

CHRONICLE OF VALOR: THE JOURNAL OF A PENNSYLVANIA OFFICER IN THE WAR OF 1812

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IT is seldom appreciated that Pennsylvania's contributions to the War of 1812 were essential to the beginning and continuation of that conflict. As a whole, the commonwealth provided more congressional votes in support of Jeffersonian policies than any other state and made possible the reelection of President Madison in 1812. Furthermore, her representatives cast sixteen votes for war with only two dissenters, thus constituting not only the largest single bloc in Congress, but also the highest percentage for the government in any of the larger delegations.¹ But while forming a pillar of Jeffersonian Republican foreign policy, the Keystone State supported the war in a direct, military sense as well. Pennsylvania provided, in addition to numerous state and federal militia units, no less than three regular regiments that served for the duration of the conflict. One of these, the Twenty-second United States Infantry, emerged with a sterling reputation and is generally considered one of the most effective formations on the American side.² The Twenty-second was commanded by Colonel Hugh Brady of Northumberland County, son of the famous Indian fighter Sam Brady, who led it against such hotly contested fields as Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and Fort Erie.³ But, ironically, most of the Twenty-second's battles were fought by detachments away from the main regiment and under subordinate leaders. It is significant to note that while the battlefield activities of this unit are well known,

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1 For a complete account of Pennsylvania politics during this period consult Victor A. Sapio, *Pennsylvania and the War of 1812* (Lexington, Ky., 1970).

2 See William Young Brady, "The 22nd Regiment in the War of 1812," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 23 (Mar.-June 1949): 56-60, and John Newell Crombie, "The Twenty-Second Infantry: A Forgotten Regiment in a Forgotten War," *ibid.* 50 (Apr. 1967): 133-48. The two remaining regiments were the Fifth and Sixteenth.

3 See Hugh Brady, "A Biographical Sketch of General Hugh Brady by Himself," *Michigan Pioneer* 3 (1903): 84-91, and George C. Bales, "General Hugh Brady," *ibid.* 7 (1877-1878): 573-79.

few narratives exist that articulate the experiences of the men and officers in these smaller commands. Therefore, because the last account relative to Pennsylvania troops in this war was published nearly a century ago,⁴ this article will address a long-standing historical omission and delineate in detail the activities of a Pennsylvania officer and his regiment in the War of 1812.

The diary of Lieutenant Colonel George McFeely of Cumberland County is important because it is one of only two such documents about a War of 1812 Pennsylvania regiment.⁵ The manuscript is extensive, minute in detail, and accurately recounts the hardships, sacrifice, and disaster associated with this war. Unfortunately, several pages are lost, but those that survive provide new and invaluable insight on such obscure but hard-fought actions as the bombardment of Fort Niagara, the capture of Fort George, and the American humiliation before LaColle Mill. It is indicative of the temper of the times that McFeely was more often threatened with harm by Vermont Federalists than he ever was by the British, and his restraint in such civil-military confrontations was admirable. But what makes this narrative unique is the genuine concern and humanity evinced by Colonel McFeely during the war, both in caring for the lives of his own men, civilians on all sides, and in one chivalrous instance the enemy themselves. He was apparently an intelligent, compassionate individual with an impartial mind and humane convictions. Like most of his contemporaries, however, little can be found about the man following his discharge and George McFeely remains yet another perennial unknown from the War of 1812. But scholars can be grateful for his bequeathing to posterity a narrative valuable in scope, exacting in detail, and one that places Pennsylvania's contribution to the War of 1812 in a proper and more deserving perspective.

The original McFeely diary is in the collections of the Cumberland County Historical Society in Carlisle. A microfilm copy of the diary is at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks.

Marched from the Carlisle Barracks on the 5th of October, 1812, with a detachment of the 22nd Regt. United States Infantry consisting

⁴ This was Isaac Roach. See Mary Roach Archer, "Journal of Major Isaac Roach, 1812-1824," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 17 (1893): 129-58.

⁵ The other is "The Biographical Memoirs of Colonel Cromwell Pearce" in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania which is currently being transcribed by the author for publication.

of 200 men, and encamped at Smileys on the bank of Sherman's creek, 10 miles.

October the 6th. Took up the line of march early and arrived at the Juniata which had no ford; the water was waist deep on the men. Encamped at Millerston; marched this day 17 miles.

October 7th. Commenced our march this morning and encamped at Herald's, 18 miles.

October 8th. Set out this morning at sunrise and arrived at the Susquhanna and encamped opposite Sunberry. Here we lay two days for the purpose of allowing our men to wash their clothes and rest.

October 10th. Took up line of march early this morning, crossed the west branch of the Susquhanna at Northumberland. We were well treated by the citizens of this place; we were saluted by the discharge of a six-pounder in passing through the town. Arrived and encamped at Milton.

October 11th. Left Milton this morning and encamped—14 miles.

October 12th. Commenced our march this day; crossed the Loyal Sock. A number of our men were drunk this day which retarded our march. Arrived at Williamsport: here we lay two days for the purpose of laying in provisions sufficient for passing the wilderness. The citizens here were remarkably kind in entertaining our men with treating them to coffee; I refused to admit whiskey.

October 15th. This morning a number of our men were drunk here. I ordered the company officers to search the men and destroy all the whiskey that might be found amongst them; for the remainder of the march no soldier would be permitted to carry whiskey with him on the march. After sending Ensign Cuthbertson with 12 men as a guard with the wagons I marched with the detachment across the hills along an old Indian path to avoid crossing the Lycoming creek. The road this day crosses the Lycoming five times in a day's march. This is a most beautiful water; it is as transparent as glass and contains trout in abundance. Encamped at Rendles.

October 16th. Cloudy and raining this morning; marched early, bad roads, marched only 7 miles this day owing to the bad roads; encamped at the foot of Laurel Hill. The road runs this day along the small stream called Tall Trout Run, no doubt from the great quantity of Trout that goes up this stream to spawn. Our soldiers this evening had many fine trout as they could all eat. On the rivers in this run the Trout was in shoals, our men could catch with their hands as many as they pleased. They were about 8 or 9 inches long and of a darker color on the back than any I had ever seen before. This night our

men had a frolick, a drunken one, and were at a loss to find where or how they got the whiskey because in the morning every man was searched and all the whiskey emptied out. After some time it was discovered that they had filled their gun barrels with whiskey and had the vent stopped up with a little plug made of hickory wood and a tomkin of cork in the muzzle. The timber here is hemlock, white pine, birch, etc., the former two grows very large and very high and so thick that it appears that the sun could never shine on the earth. Marched 9 miles and encamped.

October 17th. Had great difficulty in getting our wagons up the Alleghany mountains, the roads this day were very bad, rained in the afternoon. Arrived and encamped at the Old Block house, came 11 miles.

October 18th. Marched at 8 o'clock; ordered the baggage in front this day, found it had a good effect in preventing stragglers from falling in the rear: cold, and some snow fell; marched 10 miles and encamped at Tioge. This is the third day since we entered the wilderness.

October 19th. Marched at seven o'clock this morning; crossed the Tioge river this day four times. The day was very cold, our men had to ford the river waist deep, and in their summer clothing, Government not having provided us with winter clothes. From Peter's camp to Dr. Wilard's where we encamped is 20 miles: our men much scattered this day but came up at night.

October 20th. All out sunrise and marched down the west side of Tioge to avoid crossing the river; the wagons crossed to the east side along the road. Seen an Elm tree this day which measured 21 feet in circumference. Marched 9 miles and encamped.

October 21st. Took up the line of march early and continued on the west side of the river over the hills along an old Indian path for about six miles and came into the road and joined the wagons. Forded the Canasteer river a small distance from where it empties its waters into the Tioge. The country this three days appears to be hilly and barren. Crossed the Cohocton and encamped at the Painted Pose, 12 miles.

October 22nd. This morning cold, a heavy white frost. Our road this day was up the Cohocton river: had to ford the river twice; passed a small lake covering about seven acres. Encamped at Bath 19 miles.

October 23rd and 24th. Remained at Bath, we were well entertained here by the citizens. Capt. Helms showed us every kindness and attention; he is a very respectable and worthy man.

October 25th. This day the road is good, the soil good for grass. Encamped at Bennets—14 miles.

October 27th. Took up the line of march at sunrise and passed over the dividing ridge which is covered with scrubby white oak. This ridge divides the head waters of the Genesee. Passed through Dansville, marched this day 20 miles and encamped.

October 28th. Marched at sunrise. rained hard all this day. Passed a branch of the Genesee river. Road good. The river runs very rapid—high banks. 16 miles encamped at Findlays. An old Indian Chief of the Seneka tribe came to our camp and held a talk.

October 29th. This morning we arrived on the turnpike leading from Utica to Buffalo. Crossed the Genesee river and passed through an Indian reservation of about two miles square. This is the finest land that I have ever seen: marched 13 miles and encamped on the banks of Allen's creek.

October 30th. Took up the line of march; had good roads, soil good, and thickly settled along the road. Encamped—10 miles.

October 31st. Crossed the Tontevante at Batavia. Roads this day very bad. The road is made with poles laid across the road so close as to form a bridge, this our Yankees call "Cordaroy." Rained all afternoon,—12 miles.

Novr. 1st, 1812. Rained all last night, snowed this morning, very cold. Roads very bad, for five miles at a stretch over this swamp country we travel on poles and logs, the timber principally Beech. 12 miles and encamped.

Novr. 2nd. Marched this morning at 8 o'clock, arrived at head quarters at Flint Hill about two miles from Buffalo. Here I reported my arrival to General Smyth⁶ and received his orders verbally to encamp on the extreme left of the brigade. This was the only order I received. I ordered out a camp guard as usual and gave a countersign and parole of my own (the officer of the day having neglected his duty until some time in the day; when he was going the rounds he was stopped by my sentinels and not permitted to pass. This offended him very much and he reported to the General the next morning how he had been insulted by an independent corps, but on the enquiry Gen'l Smyth told him that if [he] had attended to his duty in the day time he would not have been stopped in the night by an unknown and inde-

⁶ Alexander Smyth, 1764-1830. A good account of his subsequent service on the Niagara frontier is "Reminiscences of the Late War," *Army and Navy Chronicle* 1 (1835): 59-60, and Frank H. Severance, ed., "The Case of Brig. General Alexander Smyth as Shown by His Own Writings," *Buffalo Historical Society Publications* 18 (1914): 213-55.

pendent corps.) Here we lay until the 10th when an order came from Gen'l Smyth for to march for old Fort Niagara and relieve Col. Winder.⁷

Novr. 10th., marched four miles and encamped on the banks of the Niagara river where the Conjockety empties into the Niagara. Here I seen for the first time the enemy's batteries on the opposite shore. Here was a Navy yard, several schooners were building for the purpose of cruising on Lake Erie. Lt. Jesse D. Elliot⁸ of the navy called at our camp as also Lt. Dudley and other officers of the navy.

Novr. 11th Commenced our march early down the Niagara river. Our baggage was sent by water to Schlosser under the command of Lt. Guy. The road this day is worse than any I have ever seen, my horse in many places had difficulty in extracting himself. Marched 15 miles and encamped on the banks of Niagara, our boats having arrived long before the troops.

