

23. Legend has it, of course, that Tecumseh was slain by Johnson, but others maintain he was slain by neither Johnson nor Whitley, but rather bayoneted by a soldier in Capt. Fairfield's company named King. See "Early Recollections of John P. Hodges," *Indiana Magazine of History* 8 (1912): 171-173, and "Letter to Benjamin Drake," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 41 (1917): 251-252.

24. This was founded by the Moravian Church for the benefit of the Indians and was subsequently burned by the Americans. See O. R. Watson, "Moraviantown," *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 28 (1932): 125-134.

25. Henry Procter (1789-1859). See Antal, *A Wampum Denied*.

26. This was immediately pressed into service by the foot-wary Americans: "I must say to the reader I had a very pleasant ride to Detroit in Procter's beautiful carriage. I found in it a hat, a sword, and a trunk, the trunk was partly filled with letters and mostly by Procter's wife to her darling Henry." Sholes, "Narrative," 525.

27. Detroit at this time was a scene of considerable rejoicing as McAfee indicates: "Detroit, when we entered it on the 30th of September was desolate & exhibited every mark of distress and decay — Now everything is in motion. Life and activity pervades every countenance & the vacant houses fast filling up, even improvement are beginning to be made and a constant bustle of business every where & various articles of the country appear at the market at the river side, a glorious change in a few days!" "The McAfee Papers," 131.

13. Private Charles Fairbanks, New Hampshire Volunteers*

The War of 1812 was one of the most turbulent episodes in American history. This was especially true in New Hampshire where state politics were dictated and nearly paralyzed by a strong Federalist establishment. William Plumer, the Republican governor, was an outspoken proponent of the war but had to confront growing dissent with pleas for national unity. "Union," he noted, "is the vital strength of a nation, particularly so of a Republic, whose authority rests on public opinion. Our union is our safety — a house divided against itself cannot stand." His appeals were met with derision from the Federalists who, in 1813, rose to power under the aegis of John Taylor Gilman. As governor, Gilman adopted a deliberate policy of confrontation with the Madison administration, and state Federalists did everything in their power to sabotage the war effort. This wave of political antagonism crested in 1814 when the militia refused to respond to federal or gubernatorial requisition, even to protect the strategic harbor of Portsmouth from attack. Fortunately, an invasion never materialized and New Hampshire emerged from the war unscathed. But the wave of nationalism that swept the country after the war was unforeseen and the Federalists, by dint of their obstructionist tactics, found themselves on the road to political extinction. Mindful of war-time excesses, the New Hampshire electorate eliminated them from power in 1816, and they never again assumed their previously eminent position in state or national politics.

Despite the partisan wrangling, it is interesting to note that not all New Hampshire citizens responded to the War of 1812 with such acrimony. Indeed, several individuals from the Granite State became nationally recognized figures whose military service transcended regional affiliations. Brevet Major General Eleazar Wheelock Ripley of Hanover was the highest-ranking New England soldier of the war. A brave and accomplished fighter, Ripley survived a storm of controversy surrounding his conduct at the battle of Lundy's Lane and remained in the military following the war. After helping to perfect the defenses of New Orleans, he served several terms in Congress as representative from

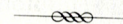
*This chapter was originally published as "A New Hampshire Volunteer in the War of 1812: The Experiences of Charles Fairbanks," *Historical New Hampshire* 40 (Fall/Winter 1985): 156-178, and is reprinted with permission.

Louisiana.² Brevet Brigadier General James Miller of Peterborough also fought with distinction at Lundy's Lane, where he captured a British battery in a celebrated charge. President Monroe subsequently appointed him governor of the Arkansas Territory and he later served as a revenue agent at Salem, Massachusetts.³ Brevet Colonel John McNeil of Hillsboro also broke the British center at the battle of Chippewa and carried the day for the Americans. Though crippled for life at Lundy's Lane, McNeil remained in the service and was instrumental in the settlement and development of the Wisconsin Territory. He was also brother-in-law to President Franklin Pierce.⁴ Others, such as Lieutenant Colonels Moody Bedel and Timothy Upham, distinguished themselves in a number of engagements and later assumed prominent positions in the state militia throughout the post-war period.⁵

While New Hampshire had its fair share of nationally recognized heroes, hundreds more rendered valuable, if less-heralded, service. A good example is Charles Fairbanks. In 1813 Fairbanks joined the obscure New Hampshire Volunteers. Many years later he published an account of his experiences, and this pamphlet, only recently rediscovered, is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the period.⁶ Far from being an inflated chronicle of prowess in battle, Fairbank's narrative is unique in that it serves as a testimonial against the military. He expounds upon the harshness of army life and the unenviable plight of the common soldier, a theme rarely considered by historians of this war. The incidents of profiteering and brutality directed against soldiers by their own officers are especially revealing. Other little-known facets such as poor diet, bad clothing, low morale, and harsh punishments are also rendered in great detail. His is a powerful indictment against a military establishment more intent upon abusing and exploiting its members than winning battles. Fortunately for historians, Fairbanks endured all these deprivations and soldiered through two grueling campaigns, including the encounters at Chateauguay and Plattsburgh. Thanks to his perseverance, Fairbanks has left us a detailed narrative essentially military in nature, but one that also exudes a human and personal dimension.

