degree of debility attended with low fever exhibited itself from his restlessness I was obliged to open his bandages, I found every wound appearing as well as it was possible to expect tho' through the day he was cheerful & collected, yet his countenance became bad & towards Evening began to wander much, talked much of home & still expressed his uneasiness at the loss of the men in this affair though I had hoped both the district order & the visit of General de Rottenburg who commands here & who with his wanted benevolence kindly came some distance in the early stage of his wounds to see him had removed all uneasiness from his mind; on this subject & giving directions to his servant Reece for his departure for England he spoke the whole day this night/Thursday/he past very badly, & on Friday noon all hope vanished—The loss of the men he still spoke of & continued to talk as the day before, till about half past six o'clock in the Evening he expired, without a struggle, nay without a groan—I have been thus minute in every thing concerning this worthy invaluable & much esteemed Officer, who fell in the zealous discharge of his duty. I trust it will be a consolatory reflection to his friends that whatever the most humane attention could afford or friendship supply was furnished by Colonel Clarke of the Militia who shared in his danger & was partner in the enterprise, to whose house he was removed shortly after his arrival on our shore. Mr. Barnard who was his Staff Adjutant since his arrival in this Country was constant & unremitting in his attention in short Sir, so much was he esteemed both by the natives of the province, & throughout the army that every

individual was anxious to be of service & employed about him, here I would indeed be wanting in justice were I not to bear testimony to the zealous & affectionate attention of Reece to his wounded Master, his attendance was assiduous & constant—Every attention has been paid to his remains, though on the day of his burial a forward movement was made towards the Enemy yet General de Rottenburg with most of his Staff came to pay the last sad duties to departed worth, he is buried in the Church Yard of Stamford within half a mile of the Falls of Niagara under an Oak Tree, on the South Side close to the railing removed from every other grave, round his is to be put a railing in which the Oak Tree will be included serving as a landmark till better times, when tis' proposed to build a proper covering over it—I have now Sir to claim your indulgence for any inaccuracy I may have been guilty of, situated as we are will I trust plead my apology both for the Errors & omissions I may have been guilty of.

Enclosed I send a small lock of hair, which when my much respected friend departed, I cut off as a memento for myself, I now excuse my want of thought in not remembering how dear such a memorial might have been to his friends in England, tho' small I trust it will be acceptable, excuse the style in which I send it, do not Sir, consider me presumptive when I say I deeply & sincerely, participate in your distress—A general sentiment that pervades the whole Army—

With much respect

I have the Honor to Subscribe myself

Your very obedient Servant

/signed/

D. Hackett

Surgeon

King's Regiment

Sir Cecil Bisshopp Bart

One year later, the Battle of Lundy's Lane (25 July 1814) raged over and around the burial place of Cecil Bisshopp. By the late autumn, the Americans had withdrawn from Upper Canada, and in December of that year the war terminated, and British North America was preserved. In 1843, Kate funded the erection of a small monument to commemorate the service of her brother to Canada, England and the empire. Today, this monument, marked #18 still stands in the Drummond Hill Cemetery, Niagara Falls, Ontario.⁷ Cecil Bisshopp symbolized the dedication of British officers who served and sacrificed throughout the scattered parts of the British empire during the Napoleonic Wars. Most importantly, however, he provides a reminder that whether in India, South Africa, or along the Niagara frontier of Upper Canada in 1812 and 1813, British officers and soldiers fought with a zeal and intensity which revealed that of their contemporaries on the grand stage at Salamanca and Vitoria.

⁷ Acknowledgement and thanks are extended to Mrs. M. A. Tabaka, Curator, Lundy's Lane Historical Museum, Niagara Falls, Ontario, for this information.