Novr. 12th. Took up the line of march this morning at daybreak without anything to eat; the weather cold and windy with snow showers. Arrived at Old Fort Schlosser. The contractor here could not furnish us with any rations. Our men however soon had plenty of fresh beef which some of them ate raw while others waited until they half roasted as much as they could devour. This place is about a mile above the great falls of Niagara. Here I went to see one of the greatest curiosities in the world. I confess I was much disappointed in this great wonder of the world. I felt displeased and disappointed as it appeared to me to fall so far short of the sublime descriptions I had read of it. This river from lake Erie to the falls has very low banks, that is the banks are at all seasons full without ever overflowing. The current about 4 miles an hour to Schlosser where the rapids begin and increase until the grand pitch at the point of Goat island, where the water falls perpendicularly over the rock in two sheets but unites in white foam about half way down. The country from Erie to Lewiston is level, it is also level at the falls. The water pitches over the rock in the form of a half-moon into the abyss below. From the falls to Lewistown is called seven miles, the banks of the river is very high and the current very rough and rapid so that no boat could possibly cross except just immediately below the falls, the water appears to be

7 William H. Winder, 1775-1824. Winder's career was a subject of considerable controversy. See his *Statement of Occurrences on the Niagara Frontier in 1812* (Washington, 1829).

8 Jesse D. Elliot, 1782-1845. The following year Elliot would be embroiled in a controversy with Oliver Hazard Perry over his conduct at the Battle of Lake Erie.

dead and deep without any apparent current for five or more hundred yards below the grand pitch. There is no doubt but at one period of the world the falls of Niagara river was seven miles below where it now is. This is what is called the Mountain at Lewiston, which appears to run directly across the river and forms the heights at Queenston in Canada. The mountain (or bench) extends for many miles into the state of New York and on the Canada side runs to the head of Lake Ontario and there forms the Burlington heights. Perhaps I cannot describe it better than to say that the country from Lake Erie to Lewiston as you travel down the river is level; you see no mountain until you arrive on the top of Lewiston heights. Here is a fine view of Lake Ontario about seven miles below, a fine flat country from the foot of the hill to Ontario also a fine level country from the foot of the hill to Lake Erie above.⁹ Here is the place that the grand falls was at one period of the world, perhaps ten millions of years before Moses was born. Indeed the force of this struck me very forcibly that this world was much older than Moses makes it. Who can tell when this world was made or whether it was ever made or not; it might have always existed, that is it might be co-equal with time and space and may always exist; none can tell or know anything about these things but that intelligence who governs and directs the universe.

Novr. 14th. [*sic*] Commenced our march early, this morning is cold and blustery. Passed the Devil's hole, a place so called in the bank of the river, it is in the form of a horseshoe and appears to be formed by a small stream that sinks some distance from the river and empties itself into the Niagara perhaps fifty [blank] below the surface of the earth, which no doubt caused the ground to fall in the form of a horseshoe. In this hole or gulph the water forms an eddy and abounds in fish of different kinds. It was in this place that the Farmer's Brother, a celebrated Indian chief, defeated a detachment of the British that was going to Fort Niagara with provisions in the old French war. The detachment had encamped at the Devil's hole for the night where they were surprised by the Indians and driven over the precipice and all slaughtered except one man who in falling over was caught in the top of a tree and remained there until the next day, when he climbed to the top of the tree, got out and made his way to the Fort with news of the defeat of the party. Here the trees grow out of the side of the precipice, the tops of some reach to the surface and above

⁹ McFeely observed in a diary footnote, "It appears to me that Lewiston and Queenston Heights formed the barrier of Lake Ontario some hundred thousand years since."

the surface, while others that take root near the bottom do not reach more than half way. It was on one of these trees that the man was preserved.

The Indians at this time come here from the Tuskerora village to catch fish. An Indian will go to the margin, catch hold of the top of a tree, climb down to its roots, then catch hold of another tree by the top and climb down it and so on until he gets to the water below, then commence to catch fish until he gets his load, strings them on a piece of ellum bark, slings his load on his back and there secures it, then climbs up one tree, then up another until he gets out, I suppose at least one hundred fifty feet.

Novr. 14th. Arrived at Fort Niagara about 3 o'clock and relieved Colonel Winder, who marched the same evening with the 14th regt. for Buffalo. At this time there was an armistice between Genl. Van Renssaler¹⁰ and the British General, either side was bound to give 30 hours notice before hostilities were to commence. This fort stands in a part where the river empties itself into the lake; there are three large stone buildings or block houses, one of each stands in the angle of the fort which forms a triangle; these buildings were put up by the French and are so strong that a 24 lb cannon shot makes no impression. The outward works were all decayed away on the land side; on River and on the lake side the picquets were pretty good. The roofs were taken off the block houses to prevent the enemy from firing them with hot shot. All hands were set to work day and night in building sod batteries on the tops of the block-houses and mounting guns. On the 20th of November we discovered a great stir and bustle in the town of Newark and about Fort George (the river here is about 700 yards wide) in manning their guns, the citizens appeared to be moving out of the town, men, women and children running in all directions, carrying off beds and furniture, this took place about 12 o'clock in the day, we were at a loss to know the cause of all this commotion until about sun down when a dragoon arrived from headquarters with a letter from General Smyth informing me to be in readiness, that the armistice would cease at one o'clock that night. The enemy had information of this about five hours before us; such was the advantage they had over us owing to their telegraphs.¹¹ As soon as we got the news

¹⁰ Stephen Van Rensselaer, 1764-1839. For additional details see Jacques W. Redway, "General Van Rensselaer and the Niagara Frontier," *New York State Historical Society Proceedings* 8 (1909): 14-22, and Catharina V. Bonney, *A Legacy of Historical Gleanings* (Albany, N.Y., 1875).

¹¹ By telegraphs McFeely meant networks of semaphore stations used to convey signals to and from the fields of battle.

all hands went to work, some cutting and collecting dry wood and others making large fires and heating shot. At twelve o'clock that night all our cannon were loaded, lighted matches and guns manned, waiting with great anxiety for the hour of one o'clock. At length that hour arrived, no gun fired although the enemy's batteries and guns were all manned and lighted, my officers were all demanding orders to commence, but I told them and indeed showed them orders which was to act on the defensive, for 12 hours cannonading would exhaust all the ammunition in the fort. At about six o'clock the enemy opened all his batteries & guns from Fort George. In a few seconds we returned the fire from three 18 pounders, 2 twelves, and 2 sixes. The eighteens and twelves fired red hot shot. At about 9 o'clock we had the pleasure of seeing a schooner sink and several houses in flames in the town of Newark, as also at their Navy yard and in Fort George. The firing continued with little or no intermission until dark, our loss was three killed and six wounded, two or three of the wounded died afterwards, one man was killed and four wounded from the bursting of one of our twelve pounders, this was occasioned by a hot ball which had expanded by the heat and got fast in the gun about two feet from home, where a vacuum was formed and when fired burst into ten thousand pieces. Another twelve pounder went off when the man was in the act of ramming and took off both his hands above the wrists, this was owing to the gun getting very hot and the man at the vent having no thumb stool. Our frame barracks were much cut up and frequently on fire, but was put out as soon almost as the smoke was seen. In one building I counted fifty two round shot that had passed through and into it. The enemy's loss I could not ascertain. I saw this day a 13 inch shell fall on the parade and within ten feet of a little Irishman whose name was Patrick McGinlay. I was looking at the shell as it lit and exploded, it through up a great column of smoke and dust, and Pat was enveloped in the smoke for the space of two or three minutes, all eyes were looking to see the fragments of Pat flying in the air, but Pat after recovering from the fright came running out of the column of smoke with both his hands extended over his head, his cap off, exclaiming "*Lord Jasus whats all this*". This was fine sport for the soldiers afterward with Pat.

This evening we doubled our guards, Lt. Col. Young of New York militia and myself attended to the placing of different sentinels, it was after dark in passing Dr. West's quarters we were asked by the Doctor if we had gotten anything to eat that day, we replied that we had not. He then said that he had got some tea made and invited



The most notable event in McFeely's military career: Fanny Doyle at the bombardment of Fort Niagara. From Tomes, *Battles of the United States by Land and by Sea*.

us in to take supper with him. This we agreed to do and went into his room where he had been amputating the wounded through the course of the day. On going round to take my seat at the table I saw a pile of legs and arms lying in the corner on the floor. This sight together with the smell took away all my appetite; I gave the Colonel a look and he smiled. I told the Doctor that I felt unwell, that he would please excuse me that I could not eat any supper, the Colonel said that he could not eat anything, that he had a headache and begged the Doctor to excuse him. The Doctor saw the cause and began to laugh, we bade him good evening and withdrew.

The extraordinary bravery of a female drew the attention of all our garrison: her name was Betsy Doyle, her husband was taken prisoner at Queenston in the fall under Genl. Van Renssaler. The woman attended and served one of the guns with hot shot during the day of the cannonading. She would take the ball tongs from any of the men, run to the fire, take up a hot shot, put it in the cannon, and run for another; thus she continued for the whole of the day. I mentioned this circumstance in my official letter to General Smyth.¹²

¹² McFeely observed in his official report, "During the most terrific cannonading I have ever seen, she attended the six pounder on the old mess-

On the 14th I crossed over with a flag for the purpose of taking some money to Captain King who was taken prisoner at the spiking of the cannon opposite to Black Rock at the time General Smyth was threatening the invasion of Canada;¹³ I was treated politely by the British officers & had an interview of about fifteen minutes with Captain King. This day Captain Mills of the 23rd Regt. arrived with his company.

Decr. 22nd. This night we had an alarm—a false one; one of the sentinels hailed, fired, and killed a horse belonging to some of the Indians.

Jany. 16th, 1813. This day a flag came over with six prisoners of war, these men were taken at Detroit.

Jany. 18th. While at breakfast this morning a sergeant rushed into my room with information that a deserter was swimming the river and that a boat with three men was in close pursuit of him. I ordered the main gate to be opened and a six pounder to be run out to the bank of the river, but I came to see it was three citizens, Canadians, in pursuit of a deer. They were about three hundred yards from our shore, the deer would have landed at our wharf but for the men running out with the cannon. Our men were preparing to fire upon them with grape shot but I ordered them not. The deer turned down with the current into the lake. The three men in the boat seeing the cannon preparing to fire, turned their Indian bark canoe down for the lake, pulled away so hard at the paddles that the boat appeared to run on top of the water. I never saw any water craft run half so fast as this boat did. They succeeded in killing the deer out on the lake. What added to the fright of these poor fellows two of our sentinels fired at them with their muskets, the balls struck the water near the canoe, this was without orders.

Feby. 7th, 1813. This day a flag came over with information that the prisoners of war would be sent over on parole, taken at Frenchtown under the command of Gen'l. Winchester.¹⁴ In the course of a few days twenty-nine commissioned officers and four hundred and

house with red-hot shot and showed fortitude equal to the 'Maid of Orleans.' " McFeely to Smyth, Nov. 25, 1812. John Brannon, *Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States During the War with Great Britain* (Washington, 1823), 56. It is curious that McFeely, from Cumberland County, did not compare the exploits of Fanny Doyle with those of Cumberland County's legendary heroine, Molly Pitcher. For additional information, see Sara S. Swain, *The Story of Laura Secord and Fanny Doyle, Heroines of the Niagara Frontier* (Buffalo, 1927).