Despite the publication of his memoirs, Charles Fairbanks is and remains a shadowy figure. He enlisted a private in Captain Benjamin Bradford's company, New Hampshire Volunteers, but his life and subsequent activities are a mystery.⁷ This compounds the problem for historians who must consider the veracity of his statements and claims. Of particular concern is the fact that there is a lapse of nearly fifty years between the actual events and the publication date. Furthermore, Fairbanks is not an objective observer of military events surrounding him. But in many respects his narrative compares much more favorably with accepted history than the published accounts of other veterans.⁸ His is noticeably lacking in the conscious self-glorification usually associated with such documents. In terms of his own accomplishments, Fairbanks is restrained, even reticent, and this lack of bombast lends credibility to his tale. Fairbanks' story is a rambling recital of

deeply etched personal experiences — some harsh, some humorous, but all within the expected regimen of military life. It is safe to assume, therefore, that the memoirs of Charles Fairbanks constitute reliable historical evidence, providing we make allowance for his rancor towards the army and the possible ravages of time upon memory. Indeed, the memoirs of Charles Fairbanks add a unique personal perspective to life in this conflict, and place New Hampshire's contributions to the War of 1812 in a new context.



A soldier, when he enlists for one year, receives sixteen dollars bounty. He also receives one cap, made of hard stiff leather, one neck stock, of the same material, four ruffled shirts, two pair blue pants, one pair white, four pairs of shoes, four pairs of socks, two red flannel shirts, one blanket, one pair of blue gaiters, one coat, and one work jacket. Our rations consisted of bread and salt beef; sometimes the beef was fresh, but usually salt; we also had salt pork, candles, soap, and potato whiskey. I enlisted at Concord, N.H. with one companion on 16th March, 1813, in the N.H. Regiment of the United States Volunteers, for one year. The first enlistment was one month previous to the time we enlisted; and the promise was made to us that our names should be *put* with the first, but when we came to draw our pay, they said my companion's name was put back with the first, but mine was not; they asked him if he would give me half his month's pay? But he refused to do this and got nothing. I found out afterwards, when discharged, that my name was the *one* put back, and the officers had kept the money. Our regiment was commanded by Col. E. Davis. We left Concord in May, for Burlington. On our arrival at Canterbury, we received of the Shakers some doughnuts and cheese; at another place a cartload of potatoes. We crossed the Connecticut river at the mouth of the White River, and followed the latter to the top of the Green Mountains, and then passed down the other side, close to the Onion River, until we reached Burlington College, where we stopped to receive an escort from the camp, about a mile distant. While we were waiting here we were instructed in the forms by which we must honor our officers. After a short stay here we passed down Lake Champlain in boats, about 40 miles, to Charzee river, and up that to Champlain Village, where we remained a "Picket Guard," till August. We kept a guard on the lake shore to catch smugglers. One night an officer from camp took our boat that would carry 30 men, it was so large, and in the morning returned with it full of tobacco that he had taken from smugglers. The smugglers in passing down the lake, finding we had a guard on the point, stopped above us, and attempted to carry it round on the land, and were caught. We had a man who took a little too much whiskey, and was found asleep at his post; he was sentenced to wear a ball and chain fastened to his ankle for a month, and also to

dig stumps, although the punishment is death for such a crime. The first part of August we started for Burlington, to rejoin the main army; the first night we camped on an island near Plattsburgh; the next day we kept on up the lake near the New York shore, until we arrived opposite Burlington; the we crossed and landed at about 4 o'clock P.M. We had hauled up about half our boats, when a gale struck and smashed them all, those we had on the shore, and those that were in the water. If we had been a hour later in arriving, the while regiment would have been lost. After the gale we pitched our tents.

The army was now under Gen. Hampton⁹ from Virginia. About this time one of our men was hung; he belonged to the dragoons and deserted to the British, with his horse and equipments, which he sold to them. He was hung as a traitor. The gallows was put up about the centre of the "grand parade;" the army formed a hollow square round the gallows, that all might see and take warning not to be caught in such a game. Within a few days of this, three ran the "gauntlet." They ran through "fifty file;" that is, one hundred men on two lines facing each other; each soldier has a stick in his hand three feet long; the person that is to be whipped at one end of the lines, passing between them at a moderate walk, one soldier in front to hold a bayonet to his breast, one on each side, and one in the rear: each man strikes him as he passes; an officer walks along to see that every man does his duty. There was also one tarred, feathered, and drummed out of camp.