13 This skirmish is known as Frenchman's Creek, Nov. 28, 1812.

14 James Winchester, 1752-1826.

ninety non-commissioned officers and men were sent over on to parole. I had to sign receipts for all prisoners: they were all Kentucky troops. Amongst these prisoners five were wounded, some badly; they had concealed their wounds from the enemy all the wounded taken at Frenchtown not able to travel was given up to Indian butchery.¹⁵ These men had the greatest flow of animal spirits that I had ever seen, they were reduced almost to human skeletons having been stripped of all their clothes by the Indians, not a man had a hat or cap on his head, and very few had any shoes., in fact they had nothing but some old duds the people of Canada had given them as a charity as they passed along. On landing on our shores they jumped, danced and crowed like chicken cocks. One great big fellow six feet five or six inches did not wait until the boat came to shore but jumped to shore into the river, swam ashore before the boat, jumped and halloed, then ran up to a British officer clapping his hands on his thighs, crowed like a cock and exclaimed "Godamn your bloody eyes do you not feel the air of liberty much lighter on your lungs than the air you breathed over on yon other side." We furnished these brave fellows with rations, shoes, and as many blankets as we could spare and sent them on to their homes.

Feb'y. 13th. This day a flag with three prisoners of war and three ladies were seen coming across. On approaching our shore the drift ice ran so thick and the current so strong they could not make the landing and soon were carried out into the lake; they labored hard but could not stem the current. It was near sundown and the weather excessively cold (the thermometer stood at 8 degrees below zero). I ordered Sergeant Bangs with two good seaman to take a small boat and go to their relief; he soon was under way and arrived at the large boat. The men at the oars of the British boats had their hands frozen and were exhausted (they would have no doubt perished had we not sent our boat to their relief). After an hour and a half our men brought them all in. One of the ladies was so overcome with the cold that she could not speak, indeed she was to all appearance dead, but, with the attention and skill of our doctors she recovered and was able the next day to sit up and converse. This lady was married to the son of old Captain Helms of Bath where we lay on the 23rd and 24th of October last on our march to the frontier. She appeared quite rejoiced to find that I was acquainted with her father-in-law. Her husband was an officer in the United States army, with whom she was taken prisoner

15 The Battle of Frenchtown fought Jan. 22, 1813.

somewhere in the neighborhood of Mackinaw.¹⁶ She had not seen or heard anything of her husband since the day she was made prisoner. She had been taken by the Indians into the wilderness and had not seen a white man for upwards of four months. At length she was purchased by a British officer from the Indians and sent on to Fort George. She appeared to be a very delicate little body, heart broken and far gone in a consumption. She spoke in high terms of the treatment she received from the Indians while she was with them, but with resentment and contempt of the British officers. She remained for two weeks with Captain Leonard and Doctor Wist's ladies, when she had recovered so far as to travel in a sleigh. I afterwards heard that on her arrival at Bath she met her husband who arrived at the same place on the same day. Neither had heard anything of the other from the day they were captured until the day they met at old Captain Helms in Bath. This must have been a very affecting and very pleasing interview indeed. There were four British soldiers and one Sergeant in the boat with the prisoners, I ordered a fire made on the beach to warm the poor fellows as they were almost frozen. We gave them some whiskey and in half an hour they were so drunk that they could scarcely stand. What to do I did not know, we could not keep them all night, and to send them off they must all perish. I asked Captain MacFarland and Millikin what was the best to be done. Millikin insisted on sending them off and have them drowned, it would be five less next summer to fight against. I told them they had come with a flag and independent of that humanity called aloud for us to protect them after making them drunk. I at length ordered Sergeant Bangs with two trusty men to take them over. They soon got under weigh and in coming in contact with the current they were carried out into the lake and after hard rowing for three hours we had the satisfaction of seeing them, by the light of the moon, approach Massasauga point about 10 o'clock at night.

Feby. 15th. Sergeant Bangs and the two men returned, bringing me a letter of thanks from the commanding officer of Fort George for saving the lives of five of his men. Bangs was well treated and had the privilege of going anywhere through the town.

I have omitted a circumstance that had like to have been our ruin. In December last a British schooner came up and lay off an anchor round the point out of reach of our guns. We watched her until dark and but three sailors were to be seen. In the evening a very gentlemanly looking man dressed in furs landed from the schooner and

¹⁶ Mackinac was captured on July 17, 1812.

walked up to the town of Newark. Nothing would do but my officers would go out in boats and capture the schooner. I had consented to gratify them and everything necessary was prepared. We were to set off at two o'clock in the morning, after making a selection of fifty men, all that our boats would carry. The moon rose about the time we had appointed to embark. I called Captain Archer¹⁷ of the artillery to our side and told him I thought it would be imprudent, that by the time our boats would get near the schooner we would be seen from their batteries. He was of the same opinion and the expedition was abandoned and the men ordered to their quarters. This gave some dissatisfaction (as I afterwards learned) to some of my officers. The next morning two hundred and twenty men of the Glengary Regt. landed from the schooner and marched up in full view to Fort George. This no doubt was intended as a trap, these troops were kept out of view for the purpose of inducing us to attempt the cutting out of the schooner, but good fortune favored us in the moon's rising before we put off. The officers who censured me the night before for giving up the enterprise now gave me credit. They were very glad the expedition did not go on. The Glengary troops were the best troops by far then in Canada; they were a Scotch reg't.¹⁸

Among the prisoners of war paroled and sent over in the month of February was a Captain Ballard, who had commanded a company of Rangers, and had been in Gen'l St. Clair's defeat, and in every expedition against the Northwest Indians since that time. He was a first rate woodsman and was always employed as a spy or on a scouting party. He was as savage as any Indian. He had two Indian scalps that he had taken at Frenchtown, and had concealed them in the waist band of his pantaloons while a prisoner. While in the fort with us he ripped open his waist band, took out the scalps, fleshed them with his knife, salted them, and set them in hoops in true Indian style. He said he had twenty scalps at home, and these two would make thirty he taken off with his own hands in his time, and that he would raise fifty scalps before he would die.

March 3rd. A strange phenomenon appeared to our sentinels this morning about 4 o'clock, a brilliant light appeared upon the points of their bayonets that resembled fire. Eight sentinels were stationed on the batteries on the fort, seven out of the eight declared that they saw the light on the points of their bayonets and continued for more than

¹⁷ Samuel Archer, 1790-1825.

¹⁸ See Ernest A. Cruikshank, *The Glengarry Light Infantry* (Toronto, 1920).

a minute. The same thing was seen by three sentinels on picquet one mile from the fort.¹⁹ The night was soft and some snow fell about day-light.

March 17th. A sergeant of the 49th deserted from Fort George and came over about 11 o'clock at night. He says we need not apprehend an attack on Fort Niagara, that the British are very apprehensive of an attack on Fort George.

From the first of March until the first of April all hands were employed at work in building scows, batteries, and putting the garrison in the best possible state of defense.

April 4th. Ten deserters from the enemy came over last night. They put off thirty miles above York at 12 o'clock yesterday and arrived this morning about two.

April 14th. A flag came over this day, brought the information that Lt. Dudley of our navy, three seamen and two citizens were captured yesterday on Strawberry Island. They had gone on the island to shoot geese.

April 27th. This morning at about seven o'clock a heavy cannonading was heard in the direction of York, which continued until half-past one, at which time a tremendous explosion took place, which shook the buildings in Fort Niagara and made the glass in the windows rattle like what rolling thunder will do some times, although this place is forty two miles from York across the lake.

April 28th. Sent a flag over to Fort George, Captain Armistead²⁰ with a letter to the commanding officer informing him that firing

¹⁹ Major Mordecai Myers of the Thirteenth Infantry related this harrowing occurrence about sentry duty: "I had in my company a young Irishman whose bravery was never doubted; but while I commanded the cantonment at Williamsville in the winter of 1812, a report was one morning current that O'Bryan had seen the Devil when on post at the sallyport leading to the graveyard. Feeling that others might feel alarmed on going on the same post, I sent for O'Bryan and said to him, 'It is said that you saw the Devil last night when on post.' He turned very pale and said, 'I do not know whether it was the Devil, but something black, about the size of a horse without a head came rolling towards me. I challenged but received no answer; it was light, I plainly saw it still approaching; I sighted my piece to fire, but lost my strength and fell back against the cantonment where the relief soon after found me.' I said, 'Are you afraid to go on the same post at the same hour tonight with me?' Perhaps we may find that there was no Devil, but your own fear of spirits.' He said, 'Sir, I have never known fear, and I am willing to go with or without you — but I should prefer to have you go with me.' I went and we remained on post two hours; but the black Devil in the shape of a horse without a head did not renew his visit, and my having been on post with O'Bryan was known to all command, and it satisfied all that they might go on that post without meeting 'His Satanic Majesty'." Mordecai Myers, *Reminiscences, 1780-1814, Including Incidents in the War of 1812* (Washington, 1900), 52.

²⁰ George Armistead, 1780-1818. He was later the hero of Fort McHenry during the British bombardment of Baltimore in 1814.

would take place from Fort Niagara, not in a hostile direction but for the purpose of proving some ordnance. The real object was to get some information about the heavy firing and explosion that took place yesterday in the direction of Little York. When Armistead returned he brought word that the enemy were as ignorant of the result of the firing yesterday as we were. They had made a great inquiry if we had got any news. One of the British officers informed Armistead that an express had arrived that morning, but that no person knew what news he brought but the commanding officer. This we construed as a good omen. In the afternoon a sail was seen standing in, the enemy hoisted several signals, none of which was answered by the schooner. We hoisted our flag and she soon showed the United States colors and stood in for our shore. She proved to be the Growler commanded by Lieut. Meigs, with dispatches for General Lewis²¹ and the news of the capture of York. An express was immediately dispatched to head quarters and a flag sent to Fort George with information that a salute would be fired from Fort Niagara at four o'clock that afternoon. This was a retaliation for their politeness. The British had always sent us a flag with information when they fired a salute in consequence of their victories.

April 30th. Major General Lewis, Brigadier General Boyd,²² with their suites arrived, the latter to take command of this post.

May 2nd. General Dearborn and suite landed here this day.²³

May 3rd. The 13th Regt. under Lt. Col. Chrystie²⁴ arrived of Gen'l. Lewis's division. Two vessels from York landed a number of wounded, many of whom had not had their wounds dressed until their arrival here. Capt. Moore of the Baltimore Volunteers was among the wounded: he had his leg amputated at this place. I called to see him after the operation, he appeared very weak and faint and asked for wine, but there was not a drop to be had in the hospital. I had but one bottle left in my case which I sent to him. He said it done him a great

21 Morgan Lewis, 1754-1830. For a summary of his military career along the Niagara see Julia Delafield, *Biographies of Morgan Lewis and Francis Lewis*, 2 vols. (New York, 1877).

22 John P. Boyd, 1764-1830. A defense of his military career appears in his *Documents and Facts Relative to Military Operations in the Late War* (n.p., 1816).

23 Henry Dearborn, 1751-1829. The most recent account of Dearborn's participation in this campaign is Richard A. Erney, *The Public Life of Henry Dearborn* (New York, 1979). See also *Defense of General Dearborn Against the Attack of General Hull* (Boston, 1824).

24 John Chrystie, 1788-1813. This gallant officer was to die of a fever later in the campaign, and a street in New York City was named in his honor.

deal of good. Commodore Chauncey²⁵ with his fleet arrived and all their wounded sent into Fort this evening.

May 5th. The remainder of the wounded were brought into the Fort, they were put into the large mess house which had no roof, the rain fell in torrents and the poor fellows lying cold and wet with their broken legs and arms undressed since they were wounded.

May 8th. The remainder of Chauncey's fleet arrived this day, consisting of 18 sail, with the victorious army which landed and encamped at the Four Mile creek.

May 10th. The fleet put off this day.

May 13th. Received orders to march to the Five mile meadows with the 22nd and 23rd Regts. for the purpose of guarding the boats that had been transported by land from Slother [*sic*]. Lay on the ground without tents, this night cold and a heavy white frost.

May 14th. Our tents arrived and a fine day.

May 17th. Captain Delano with his company of the 23rd Regt. joined my command. A subaltern's guard of twenty men is despatched to Lewiston. Yesterday a salute was fired from Fort George, said to be in consequence of the success of His Majesty's arms over Gen'l. Harrison²⁶ at the rapids of the Miami. This evening a salute is fired from Fort Niagara in consequence of Gen'l. Harrison's defeating the British and Indians at the rapids of the Miami.

May 21st. Chauncey's fleet arrives with troops, they land at the Four mile creek.

May 22nd. Lt. Col. Milton arrives this day with his battalion and proceeds to head quarters at the Four mile Creek.

May 24th. Lt. Col. Scott²⁷ (afterwards General Scott) called this day to see me and stated that the day after tomorrow the army would cross over and attack Fort George, that it would consist of his own regiment, my command, and the riflemen. He said that he hoped there would be no difficulty as respected rank as we were both Lieutenant Colonels, that when the rank would be established that he would rank me in consequence of his former services. I told him that I was well aware that he would rank me, and that I was quite pleased to go with him as second in command.

²⁵ Isaac Chauncey, 1772-1840. His conduct while commanding the Lake Ontario fleet remains a subject of controversy. See William Fowler, *Memorials of the Chauncey Family* (Boston, 1858), 215-21.

²⁶ William Henry Harrison, 1773-1840. The battle in question was the sortie from Fort Meigs, Ohio, on May 5, 1813.

²⁷ Winfield Scott, 1786-1866. Scott would end the war a brevet major general. The best biography remains Charles W. Elliot, *Winfield Scott, the Soldier and the Man* (New York, 1937).

May 25th. Received orders to launch the boats in the night, to pass Fort George, and put into the Four mile creek. As soon as it was dark we commenced to get the boats into the water, under the fire of a two gun battery with grape and canister shot from Canada shore. As the first of our boats passed down the river they were fired on from every post for five miles. The enemy brought up their light artillery, four pieces, and fired at the sound of the oars. Volleys of musketry were also fired and with all I had only two men wounded.

May 26th. This day by sunrise all our guns were opened on Fort George and by 9 o'clock the Block house in Fort George was in flames. and the enemy's guns silenced. This day Scott and myself drilled & practiced our men. The following was the order given to the light troops which consisted of about six hundred men.—

"Lt. Col. Scott will have under his immediate command the right column of boats having on board one piece of artillery, one company of riflemen, the Dragoons, Hindman's, Stockton's, and Biddle's companies.

"The remaining companies to be embarked under the immediate direction of Lt. Col. McFeely, to consist of Captain Nichol's, Captain Mills, Captain Milliken & Captain MacFarland's companies, and one company of riflemen. The troops on board of each boat are to land at the same time if possible, when the two columns will be formed together in line or remain in separate lines or columns as the ground may make necessary. On reaching the shore the companies are to be speedily formed by the company officers who will then march his men up into line or column as may be ordered. When the troops are in line, the riflemen are to be on the flanks and more or less advanced according to circumstances. Each company is to march from camp separately and in sections of four files front. Each boat is to make the shore opposite to the place of the company in line".

By order of

"Col. Scott".

May 27th. The Light troops were formed and marched from camp at two o'clock this morning; embarked on board of the boats and put out at three. This morning was calm, not a ripple on the lake, and a thick heavy fog. This gave us great spirits as the fog was much in our favor. We passed the fleet and within a mile and a half of the Canada shore, were ordered to hold and lay off our oars. Here three schooners came up and passed us, one ran into the mouth of the river, the other stood round Massesauga point to the mouth of the Two mile creek. After sunrise the fog cleared away and the cannon



Fanciful reconstruction of the capture of Fort George, May 27, 1813. From Tomes, *Battles of the United States by Land and by Sea*.

commenced from Fort Niagara and all her detached batteries. The schooner in the river opened her fire on the Lighthouse battery, the other two opened on a one gun battery at the mouth of Two mile creek: this was at the point of landing. Here we lay waiting for the Grand Army to come up, but it appears that great confusion took place at the place of embarkation, the different brigades and regiments became all mixed into a confused mass, and it was eleven o'clock in the day before Boyd's division came up, followed by Winder's and Chandler's.²⁸

Orders were given for the light troops to make for the shore. Our boats formed a line and pulled away for the shore. The two schooners covered our landing. The enemy about 1500 strong lay in waiting in a ravine forty yards from the shore. They reserved their fire until our

²⁸ John Chandler, 1762-1841. For his role in the Niagara campaign consult George F. Talbot, "General John Chandler of Monmouth, Maine," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society* 9 (1887): 380-95.

boats were within one hundred and fifty yards when they opened a heavy and galling fire.²⁹ The fire was returned from our boats, the men at the oars quit rowing and took to their muskets. All appeared to be in confusion, some of our boats swung around broadside to the shore, but with the exertions of the officers we soon got under way again. As we approached near the shore their firing ought to have been very destructive, but we suffered less owing to their firing too high in consequence of their cartridges being so heavy that no man dare lay the butt of his musket to his shoulder, or if he does do it once he will not like very well to try it again, and consequently will hold his musket in such a way as not to knock the shoulder off himself. He will put the butt down along his side under his arm and in this case the muzzle when the soldier thinks his piece level will always be elevated.

The action was very close and warm for about ten minutes after we landed, when the enemy gave way and retreated in confusion. Gen'l. Boyd's division landed at the same point and at the heels of the van about the close of the action and in place of extending the line to the right or the left they rushed up the bank among the light troops and all became one solid mass of confusion.³⁰ It was well for us that the enemy was beaten before this took place for our superior numbers were rendered useless for the space of about twenty minutes. After great exertions by the officers the light troops were gotten formed in line of battle on the ground where the enemy's dead and wounded lay. I had two rifle men selected to keep close alongside of me during the action, the one named Shoops and the other Devor. They were first-rate marksmen. Devor in the confusion of landing got lost from me, I did not see him until after the action, but Shoops

²⁹ Col. Cromwell Pearce of the Sixteenth Regiment, which was made up of Pennsylvanians, described the approach: "Every nerve was now strained in rowing all the boats to the shore. Some of the boats of the First brigade had reached the shore, when the enemy again lined the bank, and from their right poured into the boats several heavy discharges of musketry, which was very fatal on the 16th Regiment, — it occupying the extreme left. On this occasion we were greeted with shells of a new construction, called sphericals, containing from 100 to 150 musket balls, which wounded many of the soldiers and injured several of the boats." "Biographical Memoirs of Colonel Cromwell Pearce," Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁰ According to Major Isaac Roach, the British pursued the Americans to the water's edge: "The enemy now charged and drove us off the bank, where the officers of the old Second succeeded in making a stand, and with the bank for cover, opened a severe fire on the enemy. They lost in killed and wounded nearly 300 and we only one-third the number. This shews the advantage which troops of inferior numbers may find in taking a position such as the above or covered by the edge of a ravine. Brush wood, a wall, or even a post and rail fence, affords shelter, gives confidence to undisciplined men, and disguises your actual number from a stronger enemy." Archer, "Journal of Major Isaac Roach," 146.

kept close to me nor did he fire until he asked permission. This man possessed the most cool and determined bravery that I have ever seen. When some of our men were firing into the air at an angle of forty-five degrees, others in their confusion did not ram the cartridge half way home, dropped their ramrods on the ground and indeed some rendered their muskets useless during the fight by firing away their rammers, Shoops remained cool and collected, he lowered his rifle and took his aim as deliberately as if he had been shooting at a mark. I saw him in the heat of the action taking aim long enough to fire then move his rifle off to the right, take a new and steady aim and fire. I supposed at the time that his eye had caught an officer, but this was not the case. The next day I had an opportunity to ask him the cause of changing his mark, if he was picking out the officers. He replied that he had picked out several officers, but in the case I alluded to the first man he was aiming at fell just as he was moving his finger to pull the trigger, that he thought there was no use in shooting at that fellow and so he moved his piece off to the right and caught another. I said, well did that fellow go down, he replied "Yes Sir, all that I took aim went down when I fired, but perhaps some of the other boys put them down as they were all shooting as fast as they could load, and that in one case about which you asked the fellow fell before I shot. If I had shot at that instant I would have thought that I had killed him when in fact it was some other one". I have no doubt but that every ball that this brave fellow fired took effect as the distance was only forty yards; I stepped the distance the day after the action. My other soldier Devor committed a most shocking outrage on a wounded soldier. This circumstance was communicated to me in the evening by Sergeant Pratt as follows: "A poor fellow was wounded in the main artery of the thigh. He was sitting on the ground holding his wound with both hands, the blood was shooting out at jerks as thick as a finger; I was looking at him when Devor came up, he cocked his rifle, and blew out his brains". This was confirmed by two or three other men; I sent for Devor the next morning and told him what I had heard and asked him if it were true. He appeared to be embarrassed and muttered that the fellow was reaching for his gun and he thought he was going to shoot some of the men. I told him that that was murder & that I had a good mind to send him to the Provost Guard and prefer charges against him. He deserted the next morning and was never heard of.

The light troops were ordered to pursue the enemy; their track was easily followed, the ground was covered with muskets, knapsacks,

blankets and cartridge boxes, &c. &c. When we got through the woods on to the plains of New Arke, we saw the enemy forming on the back of the town. I suggested to Col. Scott to fall back until we could gain the woods, take a circuitous route under the cover of the woods, and gain the rear of the enemy while the main army would come up in their front, thus cutting off their retreat they would surrender. Scott agreed to this and our column was to the right when the enemy opened a battery of four six pounders upon us. Scott ordered the column to wheel to the left and march at quick time direct for the battery. They continued a brisk fire until we approached within two hundred yards, when they retreated in great confusion. Every shot passed over our heads and not a shot took effect, however several men were killed and wounded in the main army three quarters of a mile in our rear.

We passed on skirting the back part of the town of Newark when we halted at a church where a black flag was flying. Scott, Hindman³¹ and myself entered the church which was occupied as a hospital; a number of wounded had been brought from the field of battle to this place, several British surgeons were employed in dressing their wounds. A British Colonel Myers was just then under the hands of the doctors, they had him bolstered up in a bed, his shirt off and were wrapping a bandage around his body. He was wounded in four different places, he looked very pale and sick. We drank some wine and water that was standing on the table at the invitation of the Colonel.³² A guard was left to protect the hospital and we took our leave and marched off. We had not gone far when two British came out of a house. Scott halted the column and commenced a conversation with them. I advanced from the center to the front to hear what was said. When I came up Scott said: "I'll go and see, you shall go along and if you are lying by God I will sacrifice you on the spot". He turned round to me and said that these men said that the enemy had vacated Fort George and that he would go with the two front com-

31 Jacob Hindman, 1789-1827. For a review of his military accomplishments see "Biography of Colonel Jacob Hindman," *Portico* 3 (1816): 38-52.