Sundays the army marched up by Burlington College, then back to the grand parade ground, and formed a hollow square to hear prayers, if possible; but there was so much swearing, and the soldiers were so uncomfortable, having marched two hours, being covered with dust, and the hot sun pouring down on our heads, that the prayers seemed to do but little good, and were but little appreciated. There were at this time no troops at Plattsburgh; the British came up and burnt all the government property, and then sent a boat up to Burlington with a flag of truce. We saw it from the fort, fired a gun, and it stopped; we sent out a boat to see what they wanted; they told us they were coming to take dinner with us the next day. Accordingly, the next day about dinner time, two vessel came in sight, the *Eagle* and the *Growler*; these vessels were taken from us the spring before, therefore we considered it more of an insult than if they had sent some that they built themselves. There was very little wind at the time, and they moved along very slow. The parade ground was a hundred feet or more above the level of the lake, so we had a fair view of them. I think the fort fired one or two guns, and a scow at the wharf one or two more...; but no more firing was allowed by our General. Capt John McNeal¹⁰ the first captain of the 11th Regiment, wheeled his company, started for the wharf, intending to take the steamboat and board them, but on his way he met the General, who ordered him back, and the vessels passed on up the lake. After being gone about two hours, they returned towing a sloop-load of flour, and the General let them pass without firing a gun. By this act he ruined his repu-

tation in his own army ever after; they considered him a traitor to his country. And therefore a traitor to them, for we were confident that the design we had when we enlisted to *serve* our country, was defeated under such a General. How could it be otherwise than discouraging to see two vessels of the enemy, carrying not more than six or eight twelve pounders, proceeding seventy or eighty miles unmolested, into the very heart of the country, stealing flour to feed *their* army, to fight against us, and allowed to pass by a fort that could have sunk them in ten minutes unharmed?

Soon after this, our army struck their tents, and marched for what was called the "new encampment." Before the tents are struck, all the drummers and fifers start from the right of each regiment, march to the left, and back again, playing what is called "The General," the words of which are these:

Don't you hear your General Say,
Strike your tents and march away, way, way!
Way, boys, way!
Strike your tents and march away!

Then they gave three rolls on the drum. While they have been playing, the soldiers have been busy pulling up the tent pins, and getting ready: one man stands at each pile of the tent, and at the last roll of the drum every tent falls to the ground. It is very seldom there is half a minute difference in the fall of every tent in the regiment. It was the last of August when we marched, and the farmers brought in pies and fruit of every kind. While I was here, I saw three soldiers whipped, with what was is called the "bats" to "cat-o-nine-tails;" it is a bunch of twenty of twenty-five sticks, tied together at the large end; a sentence



General Wade Hampton commanded the ill-fated American offensive that came to grief at Chateaugay, Lower Canada, in 1813 (Library of Congress).

was five apiece, which if they all hit, would make one hundred or more stripes. At this time the "N.H. Volunteers" and the "Maine Volunteers"¹¹ were both small regiments, hence they were put together and made one, and as our uniform was differed from theirs, the officers obliged us all to purchase new ones, which took two months pay from each man. That is the way the poor soldier gets his pay for serving his country.

We left the "New Encampment" and proceeded down the lake twenty miles to Cumberland Head, at the entrance to Plattsburgh Bay. While here two soldiers obtained a pass to go out of "camp." The oldest was about thirty-five, the other about twenty of age. After they had got some distance from the camp towards the Canada line, the older one told the younger, "that he was going to desert from the army," and wished him to go with him, but he declined. While they were talking, they were taken by a file of soldiers from the army. They had suspicions of the oldest, for I think he had deserted before. After being returned to camp, they had their trial, and both received the sentence of death, although the younger was proved innocent; the other confessed that he urged him to go, but that he refused. Still, to frighten others from commissioning a like offense, this young man must suffer the horrors of death for two long weeks.

At the time of the execution, the army marched to a large field, the first brigade in front, then the prisoners in the center of the guard, they being formed into a hollow square, then all the drummers and fifers in the army, about fifty each, with their drums muffled, beating a continual roll. Then the Second Brigade came up, and formed a hollow square within the first, leaving a space on the north side for those that were to be shot. Then the prisoners marched out into the lines about three rods, and faced about in front of those who were to fire upon them; lastly the music in the center of the square. The older one was now ordered to kneel beside his coffin, the soldiers fired, and he fell dead. The younger one then kneeled beside his coffin, the cap was pulled over his eye, the soldiers cocked their guns; then the reprieve was read, and thus ended the horrid scene.

It seems unjust to me, even in war, to sacrifice the feelings of a person to such an extent, for the sole object of striking dread on others.

We left Cumberland Head for Canada, thirty in a boat; the commanding officer and staff of each regiment in front, and two lines of boats in the rear of each commanding officer. There were six regiments, making twelve boats in width, and fifteen deep, reckoning the space between the boats on the sides, to allow for the oars, and it made nearly a complete square; there was also a fleet of five large vessels on the right. I was about the last to go on board, and as I saw the while vast fleet move off, I think it was the most splendid sight I ever saw.