32 Winfield Scott had something of a personal feud with this man. "After the capture of Scott, the year before at Queenston, he was supping with General Sheaffe and a number of British officers, when one of them, a colonel, asked him if he had ever seen the neighboring falls. Scott replied, 'Yes, from the American side.' To this the other sarcastically replied, 'You must have the glory of a successful fight before you can view the cataract in all its grandeur,' meaning from the Canada shore. Scott rejoined, 'If it be your intention to insult me, sir, honor should have prompted you first to return me my sword!' General Sheaffe promptly rebuked the British colonel, and the matter was dropped." Winfield Scott, *The Memoirs of Lieut.-General Scott, Written by Himself*, 2 vols. (New York, 1864), 1: 91.

panies to the Fort, that I should proceed with the remainder of the column along in the direction we were then in until we would intersect the river about three quarters to the left of the fort, which was then about three hundred yards off and only obstructed from our view by the town. Soon after a tremendous explosion took place and in a few minutes another, more tremendous than the first. Scott marched on to the fort and entered, cut down the flag staff and took the matches out of two other magazines that would have exploded in perhaps a few seconds.³³ I proceeded with the column until I came to the river, our men complained much for the want of water. I ordered the one half to go down the bank of the river and fill their canteens with water. When this was done I permitted the other half to go and water. On our way here we took about twenty prisoners, they were all Irishmen and had concealed themselves in houses and other places when on the retreat. In half an hour Scott came up riding a British officer's horse with the flag from Fort George hanging across the saddle before him. He swore he would sleep in it that night. He said the General's orders were to pursue the enemy. We marched in pursuit of the enemy about five miles, when orders came for the light troops to return to Fort George. I should have mentioned that Col. Miller³⁴ with his regiment joined us at the place where we halted for water. We returned with reluctance from the pursuit. This was in my opinion highly censurable on our generals. We ought to have pursued the enemy night and day while they were under the panic. We could have captured all their stores and baggage that evening and the greater number of their army.³⁵ Many of their men came in from the woods and gave themselves up claiming the right of deserters. That night the stores at Queenston and Fort Erie were burned and their scattered remains marched for Burlington Heights at the head of Lake Ontario. We retired and encamped in Fort George and lay on the ground having no tents or straw. This was on the 27th of May, 1813, and our Generals appeared to act as if Canada were conquered, nothing was done until the first of June when Generals Winder and Chandler with their

33 Tradition has it that Scott ran into the fort to strike the flag: "Just behind him was Colonel Moses Porter, of the artillery. On entering the fort, and finding Scott there, Porter said, 'Confound your long legs, Scott, you have got in before me.'" *Ibid.*, 90.

34 James Miller, 1776-1851. Miller was later the hero of Lundy's Lane. See Robert J. Holden, "James Miller, Collector of the Port of Salem," *Essex Institute Collections* 104 (Oct. 1968): 253-302.

35 Major Myers was in agreement with this assessment: "There was no necessity for stopping at Newark except the Generals having been hungry, and Mrs. Black having a good dinner. I suppose they had glory enough for one day without following up the enemy." Myers, *Reminiscences*, 30.

brigades marched in pursuit of the enemy up the lake, and were both captured at Stoney Creek,³⁶ although the Americans defeated the enemy after losing their two generals. About this time the British fleet hove in sight and General Boyd took the alarm for the safety of Fort George, although he had two thousand men, more than was sufficient for the defense of that place. He ordered his victorious division to return with all possible expedition to Fort George. The consequence was that the Indians followed close in the rear of our victorious but retreating division and killed and made prisoners of all the wounded and sick that fell in the rear of the division. The retreat was badly conducted and General Lewis ought to have been cashiered for it for not protecting his wounded and sick; they ought to have been sent in front or a strong rear guard to have protected and covered the rear.

We lost all our camp equipage and baggage, it was transported by water in boats up the lake, the British fleet fell in with and took all our baggage, &c.

Generals Winder and Chandler were censurable in my opinion for suffering themselves to be surprised and captured.

The ground was very bad and each regiment was permitted to select its own ground, consequently there was no order, no precaution taken to guard against surprise. The enemy rushed in close column determined to settle all with the bayonet, threw the whole army into confusion, and in many instances one of our regiments would fire upon another, when the cry was "don't fire, you are firing on your own men". The British caught the cry and made use of it to some advantage, they were however finally beaten and routed. A story was afterwards told by a British officer that on first entering our camp, Generals Winder and Chandler came running into their column asking in a hurried and confused manner "Where is the artillery? Where is the artillery"? A British officer caught them by the arm saying he would show them the artillery and conducted them to the rear of their column, before they knew they were in the hands of the enemy.

Generals Dearborn and Lewis soon after withdrew into the interior for the recovery of their healths and the command devolved on General Boyd who remained in his strong place Fort George for the remainder of the summer, notwithstanding that the enemy was not one third as strong as the American army.

The Americans occupied the Fort and the town of Newark. The British camp was at Twelve mile creek, their light troops and the

³⁶ Battle of Stoney Creek, June 6, 1813, where the Americans were attacked in camp.

Indians were harassing our picquets every morning.

Nothing occurred worthy of note this summer except the disgraceful surrender of Lt. Col. Boerstler with six hundred chosen men at the Beaver Dams³⁷ to an inferior number of British and Indians.

I omitted to mention in its proper place an Indian talk that took place between General Lewis and the celebrated Indian orator Red Jacket.³⁸ In May, 1813, while I commanded at Fort Niagara, thirteen Indian warriors of the Seneca tribe arrived at the Fort and asked thro' their interpreter for something to eat. I sent for the Quarter-Sergeant and ordered him to make out a requisition for provision for the Indians. Red Jacket informed me that when White man sent for them to hold a talk that they were well treated and always got their provisions cooked. I replied that I did not know that they had been sent for, that the Tuskerora Indians were in the habit of visiting daily and drawing provisions like soldiers, that now understanding their business I would have the provisions cooked for them, and immediately dispatched an express to head quarters with the information of their arrival. An express returned in a short time with a note from Gen'l Dearborn that I should keep the Indians until morning and treat them well. I sat down a bottle of whiskey and some water and invited them to drink. The whole thirteen did not drink the one wineglassful the whole evening although they would all take up the glass and put it to their lips as often as invited.

The next morning after breakfast General Lewis arrived and, after being introduced to all the chiefs, Red Jacket rose and made two very easy and graceful bows, and said: "The Great man has sent for the chiefs of his Nation, the Chiefs have now arrived and were ready to hear any communication he wished to make".

The General rose and said that Gen'l Dearborn was very much indisposed that day and not able to go out, that he had sent himself to come and hold a talk with his red brothers. He said that the object of his sending for them was to state he was informed that the Massisagua tribe of Indians in Canada was a branch of the Senecas and that the Massisague had refused to take up arms against the United States, that the General wished the Senecas two or three hundred of their warriors and encamp on the plains in view of the British, that they

37 Battle of Beaver Dams, June 24, 1813, where the American detachment surrendered to Fitzgibbon.

38 Red Jacket, 1758-1830. The two standard accounts are William L. Stone, *The Life and Times of Red Jacket* (New York, 1841) and J. Niles Hubbard, *An Account of Sa-Go-Ye-Wat-Ha or Red Jacket* (Albany, N.Y., 1886).

should draw arms, provisions and pay. That they would not be asked to fight, the President was able to fight his own battles, but that this movement would have the effect to prevent the British from prevailing on their friends the Massisagues from taking up arms against the United States.

Red Jacket said he was very sorry to hear that Gen'l Dearborn was unwell and he hoped he [Here ends page 73 of Col. McFeely's diary, pages 74-100 are missing.]

[Beginning page 101 of Col. McFeely's diary]

27th Decr. 1813. Took up the line of march with a detachment of 800 men for French Mills, and encamped at Watertown, 10 miles.

28th Decr. Rained and snowed all day, arrived at Champlain 12 miles.

29th. Snow fell all last night, also snowed all this day, marched twenty miles and encamped around good fires, made shanties of hemlock boughs. Our tents very drenched with rain on the 28th and now frozen so hard that they were useless. Snow about three feet deep and very cold.

30th Decr. Set off early this morning; weather cold; showers of snow fell at intervals this day, the road well broke, marched 18 miles and encamped in the woods. Struck up fires, made shanties and beds of hemlock boughs, but this night so cold that we got no sleep. We sat around the fires turning ourselves like a spit all night, the one side freezing and the other roasting.

31 Decr. The weather having cleared up yesterday evening, the north-wester blew sharp and cutting all night, this morning was the coldest I ever felt, our men appeared to be chilled to the heart, one child was frozen as stiff as the poker, it was poked under the snow without ceremony. Took up the line of march about sun rise; some of our men had their noses and ears frosted, and some their hands and feet. Arrived at a small village called Rossie and encamped, 10 mile only this day owing to the cold. A great many of our men fell in the rear so that the sleighs were overloaded. Here a soldier stole a child and sold it for a pair of shoes and a quart of whiskey. The mother of the child came to me in company with Captain McIlvain and finding she could not be prevailed upon to leave the child I gave her one dollar and fifty cents to redeem her child.

January 1st, 1814. This day more snow fell, which measures upwards of four feet upon the level, yet the road is well broke. This day's march is through a wilderness which abounds with deer. Passed a hunter's hut, there were six or seven deer skinned and hanging up in

the hut, they were very fat. I ordered the soldiers not to touch them but the sleighs in the rear took and brought off the venison. Encamped at a village on the west side of the St. Regis, encamped around good fires in the street. Made 21 miles.

Jany. 2nd, 1814. Started early; more snow fell, made 18 miles and encamped in the woods around good fires; made shanties with hemlock boughs. Lay more comfortable in our shanties than we had done last night in the village.

Jany. 23rd. Cleared up last night and exceedingly cold; marched 12 miles and arrived at Malone. Here I reported to General Wilkinson³⁹ and received orders to march for Shattегie Four Corners and join Gen'l Bissell.⁴⁰ Weather very cold.

Jany. 26th. Orders came for me to march to Plattsburg without delay and to press as many sleighs as I thought necessary. We took up the line of march about dark and by 10 o'clock had all our men in sleighs. The night was very cold, arrived at Plattsburg by three o'clock on the 27th, a distance of forty miles and the greater part of the way through a wilderness and snow six feet deep. This may not be believed by a Pennsylvanian but it is well known to the people of the northern part of New York and Canada, that the snow in that country is often from six to eight feet deep. Here I was to hold out the idea that the whole army was coming on to Plattsburg. This was intended to satisfy the people of Plattsburg who had been alarmed from a report that the enemy was preparing an expedition against that place, and I was sent off in the night through the cold and deep snow and with a lie in my mouth too. In the course of a day or two I sent my men off by companies in the night secretly. The last company was about marching with which I intended to go myself, but Col. Purdy who commanded at this place would not permit me to go. I remained until the 31st of Jany when I received orders from Gen'l Wilkinson to get 250 picked men with two day's provisions and sixty rounds of ammunition each man, and call at his quarters that evening at sun down. This order was promptly obeyed, I called at the general's headquarters twenty minutes before the time. His orders were for me to proceed on that night to the village of Chazy and there hold out an idea that we were the van of the Grand army, that an attack was to be made on St. John's, and in the morning to take the road for Ribson's Tavern, where he would

³⁹ James Wilkinson, 1751-1825. A defense against charges of incompetence is his *Memoirs of My Own Times*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1816). McFeely's testimony on his behalf is on p. 250.

⁴⁰ Daniel Bissell, 1764-1833. Formerly commander of the Fifth U.S. Infantry, also made up of Pennsylvanians.

meet me in the morning at 9 o'clock. We set off at a rapid gait and after marching about five miles were overtaken by the sleighs. Got on board the sleighs and drove very fast; arrived at Chazy about 7 o'clock and billeted our men in the houses. This night was intensely cold; the thermometer was 30 degrees below 0. The next morning set off at sunrise (it being the first of February) and arrived at Robinson's before 9 o'clock. Here the men made large fires of rails to warm themselves. In about two hours a dragoon arrived with a letter from the general that I should return to Plattsburg, that he could not venture out until the weather would moderate as he had only recovered from a severe spell of sickness. We arrived in Plattsburg about 3 o'clock after the coldest sleigh ride of 42 miles that any poor fellows ever had. We had fourteen men so frozen that they were put into the hospital, two of whom died, and some of the others were cripples, no doubt for the remainder of their lives.

Feb'y. 3rd, 1814. The General having given notice last evening of his intention of starting off for the French Mills early this morning, I was ready with two hundred men to accompany him as a life guard through the wilderness, we set off early all in sleighs; drove very fast, weather not so cold, arrived at Shataguee Four Corners — 40 miles.

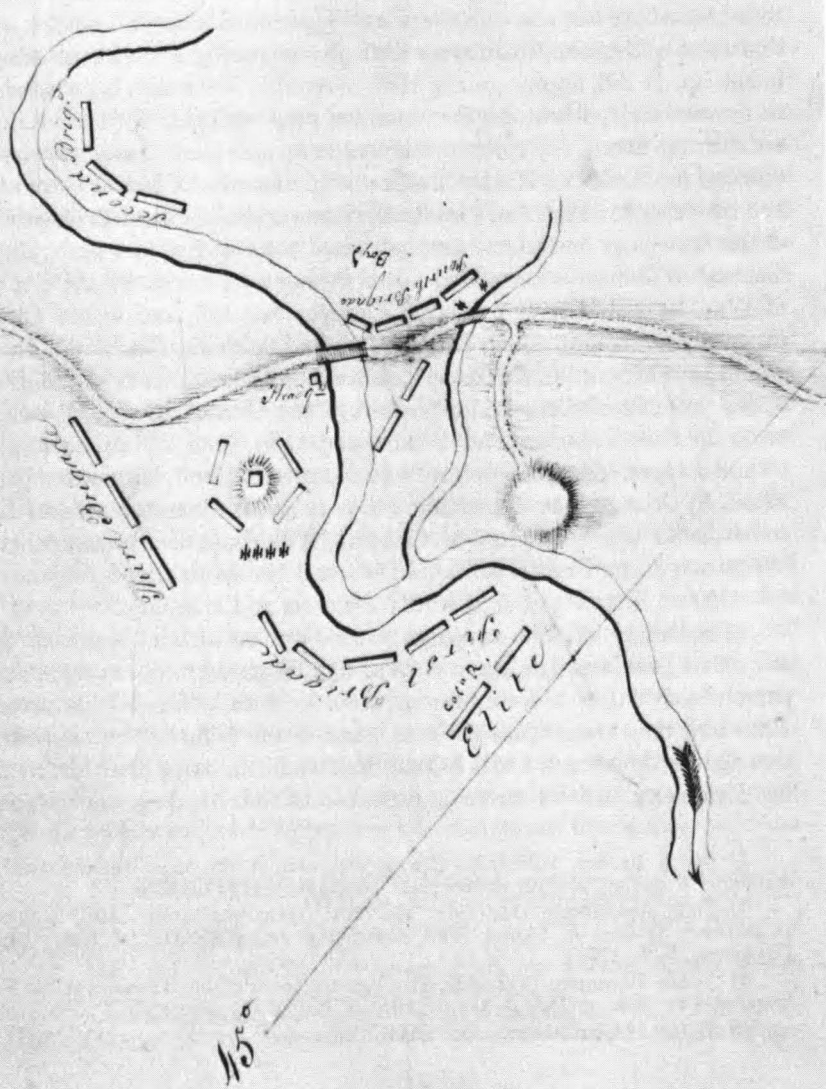
Feb'y. 4th. Arrived at French Mills, 20 miles. Here lay an army of about 7,000 men, who had just finished their huts and began to live with some little comfort.⁴¹

General Wilkinson was preparing an expedition to cross the St. Lawrence on the ice and destroy two large depots of provisions, when an order came from the Secretary of War for to burn the flotilla and the barracks and proceed with one division of his army to Plattsburg and the other to Sackett's Harbor, for the purpose of protecting the fleets. From a report the Government was apprehensive the enemy would cross over on the ice and burn the fleets at these two places.

Feb'y. 12, 1814. Orders were given for the troops to be ready to

41 This is a gross understatement. The ordeal at French Mills was almost a second Valley Forge. Colonel Miller left this vivid impression: "The army has been in a state of starvation ever since we landed here; the men have been deprived of all their small rations, such as soap, candles, whiskey, vinegar and straw, part of the times on half rations of meat and bread, and five days altogether without bread or flour; we could not even get flour for the nourishment of the sick in the hospitals, and when we got flour, one half of it damaged, the men were obliged to pound it up with axes and mauls before they could make it into any kind of bread. All this they have borne almost without a murmur, & constantly on hard fatigue. Our sick are destitute of almost every necessity and are daily increasing. I very much fear we shall have a distressed and destructive winter, but hope for better times." James Miller to wife, Dec. 8, 1813, War of 1812 Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

Stone to Chataaugay



Map of the disastrous camp at French Mills. McFeely and the Twenty-second were quartered with the Second Brigade on the far right. Courtesy Massachusetts Historical Society.

march tomorrow morning at sunrise, that the barracks and flottilla were to be burned, but the burning was to be kept a secret from the men until the troops were all formed and ready to march.

Feb. 13th. This morning the men appeared to anticipate what was to be done (soldiers always delight in destroying), fire was communicated to the barracks before the baggage was loaded, parties were sent to put out the fire and guards sent to prevent firing the buildings until the proper time, but no sooner than the fire was got under in one place than it broke out in two or three other places, so that in a little time the whole cantonments were enveloped in flames and smoke, so that some of the troops had some difficulty in getting out without being burnt up. It did appear to me that those that were sent as a guard to prevent and put out the fire were the very ones that set everything on fire. At about 8 o'clock the whole army got under way, the one division for Sackett's Harbor under the command of General Brown⁴² and the other for Plattsburg under the command of General Wilkinson, at this inclement season and through snow three to five feet deep. Had General Wilkinson's command not been interfered with by the Sec'y of War, he would have captured Kingston last fall, and would have proceeded on to and taken Montreal early the spring following. This would have secured to the American arms on Lake Ontario and all the upper province of Canada, but in place of this Gen. Armstrong⁴³ came on to the lines in person and dictated orders to Gen'l Wilkinson to go on and capture Montreal, to form a junction with Gen'l. Hampton,⁴⁴ on whom Wilkinson was depending for provisions. Hampton refuses to come under the command of General Wilkinson, which compelled Wilkinson at the French Mills, and General Hampton after a disgraceful affair at Shasee put into winter quarters at Plattsburg.⁴⁵

The failure of this campaign caused the arrest and downfall of our ablest generals. The Sec'y of War and General Hampton were the persons that ought to have been arrested in place of Gen'l Wilkinson. They and they alone were the sole cause of the failure of the expedition against Montreal. I was in that division of the army that marched for Plattsburg, we lay three nights around fires in deep snows and

⁴² Jacob Brown, 1775-1828. Brown was one of the most famous commanders of his day, and yet no adequate biography exists on him.

⁴³ John Armstrong, 1758-1843. The most recent evaluation of his tenure as secretary is Carl E. Skeen, *John Armstrong, Jr., 1758-1843: A Biography* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1981).

⁴⁴ Wade Hampton, 1752-1835. The latest account of his defeat is Allan S. Everest, *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1981).

⁴⁵ Battle of Chauteaugay, Oct. 26, 1813.

without covering and many men had their noses, ears, and hands and feet frozen.

Feb'y. 21st. About 4 o'clock orders came to march to meet the enemy who was said to be advancing. The whole army was soon under way, and continued the march until 8 o'clock at night when orders came to halt. The men began to kindle fires, the night was very cold. Soon after the fires were kindled we were ordered to march for quarters to Plattsburg, where we arrived about 4 o'clock the next morning cold and fatigued.

Feb'y. 27th. Crossed Lake Champlain on the ice and joined General Macomb's⁴⁶ brigade at Burlington in the state of Vermont — distance 23 miles.

March 2nd, 1814. Left Burlington and arrived at Plattsburg, sat three days on a court-martial and returned to Burlington on the 6th.

March 18th. Marched from Burlington with the 15th, 16th and 22nd Regiments to join Col. Clark⁴⁷ at Swantown, the roads very bad; had no baggage nor camp equipage; arrived at Swantown on the 20th. Here we were joined by Gen. Macomb and one company of artillery.

March 22nd. Marched for St. Armon, a small village on the Missiquoi bay. This place was a depot for British goods brought here from Montreal for the purpose of being smuggled into the United States. On the news of our approach the goods had been removed from the town into the country and deposited in barns and houses. These goods were hunted up and an immense quantity taken to Swantown by Col. Clark. This was done contrary to the express orders of General Macomb, who reprobated Col. Clark very severely and threatened to have him arrested. The Colonel produced a deputation from the United States custom-house office, and alledged that he had the right to take smuggled goods where ever he could find them. The general told him that these goods were in the province of Lower Canada and that it was a robbery & plunder, the army would be disgraced by such conduct. Clark contended that the goods were intended to be smuggled and that he had the right to seize them independent of the General's orders.⁴⁸ When we left that place Clark took sick and

⁴⁶ Alexander Macomb, 1765-1833. Macomb was one of the victors of Plattsburgh. See George H. Richards, *Memoir of Alexander Macomb* (New York, 1833) and Milo M. Quaife, "Alexander Macomb," *Burton Historical Collection Leaflet* 10 (1931): 1-16.

⁴⁷ Isaac Clark, 1749-1822, of Vermont. Clark was a Revolutionary veteran and had been a member of the Continental Congress.

⁴⁸ Contraband trade was endemic to the entire region. See H. N. Muller III, "A 'Traitorous and Diabolical Traffic': The Commerce of the Champlain-

could not go along, I felt uneasy for the safety of the Colonel and called on him to prevail with him not to remain in the rear, that I would have a bed fixed in a covered sleigh so that he could go comfortably, that if he remained twenty four hours in our rear he would be made a prisoner. He replied that he would keep one company of Riflemen as a guard and that by tomorrow morning he would be able to follow us. I only now understood his object.

We remained in the village of St. Armon until the 26th. At day break a heavy firing of musketry commenced in the direction of one of our pickets. The alarm was beat and we were soon on the march to meet the enemy, but the firing soon ceased. On arriving at the picket we were informed that the enemy four hundred strong had surrounded and attacked the house that our picket guard had occupied the night before. It was a fortunate thing that our piquet had been removed to another house about three hundred yards nearer the town. The house they attacked was empty, it was a weatherboarded house and was riddled with holes, they had surrounded the house and fired into it from every direction and either killed or wounded two of their own men as blood was seen in considerable quantities on the snow in two places. We returned to the town and soon marched for Swanton where we remained for the night. Rain fell in torrents this night.