As soon as it began to be dark, all the regiments but ours landed along the shore of the lake. Our regiment had been there before, so we kept on till one o'clock in the morning, when we landed at the mouth of the Charzee river, and

encamped for the rest of the night. In the morning we rowed up the river, within a mile of Champlain village. Here we found the water so shallow that we could go no further in boats, so we left them, and marched into a field near the road, in sight of the village. We had not been there but a few moments when a messenger rode up in great haste and inquired for our general. We directed him to the village and he went on. The General soon made his appearance at our left, where I was, and sent for our Colonel. When we arrived, he told him "he had a message from Odletown, Canada, and that the British were driving the light corps from that place, and that he must start with his regiment as soon as possible."

The Light Corps were choice men, in nine companies, the three divisions, commanded by three majors, McNeal, Snelling,¹² and Foresight.¹³ They (the Light Corps) went by land, and marched into Odletown that morning before we arrived. Our regiment was the only one that he could call upon, for the other regiments were five miles off. It was thought best to leave our knapsacks where we were, that we might go the quicker.

When the General left us, he said, "Now, my brave volunteers, *now* is your time." We started quick step, and were not long in going three miles to the place of our destination. When we arrived, all was quiet. Our men had driven the picket guard of the enemy from the field, and a few guns had been fired. Our Lieutenant Colonel went to a house near where we stopped, procured two pails of water, walked along to the left, and each man out in his hand and drank what he could get in. That was all we were allowed, but we were very dry and hot. Soon after, the other regiments arrived, and we formed a line of battle. After our line was formed, the light troops passed beyond us over the swell, to ascertain if the enemy were there, and to commence the attack; but we heard nothing from them that night, therefore each regiment formed by themselves to pass the night. Our Captain was called to go on guard and six men with him. As it was a dangerous position, he called for six to volunteer their services, and with one consent the whole company marched. He took them all, and we formed one captain's guard.

Our line of sentinels was posted about ten yards from the wood; the officer of the day said it was the most dangerous position in the whole chain (of sentinels); — there was but one gun fired during the night, however, but it proved to be a false alarm; when daylight came, we discovered a flock of sheep outside the guard, near the woods; we penned them up, the butcher selected the two best and killed them; we soon had them dressed and on cooking. We were at this time very hungry, not having tasted anything since the morning before; having left our knapsacks and provisions on the field we had come from the day before, and being out all night on guard, we were glad to eat almost anything. It was not every day that we got fresh mutton and new potatoes — (the later we discovered nearby and pulled up the tops); we sat down on the ground and ate our fill.

Not finding the enemy here, we took our line of march back through Champlain and Charzee villages until we came in sight of Plattsburgh; then we turned to the right for "French Mills." We went about forty miles to Chautauqua Fort Corners; this was the latter part of September.

Here we stayed about a month. During all this time we drew flour with our rations, but we had no way to bake it; we built ovens of mud and stones, but our bread was not fit to eat. One part of our guard was in great danger from Indians; usually the sentinels were relieved every two hours, but now those who were on guard the first part of the night, had to stay there till morning, and the others go on and stay with them also; we were not allowed any conversation during the night. There was a part of a tribe of Indians came to see us, and offered to join us if we would give them ten dollars, some blankets and a rifle. Our General did as desired, but they soon returned with the rifles and nothing else, and stated that there was another tribe on the other side of the line, and they had agreed not to fight. Our objective in coming here was to meet Gen. Wilkinson,¹⁴ who had previously ordered our General to meet him at French Mills, about twenty miles further on, but as Wilkinson did not come as soon as was expected, Hampton, we supposed, thought he would cut a way down through the woods, take Montreal, and have all the glory himself.

To accomplish this object, he ordered his army to be put on half rations, when whole rations while we were on the march, was little enough. We received six or eight days rations at a time, and a day or two before our time was out, our rations would be out, no matter how closely we hoarded the scanty allowance, and then we had nothing to eat. There were two hundred of us taken out of the army, commanded by two Colonels;—our work was to cut trees out of the road the British had felled in, and rebuild the bridges they had destroyed. The roads were soft and miry, and often the wheels of the baggage wagon cut up the road so we had to lay logs across for miles; we often had to wade in the river up to our knees, or above them, lugging logs and timber. Such is the work of the poor soldier on half rations. One day we found some corn buried, and it was eaten about as quick as so many hogs would have eaten it. At night we had to take our blankets out of our knapsacks, roll ourselves up in them, and with our knapsack for a pillow, lie down on the frozen ground, oftentimes with a storm of hail or sleet driving down upon us; we could not stop to pitch our tent every day. The Indians could often be seen in the woods near us, so that we were always compelled to sleep with our guns by our sides.