March 27th. It was this morning Colonel Clark was confined to his bed and unable to go along. Took up the line of march at 7 o'clock. Crossed the Missiquoi bay on the ice. From the heavy rain last night the water was shoe-deep on the ice. Encamped on an island or neck of land between the bay and lake Champlain. This evening cleared and a north-wester blew a cold night. We lay around fires without tents. Every man appears to have caught a bad cold, nothing but coughing was to be heard the whole night.

March 28th. Started early this morning, stiff cold, and hungry, and on taking the ice the men slipped and fell, but few there were that did not get one or more falls. The rain that fell the day before froze into solid ice last night and this new formed ice was smooth and slippery as glass. Several men had their shoulders dislocated and some received bayonet wounds. We crossed the lake and made the shore at Rouse's point on the New York side, a little above the outlet or head of the Sorel river. Arrived at the village of Champlain; here we met the van of the Grand army from Plattsburg.

March 29th. This day General Wilkinson arrived with the whole

army and orders given for each man to have some sixty rounds of ammunition and four days provisions cooked, and packed up in his knapsack. Each Colonel was furnished with a diagram of the order of march and order of battle.

March 30th. The whole army was on the march a little after sunrise. About 11 o'clock our riflemen fell in with and engaged the enemy at Odletown.⁴⁹ The firing increased, the first brigade came up to the support of the Riflemen. The second and third brigades having arrived on the field of battle and commenced to deploy into line when the British gave way and retreated to LaCole Mill. An attack was also made on our right flank from a point of the woods, but they were soon dispersed by Lt. Scoffield with his company who was detached for that purpose. In this affair I saw the Congreve rocket used for the first time. The enemy threw a number which passed over and burst in the air harmless. They might answer a good purpose for burning a town or for frightening raw troops, but in the field they are a poor contrivance for killing men, when compared to the rifle and musket.⁵⁰

The road to LaCole was blockaded so that our army had to counter march about a mile, and [took] a by-road through the deep woods. The enemy harassed our front at every advantageous piece of ground. At one place they had killed two Riflemen, after this the Riflemen flanked the road. The enemy intended to make a stand on a piece of rising ground where there was a cabin. They told the woman of the cabin their intentions and she must clear out. She accordingly wrapped a blanket around each of her two little girls and one around herself and took to the woods. The Riflemen in flanking the road mistaking them for Indians fired and wounded the two girls, the one through the hip and the other through the abdomen; two balls also passed through the woman's clothes. They discovered their mistake and carried them home to their own cabin. This firing in the woods at the poor woman and children alarmed the enemy, they believing that they would be surrounded, hastily retreated from their ambushade. When the main army came up I saw two dead riflemen lying at the cabin door. I stopped for a minute while the troops were filing past to ask the cause of the two dead men lying there. The poor woman was almost dis-

⁴⁹ This battle has attracted considerable Canadian interest. Consult Ernest A. Cruikshank, "The Combat at the Mill on LaColle," *Canadian History Readings* 1 (1900): 322-30, and D. C. Gosling, "The Battle of LaColle Mill," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 47 (Autumn 1969): 169-74.

⁵⁰ For additional information on the Congreve rockets, see Richard A. Hobbs, "The Congreve Rockets, 1800-1825," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 94 (Mar. 1968): 80-88.

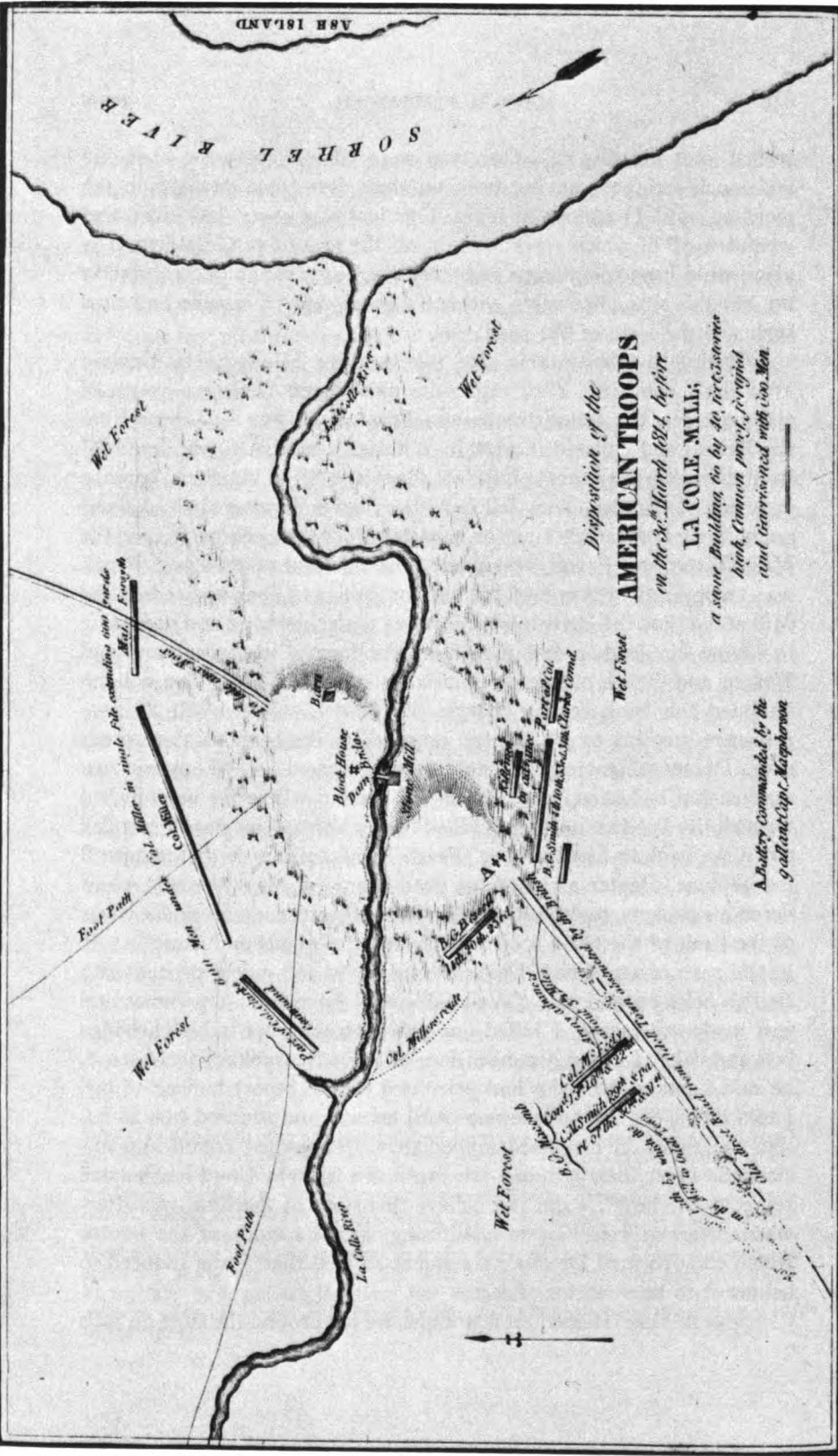
tracted, she informed me of the circumstances, how her little girls were wounded. One of our surgeons was dressing their wounds at the time. He said the one was only a fleshwound and was not dangerous, but the other was mortal. I asked the woman where her husband was, she said she did not know where. I asked her if the British had not compelled him to take up arms and enter into their ranks to fight the Yankees, she replied, "I do not know, but as like as not they did". I proceeded on and with some difficulty I regained my place in line.

On arriving at the Mill the enemy were soon driven in. Gen'l Smith's⁵¹ brigade was formed with its left resting on the road and his right extending off towards the Sorel river. General Bissel's brigade was formed with his right on the road and opposite to General Smith's left extending towards the LaCole River. These two brigades formed an angle, fronting and within two hundred yards of the Mill. General Macomb's brigade was drawn up across the road in rear of the angle and one hundred yards in rear on the front line. A battery of three or four light field pieces formed in the road and forty yards in front of the angle of the front line. Two regiments were thrown across the LaCole river for the purpose of cutting off the enemy should he attempt to retreat. About an hour after the battle commenced the British sallied out of the Mill and formed under the bank of the LaCole, mounted the bank, beat the charge and advanced in column (their Grenadiers in front). Our fire was reserved until within forty yards, when a tremendous volley was fired from four pieces of artillery and two thousand infantry. The whole front of the British column went down, the remainder retreated into the Mill in confusion. A Grenadier who was in front of the British column was taken; he was wounded in fifteen different places, and strange to say he could walk, none of his wounds were deep or dangerous.

Our artillerymen suffered severely the guns in the evening were supplied and served by infantry. Our light guns making no impression on the enemy's works and night coming on, the army was drawn off and marched to Odletown, five miles in the rear. I was ordered down with three regiments and covered the front line while it was filing off. General Wilkinson remained on the ground until the last corps filed off.

The road to Odletown had many deep ravines, these were full of water running like a torrent; this was in consequence of the fine day and a warm south wind that blew all day. I never saw the snow melt

⁵¹ Thomas Adams Smith, 1781-1844. A biographical sketch is in N. B. Napton, *Past and Present of Saline County, Missouri* (Chicago, 1910), 318-24.



Map of the bloody American attack on LaColle Mill. McFeely and the Twenty-second are in the lower left portion of the map. From Wilkinson, *Memoirs*.

so fast as it did this day. Our men were all wet up to the haunches and much fatigued, having been on their feet from daylight in the morning until 11 o'clock at night. Our loss was about 130 killed and wounded, all of which were brought off the ground to Odletown. The place could have easily been taken had the heavy cannon been brought up, but this was impossible without a great deal of trouble and time such was the state of the road.

During the battle this day two soldiers belonging to Captain Whitting's company, 23rd regt., the one named Dexter a youth of about sixteen, the other's name was Frank, who was a deserter from the British and enlisted in captain Whitting's company, wandered off from their company through the woods to the left of our lines, perhaps in search of plunder. They fell in with a British piquet guard who was going down the LaCole river on the ice to join their companions in the Mill. Dexter and Frank were made prisoners and taken along. Frank was recognized by some of his old companions. They arrived at the Mill at the time the British were forming under the bank and preparing to charge our cannon and the guard was formed in the column, and Dexter and Frank were left in charge of one soldier. The column mounted the bank to the charge, the British soldier with his two prisoners anxious to see the fun crawled up the bank so as to creep over. Dexter observing his keeper off his guard picked up his own musket that had been left lying on the ground where the column had formed, fired at five paces and killed the British soldier dead, he rolled down the bank to Dexter's feet. Frank knew nothing of the matter till it was done. Dexter stripped his dead enemy of his side arms, plundered his pockets, took to his heels with his companion up under cover of the bank of the river until they gained the woods and came in safe in the rear of our lines. Dexter came up to me much excited with British belts on and said "Well Colonel, I have been a prisoner and just made my escape, I killed one red coat and here is his cartridge box and belt". I asked him how dare he leave the ranks without leave, he said Captain Whitting had permitted him to report himself to me. I told him I did not believe one word he said and ordered him to fall into the ranks in his place immediately. He turned round and exclaimed "Well, then you may ask Frank the fifer, by G—d I killed one red coat any how". I did not believe this story at the time, but afterwards hearing from Captain Whitting, Frank's story of the matter which corroborated Dexter's statement so well that I was induced to believe it to be a matter of fact.

March 31st. Rained all last night, we lay around the fires on rails

and brush. The wounded are sent to the hospital at Champlain and the dead buried in one grave with the honors of war. The army was ordered to march; got off about 3 o'clock, arrived at Champlain about dark. Rained all this night.

April 1st, 1814. The enemy's light troops attacked our outposts, the whole army is put in motion for battle; the enemy retreated.⁵² Here we lay till the 3rd of April when received orders to march with Macomb's brigade for Burlington; arrived and encamped at Chazy, roads very bad.

April 4th. Left Chazy and arrive at Plattsburg. The roads these two days as bad as they possibly could be.

April 5th. Left Plattsburg for McNeal's ferry up the lake; no passage could be effected at Plattsburg in consequence of the ice being broken up. Arrived at McNeal's ferry on the 7th; here the lake was clear of ice. We crossed the ferry in boats and arrived at Burlington the same night, thus ending an expedition of 21 days at the very worst season of the year, and over the worst of roads, without tents or baggage, and many without shaving or changing shirts. Remained at Burlington until the 12th of May, when the British fleet hove in sight. Information was received that the enemy's gun boats were rowing up the river for the purpose of cutting out a schooner that lay about a mile and a half from the lake. General Macomb ordered me to march with about 400 infantry and attack the enemy's boats in the river. We set off in good spirits and in less than an hour arrived on the bank of the Onion river, but the enemy had information of our coming and had put out into the lake. Here we missed a fine chance, the river is not more than fifteen yards wide and a forest of heavy timber covered its banks. We could have beaten twice our numbers in this situation. I afterwards learned from a gentleman who lived on Cumberland head, where the British landed on their way down to the lake, that one officer in boasting of what good friends they had in Burlington, said that one of their good friends had come on horseback and informed

⁵² McFeely observed on this skirmish in a footnote: "When the firing first commenced it was scattered and at intervals as is common between small parties, but it increased and soon became general. The troops of the center and rear were pushed forward at a rapid pace. It was at this time that every man's conscience seemed to smite him for his wickedness. The army had just come out of winter quarters where gambling had been carried on to a great extent and perhaps two thirds of the men had packs of cards in their pockets which they all threw away on approaching the field of battle. I saw more cards scattered along the roads this day than I have seen or will ever see again in my life time put all together. For upwards of two miles the road was strewn with cards and in greater numbers to all appearance than the leaves of the trees."

them that one thousand infantry was on their way to attack them in the river, that they then abandoned the project of taking the schooner and put out into the lake as fast as they could. The enemy's gunboats, six in number, stood up for Burlington, we then marched back to headquarters.

The gunboats arrived at and landed on Juniper island, about three miles from Burlington. A boat put off from the wharf of Burlington with three men and did go to the enemy on the island. In about two hours the boat returns with but two men, one having remained with the British, no doubt but for the purpose of a pilot to conduct the enemy to Otter creek, where Commodore MacDonough's⁵³ fleet was building and fitting out. On seeing the boat making for the shore I despatched an officer with a party of men to meet them at the landing and bring the two fellows into camp. On asking them what was their business with the enemy, they replied that that was their own business, they were free citizens and had a right to go where they pleased. I ordered them to be sent to the guard house and put in irons. I at the same time sent a note to General Macomb informing him of what had been done. The town of Burlington was all in an uproar, the citizens called on the General with loud complaints that their free born citizens were put under guard by the military. An express was dispatched to the Governor of the State. The General sent a written order to me to release the citizen prisoners and send them down to his quarters not under guard. I repaired to the guard house and had the two citizens released. I directed them to go down to the town and report themselves to General Macomb, but they went to an attorney by the name of Robinson and brought suit against me for having them confined in the Guardhouse. However, I took the precaution of not being taken. One of these ruffians kept a shantie in the suburbs of the town, and one of our sergeants coming past with a patrol of twelve men the next night heard a great noise and saw a light, and believing there were soldiers in, went to the door and knocked, when the lights were put out and fifteen or sixteen muskets were fired out through the doors and windows which killed two of our soldiers. The Guard commenced to return the fire but the sergeant stopped them. However, two of them fired and one ball wounded the villain in his hand. This caused an alarm, several of our officers went down to the house where they saw General Macomb and a number of citizens. The villain represented that he had been attacked in his house, that it was what he

53 Thomas MacDonough, 1783-1825.

expected and that he had got a few friends to stay with him to protect him from the military. The citizens taking a warm part against the military, and our General fearing his popularity, the villain was let go, and the military had to put up with censure and curses of the people of the place. However, this villain's house was burned the next night, and no doubt it was set on fire by some of our soldiers.

The enemy's fleet and flotillas stood up the lake and attacked the batteries at the mouth of Otter Creek, where they were repulsed. They soon sailed down out of the lake. Shortly after this we were ordered across the lake to Plattsburg and on arriving was informed of General Wilkinson's arrest. General Izard in a few days arrives and takes command of the northern army.⁵⁴

About the middle of June 1814, I received a letter of promotion from the Secretary of War to the rank of Colonel of the 25th Regt. United States Infantry,⁵⁵ to take rank from the 1st of April, 1814, and ordered to proceed to the Niagara frontier and report myself to Major General Brown and join my regiment. At this time there was a court-martial in session at Plattsburg, of which I was President. Gen'l. Izard would not allow me to go until the business of the court-martial was finished. At length on the 23rd of June I started alone by the shortest route for the Niagara frontier, by the way of Shatagu Four Corners, Malone, Sackett's Harbor &c. Major Brooke with a detachment of the 22nd & 23rd Regiments, had started for the same place about a week before me, by the way of Balls Town Springs. I was very desirous of overtaking this detachment, which I did two days before they reached Buffalo.

On the 13th of August crossed the Niagara at Lewistown and reported to General Brown who then lay at Queenstown with his army. He ordered me to report myself to General Scott and join my regiment.

Here the army lay until the 20th when the whole army marched down to within one mile of Fort George. Here we lay until the 22nd when the General with his army fell back to Queenstown Heights and encamped on the heights until the 24th, when we fell back to Chippewa and encamped until the 25th in the evening when the desperate battle of Bridgewater took place. This battle ought to have been named the battle of the falls or of the Cataract, it was immediately

⁵⁴ George Izard, 1776-1828. Izard replaced Wilkinson as commander of the Right Division. See Gabriel Manigault, "The Military Career of General George Izard," *Magazine of American History* 21 (1881): 465-72.

⁵⁵ The Twenty-fifth U.S. Infantry was raised in Connecticut.

in the vicinity of the Grand falls, and more than two miles from Bridgewater. The British call it the battle of Niagara or battle of Lundy's Lane.

General Brown has stated to the Secretary of War that his object in falling back from Fort George on the 22nd was to attack the enemy on Burlington Heights. This was not the fact; General Brown fell back in order to gain a better position as the British had received strong reinforcements, and would have gained his rear and cut off his retreat in all probability in a few hours. It was ridiculous for General Brown in his official communication to the War Department to say that he was on his way to attack the enemy at Burlington heights when the battle of the 25th was fought. It might satisfy the Secretary of War who knew nothing of the geography of the country. So far from going to Burlington Heights we had actually turned our backs on Burlington Heights as well as Fort George. We had sent all the heavy baggage across the Niagara at Queenstown the night before we decamped from Fort George. The enemy gained the heights in our rear with some light troops and Indians, but were dispersed by our riflemen before the heavy columns came up.

The morning of the 25th the enemy crossed the river and captured our baggage at Lewistown and drove off the guard. This no doubt was with the view of getting General Brown to divide his army by sending a part across the river at Schlosser to protect his baggage. When information came from our piquet Guard that the enemy was in sight and advancing with his whole army it was not believed because we had information that the enemy was crossing the river at Lewistown in the forenoon to a certainty. However, the information was confirmed by a second visit, that the enemy was advancing in force just as the troops were on parade for retreat a little before sundown. Gen'l. Scott was ordered out with his brigade with orders that if the enemy was advancing in force he should reconoitre them and send in information, but if there was a small party he should attack and beat them off. Scott set off and arrived in sight of the enemy and commenced the attack. The heavy firing soon announced that the whole British army was engaged and Gen'l. Brown with the remainder of his army marched to the aid of Gen'l. Scott, and on arriving on the field of battle he knew nothing of Gen'l. Scott's position. Scott at this [Here ends page 132 of the original manuscript, pages 133-34 are missing.]

[page 135] . . . have detached five hundred men to the taking of Buffalo, and have enough left to have kept the Americans penned up



The cutting out of the American schooners *Ohio* and *Somers* off Fort Erie, August 13, 1814, an act that might have been prevented had McFeely's advice been heeded. Courtesy The Mariners Museum, Newport News, Va.

in Fort Erie.⁵⁶ The enemy at this time had about five thousand men, while the Americans did not exceed three thousand.

For the first two weeks of the siege I commanded the batteries at Black Rock, which drove the enemy's camp off from the river out of the reach of our guns. We continued our fire into the flank of their batteries but without any success, as they threw up a strong flank works which protected them from our shot.

A British deserter swam across the Niagara one night. He was a German and belonged to the DeWatteville brigade.⁵⁷ He brought the information that the British were transporting boats by land from Fort George to a point above Fort Erie, for the purpose of cutting out three schooners that were lying opposite to our fort which were annoying them very much. After examining this fellow I sent infor-

⁵⁶ The siege of Fort Erie was one of the more successful actions of the war. See Louis L. Babcock, *The Siege of Fort Erie* (Buffalo, 1899).

⁵⁷ The Dewatteville regiment was composed of French, Spanish, Polish, and Swiss prisoners who volunteered for service in America. The best history remains John D. Martin, "The Regiment De Watteville: Its Settlement and Services in Upper Canada," *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 62 (Mar. 1960) : 17-30.

mation to General Gaines⁵⁸ at Fort Erie of the intention of the enemy to take the schooners. Some time the same day I met Lieut. Conkle⁵⁹ in the street of Buffalo who commanded the schooners and told him he had better look out or he would be captured some night as the enemy were preparing boats for that purpose. I informed him of the way I got the information. He scarcely condescended to listen, turned on his heel and said he would desire no better fun than to see twenty or thirty boats coming to take him. I told him he better keep a good look out, he replied that he understood his own business and walked off. The second night after this the British surprised him, captured two of his schooners and our worthy Conkle "who understood his own business" so well was made a prisoner before he got on his clothes. Gen'l Brown shortly after this returned to Fort Erie and took command of the army. He planned the sortie and succeeded in capturing and destroying the British batteries and guns, for which he gained credit. Had he waited until Gen'l.⁶⁰ . . . [The manuscript ends here.]

58 Edmund P. Gaines, 1777-1849. Gaines took command of the fort as Brown was then recovering from wounds received at Lundy's Lane. The only biography is James W. Silver, *Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Frontier Soldier* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1949).

59 Augustus H. M. Conklin of Virginia. He is described by one contemporary as "an elegant officer in appearance, but too convivial even for the navy." Usher Parsons, "Brief Sketches of the Officers Who Were in the Battle of Lake Erie," *Inland Seas* 19 (Fall 1963) : 186.

60 McFeely resigned his commission on June 15, 1815, and returned to Carlisle where he was actively engaged in education, being director of common schools for more than fourteen years. Little else is known about him, but his obituary described him thus: "Col. McFeely was a man of enlarged views and multiform experience. He judged men at a glance and had an intuitive sagacity as remarkable as it appeared unerring. In his political views he was a republican of the Jeffersonian school, stern, decided, unyielding and vigorous. He had great confidence in man's capacity for self government and believed in the gradual improvement and perfectability of the human race." *The American Volunteer* (Carlisle), Jan. 26, 1854.