I remember well the last day we went down the river, many of us had had nothing to eat for a day or two; they brought some salt beef, and cut it on a board in about one half pound pieces and each man was allowed to take a piece; we would cut it in slices, stick them onto the end of a stick, and hold them in the blaze of the fire, which would draw out the salt, then put it in water, and thus we soon got it so it would eat with a grand relish; *that* was to give us courage to fight. We continued slowly to proceed in this hard and laborious man-

ner for about three weeks, till slight skirmishes informed us of the presence of the enemy. The night before the battle the first brigade crossed the Chautauqua river, and the third regiment marched down the side we were on—the other two regiments were behind. About noon the army on both sides of the river commenced fighting. The two hundred of which I was one, who were engaged in constructing the road, were about a mile in the rear. Soon the artillery came up, and they took hold to help us clear the road, that they might draw their cannon up to the field of battle. But we had hard work to get them through, some of them, being three feet in diameter.

At last we arrived. As we came up, the third regiment charged, and drove the enemy forty or fifty rods. The artillery-men placed the cannon on a knoll, where the ground was forty feet higher than where the battle was taking place, so that if necessary they could fire over our men into the ranks of the enemy. There was but one hundred came up with the artillery—the other half staid back at work upon the road. We were ordered as a reinforcement to the third regiment; we had just formed a line on their left, when we were ordered back, and met the other two regiments that belonged to that brigade, coming up. We saw ten or twelve wounded, and one person dead. A little further up the river, on the opposite bank, we saw about a dozen officers who had left their companies and collected at a bend in the river; as we passed them, they wished our colonel to swim his horse across and bring them over; one of them was one of his own captains. He replied, "Go back to your men; if I saw the Indians and knew that they would kill every one of you, I would not swim my horse across."

The men on our side of the river retreated back about three miles to where the baggage was. Our General now came to the conclusion that it was useless to proceed any further in that direction; it was impossible to clear the roads, they were so full of obstructions, and he had already almost starved his men and horses what distance he had gone, without accomplishing anything. When we got back to our baggage, our Colonel ordered my brother, who was the only Sergeant we had with us, to make out a requisition to draw some hard bread. After the Colonel had signed it, it was presented, and in the evening we drew some hard bread, which we made soft. We could have gone to the other regiments and sold these cakes for a dollar apiece, because it was not time yet for either of us to draw, and when men are starving, money is but little account. We lay in an open field, our blankets around us, our guns in our arms, and supposed we were to get a little rest after the fatigues of the day. But we were doomed to disappointment, and the toils of the night were far worse than the fatigues of the day; at two o'clock the rain fell in torrents, so that we were completely drenched.

In the midst of all this discomfiture, we heard the sound of guns proceeding from the brigade on the other side of the river. They were attacked by Indians, who by some means got into the camp, and commenced shooting and tomahawking our men. It was so dark we could not tell one from the other,

and they took up a line of march for the remainder of the night. There were many killed and some taken prisoner. We were ordered to march back three miles, to those we had left behind the day before; (they had staid behind to draw clothing). Accordingly we started on our tramp; we were not allowed to speak to each other. After groping sometime we got into our baggage wagons track; there was mud in abundance, and the rain kept making it softer; we could see nothing, and had to almost find the way by the sense of feeling. Sometimes one would get out of the mud on to a bit of grass, and the grass being wet, his feet slippery, they would go out from under him quickly, his gun would snap out of his hands, go ten or twelve feet, and he would land nicely in the mud — then have to grope round in the dark till he found his gun. It was so dark I saw no one from two o'clock in the morning until daylight. Some lost their shoes; I happened to have a pair of boots that I carried in my knapsack all summer, therefore I got along better than a good many. The reader can easily imagine what grotesque appearance we must have presented that morning, the mud and water dropping from our uniforms; we in fact presented an appearance very unlike human beings. The Colonel made his men get us and build us fires to dry us. That morning we fired off our guns at a stump of a tree and in some the powder was so wet it would hardly force the ball out.

That day the army commenced its march back to the Four Corners, where we started from three weeks before. We received eight days' full rations, that we might carry the food in stead of the teams. One day our regiment was in the advance; most of us being young men, we walked faster. The General rode up and ordered us to return till we met the other regiments. Our men did not feel just right about it, but our Colonel said we must obey orders. We soon got back to the Four Corners, rather discouraged and worn out. We commenced building barracks, but left them partly finished and marched to Plattsburgh. When we arrived, General Hampton left us with no barracks and nothing but tents to keep us from freezing. He went to Washington, gave up his commission, and then went home and commenced making whiskey. I think we would be apt to do better at that than commanding an army, and that it were much better for the government and soldiers that he should. General Wilkinson, the commander in Chief, came to Plattsburgh, and finding Hampton gone, he sent King, his Adjutant General, in pursuit, to arrest him for disobeying his orders, but he arrived too late, Hampton having given up his commission and gone.¹⁵

The snow at Plattsburgh was six inches deep. The next day after our arrival we went to work to clear it away and to pitch our tents; then we went into the woods to get trees to build barracks; we cut our logs the right length, carried them on levers to the road, put as many on four wheels as we could — then some sixty soldiers would draw them to places where we were building; this was our work every day till the barracks were done — no place to shelter us but our tents; we would lay down in them at night, wet to the skin, with no fire to

dry us, freezing cold, and our coats threadbare. The whiz of bullets is not the worse thing about war — burnt powder keeps you warm! When we had finished our barracks, we moved into them, and we were very glad to do so. When we went on guard, we had to work to keep them from freezing. The fifteenth of December the officers made us an offer, if we would enlist one for year, they would give us three months furlough. I, being under age, my brother advised me to accept it. I did so. I should think about two hundred enlisted with me. I received no bounty, and my father could clear me if he wished.

We then started for home, crossing the lake in a boat to Burlington; we there got a chance to lay on a bar-room floor of a tavern for the night. During the night we were awakened by a noise proceeding from a jail opposite, and we found that some of the soldiers were breaking into the jail, to release two of their comrades that had been imprisoned unlawfully by the civil authorities. After stopping in Burlington two days, we returned home. The next spring we met at Concord, N.H., where we remained till June; we then marched for Burlington commanded by Majors Prevost and Baker. On our arrival at Burlington we went on board vessels for Plattsburgh; here we commenced building forts. The army was now under General Izard.¹⁶ Izard conceived the plan to built two forts — one was situated on high ground, so as to command the bay, the town, and even below the town; the other on the bow of the river, to keep *that* clear. Half the army kept guard, while the other half built the forts. This lasted nearly all summer, as it was the last of June when we arrived.

Some time during the season there were two men shot for desertion in a similar manner to those we have previously described. One man moved after he fell; — the sergeant had orders to walk up to him, put the muzzle of his gun to the top of the prisoner's head, and discharge it. There was another man for desertion branded with a D upon the forehead. He had deserted several times, and had enlisted in other places; this was done that he might deceive them no more. There were some fifty prisoners we had to guard, that were the most filthy looking objects I ever saw; it was enough to give a person the plague to keep guard over them. There was one lieutenant from Virginia, belonging to the third regiment, that made himself very disagreeable to the soldiers, by his pompous manners. He would walk off alone, as if no one was good enough to be seen with *him*. I do not know but that the soldiers wished that the cold weather, which was sweeping off that regiment at the rate of three a day when we left the winter before, would have carried him off, but we were not so lucky; he was still there, only a good deal worse than ever. This officer was appointed to take charge of one of the guards, and I happened to have to go on *that* guard. I wished I was on some other, but it gave me a good opportunity to witness some of his meanness. The day we formed the guard, we paraded as usual to receive the officer of the day; a young soldier stepped quickly to his place, the others began to form on the left of him till about six had formed, still others in their haste began to form two lines in the rear, which was wrong; they should

have formed but one line back of the first. The officer had previously taken his place behind the first soldier; as the others on the line with the officer, turned round, and saw two lines back of them, they began one by one to step back into the ranks till it left no one standing by the side of the officer but this one soldier. He turning his head, seeing how matters stood, began to step back, when the officer noticing it, struck him repeatedly over the head and back with his sword, till he escaped in the ranks. After the guard was dismissed he ordered this soldier to go to his room, and off coat, then thrashed him with a stick till he was tired out. He would then rest, and thrash him again, and *this* for nothing. The soldier had done his duty better than any other man on the guard; but this was a slaveholder's son, his honor had been touched, he was used to whipping, and his honor must be restored to its former *high principle*; thus, you see, that oftentimes in war, the innocent may be punished without consent of judge or jury, or the least chance of redress.

When we had got the forts completed, and ready for Macomb¹⁷ to receive Prevost,¹⁸ the governor of Canada, we marched about ten miles down to the Charzee village where we remained about a month to rest. While here, I was standing guard one day on the banks of the Charzee river, a small stream about four rods wide, and quite shallow. There was a man on a rock in the stream washing his clothes. He had received his discharge and was going to start for home. On the bank there were some persons cooking at the foot of a large tree. They had carelessly let this tree burn partly off, when it suddenly fell into the stream, and exactly on this man on the rock, crushing him. The water was crimsoned for quite distance with his blood. Thus after the toils of war, when this man was to be released, and have happiness and quiet in the bosom of his family, were his hopes blighted, and his soul summoned to God. There were two soldiers caught fighting; the officers had four sticks cut, and gave them one apiece, and then gave two others the other two. They were to whip the fighters if they did not whip each other sufficiently.

We left Charzee village in September, for Sackets Harbor, passing Plattsburgh on the right. General Macomb went with us to Lake George, if possible, to draw Prevost out to do battle, afterwards he returned, with one thousand regular troops; the artillery was also left in the forts. As soon as Macomb got back he sent for the militia. Although they did not all get there, they had sufficient soldiers to take care of Gov. Prevost, and as many men as he was pleased to bring forward. About a mile from the fort was a creek on the north shore of the bay, so deep that it could not be forded. There had been a bridge across this creek, but it was destroyed by the general. Between this creek and the forts (one of the forts stood on the bank of the river) was the Suranac river, with a large bridge across it. General Macomb placed a force on this side of the creek next to them, to keep the British from crossing till they could destroy the bridge on the Suranac. Between the two bridges was a level tract of land, so that the commander of the British could ride down to the bay, see the move-

ments of his fleet, and then ride back to take care of his army. He could also see the forts, and hear from them, too.

The militia under General Macomb retreated to the forts, after destroying all the bridge but the string pieces. The British pressed eagerly on, and began to crowd on the timbers of the bridge. General Macomb sent down several pieces of cannon, one to each string piece, in front of them a company of militia to cover the cannon, that the enemy might not see them. They were brought into place and discharged, the grape shot sweeping the bridge clean. The river was full of the bodies of the dying and the dead; the waters were literally dammed up, so great was the havoc made among them. They on the opposite bank retreated behind a block of buildings, red hot balls were fired into them, which brought them in sight again. Still they retreated under a raking fire from the forts. The fleet also struck their colors and surrendered. The British lost that day twenty-five hundred killed, wounded, or deserted; our loss one hundred twenty.¹⁹

Our army remained at Lake George three days. We had a good opportunity to see Fort William Henry, which was situated at the head of this small but beautiful lake, in the centre of the wilderness. It seems to me that there is no spot of its size in America, where here has been so much blood shed as this fort. Thousands have been tomahawked or murdered here. History says at one time three thousand; at another time, after they had been fighting for several days, the French sent and desired a cessation of hostilities for twenty-four hours. That night they got into the fort and murdered every soul. It was near here that Putnam was captured by the Indians, tied to a tree, and kept there till his men fought their way to him, and released him. While here our First Major was officer of the day. He used to get so "set up" that about the middle of the afternoon he would feel pretty good. As he went the grand rounds in the evening he found that the General was behind a little way, so he ordered the sentinel not to let anybody pass, whether they gave the countersign or not, therefore the when General came along he was stopped. He immediately sent on to the officer of the guard, and released him. Our major was arrested.

After we had been at Lake George, we took up our line of march for Sackets Harbor. One evening, when our company turned out to roll call before dark, the First Major, though he had no right to command, went round looking into our tents, to see if all were out. There was one man just coming out as he passed along. The Major seeing him, struck him several times with his large, heavy cane. We carried the man to Sackets Harbor, and about a month later, three others and myself carried him to his grave. At the time he struck the soldier, some our of non-commissioned officers stepped back among the tents where there were plenty of stones and let some drive at his head. They came pretty near him. He came in front of the company and offered two dollars to tell him who threw the stone, but he didn't find out. One of our soldiers, while he stood there, fainted, and fell down. The Major began beating him with his cane, called

him a drunken soldier, etc., when the truth was the "boot was on the other leg." As we passed through the town of Greenfield, the inhabitants had previously collected bread and cheese, and had cut it up all ready for us. Large tubs of milk set by the side of the road, and dippers in them for us to drink from. We had nothing but bread and salt beef for six months. We should have eaten it with a grand relish, but our General would not let us taste of it, or sip at all, although there was no hurry, not a reason in the world why we should not eat it. We had evidence of the inhabitant's generosity by the sight of our eyes, but not by satisfying our hunger. Such things as that embittered the feelings of a soldier towards the general. They wish to give a reason for any such course as that, and he had none to give. When we arrived at Sackets Harbor, the army was ordered to proceed to Bridgewater. Our First Major being absent, the Second Major reported us as "unfit for duty," we having drawn no clothes for seven months. When the First Major came, he was very mad to think the other Major had reported us unfit for duty. He got him into another regiment, so he went with the army; but we drew no clothes.

There was a certain class of men called "settlers" [sutlers] that the officers let come into camp to sell things to the soldiers, who would charge double what we could get them for at the village; but the officers would not let us go to the village, because these settlers let them have what they wanted for nothing, for the privilege of trading with us; therefore we had to pay pretty roundly for their drinks. The Third Regiment of Artillery manned the forts at Sackets Harbor. I think it was the best looking regiment I ever saw. There were four large forts—Independence, Volunteers, Tompkins, and Mud, besides other small ones. There were fifteen armed vessels in the harbor of Lake Ontario, which is very strongly fortified. This Major still remained with us. He had a soldier for a cook, who asked to leave to go to his regiment, and not cook any more; upon which the Major grabbed him by the hair of his head, shook, struck, kicked and beat him till we thought he would die. There were a number of officers standing looking on, and said nothing. The Major was a large, two-fisted man, and the soldier was small. Our soldiers were determined to shoot him if they could get a chance.

There were about one hundred of our company that were discharged at Sackets Harbor, the 16th of December. We had six months' pay due us and had to go to Albany before we could get it. Major General Jacob Brown²⁰ gave us an honorable discharge, and a recommendation from our company's officers for two years' faithful service. We were allowed twenty-two and one-half days to go home in, giving us ten cents a day, or ten cents for every twenty miles. That was all the money we had. Two dollars and twenty-five cents to pay for food and lodging on this long journey. But we were used to hardships, having the same clothes to wear home, in the coldest weather, that we had on when we reported unfit for duty in September. They were very thin and threadbare. Three of us kept together. The first day we went 11 miles, with the snow two

feet deep. We found some friends on the way, but they were few. We were obliged to sleep on the bar floors of inns. Many persons, when they saw us coming, would shut and fasten the door in our faces. After many hardships, we reached Albany. On the back of our discharge was our order for money and clothes. Our money was forty-eight dollars, our clothes ten. When we signed the order for our money, we had no orders for our clothes, and were cheated out of the clothes we were suffering for, and had been for months. Our money was worth fifty cents on the dollar to pay our fare home, and we then paid ten percent to get it discounted.

Notes

1. Lynn W. Turner, *The Ninth State: New Hampshire's Formative Years* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 268.
2. See Fredriksen, "Niagara, 1814."
3. See Holden, "James Miller." For an interesting sketch of Miller by Nathaniel Hawthorne, a close friend, see *The Scarlet Letter* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962), 20–26.
4. The most important source of information is the small but detailed pamphlet entitled *Biography of General John McNeil*, New Hampshire Historical Society.
5. Consult Doan, "The Enigmatic Moody Bedel" and "Timothy Upham," *New England Genealogical and Historical Register* 10 (January 1856): 101–2.
6. *The Old Soldier's History, Containing an Account of the Movements of the North Western Army During the Years 1813–14, Under Five Different Generals, Their Encampments, Battles, Executions, and Other Punishments, with their Hardships, Sufferings, etc.* (Haverhill, NH: Frothingham, 1861). The only known copy was made available courtesy of the New York Public Library.
7. Chandler E. Potter, *The Military History of the State of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH: Macfarland and Jenks, 1866), vol. 2, 77 and 82.
8. For examples of more exciting—but less reliable—memoirs of this genre see *A Compendious Account of the Most Important Battles of the Late War, to Which is Added The Curious Adventures of Corporal Samuel Stubbs (A Kentuckian of 65 Years of Age!) ...* (Boston: William Walter, 1817); Terrence Kirby, *The Life and Times and Wonderful Achievements of the Adventurous and Renowned Capt. Kirby, the Hero of the War of 1812* (Cincinnati: The Author, 1865); and Israel Adams, *A Narrative of the Life of Captain Israel Adams, who took by Stratagem the Brig Toronto and Took Her to Sackets Harbor* (Utica, NY: D. Bennette, 1848). It is interesting to note that Fairbanks chose to publish his account when he did. Coming at the commencement of the Civil War, perhaps he intended it as a warning to prospective firebrands about to embark on a military career.
9. Wade Hampton (1751–1835) of South Carolina. The most recent account of his military activities in *Graves, Field of Glory*.
10. John McNeil.
11. An account of this obscure American unit can be found in Joseph Penley, *A Short and Thrilling Narrative of a Few of the Scenes and Incidents that Occurred in the Sanguinary and Cruel War of 1812–1814* (Norway, ME: The Author, 1853).
12. Josiah Snelling (1772–1828), a captain in the 4th U.S. Infantry, recruited primarily in New Hampshire. Snelling was captured at Detroit and had been recently exchanged. See his *Remarks on General Hull's Memoir of the Northwestern Army*.

13. Benjamin Forsyth (1760–1814). Forsyth was a legendary partisan of the Champlain Valley. See Fredriksen, *Green Coats and Glory*.

14. James Wilkinson (1757–1825). See Linklater, *An Artist in Treason*.

15. Wilkinson himself had recently experienced problems at Crysler's Farm (November 11, 1813), and had abandoned his campaign on the pretext that Hampton failed to support him. See Everest, *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley*.

16. George Izard (1776–1828). Though an extremely competent soldier, Izard was to leave the war with a controversial reputation. See Fredriksen, "A Tempered Sword, Untested."

17. Alexander Macomb (1782–1841). The best summary of his military activities remains Everest, *The Military Career of Alexander Macomb*.

18. George Prevost (1767–1816). For his subsequent defeat at Plattsburgh, Prevost was summoned back to England to face court-martial but he died beforehand. The best analysis of his military activities is Turner, *British Generals in the War of 1812*.

19. This is a gross exaggeration; British losses to all causes were only 234. See Donald E. Graves, "'The Finest Army Ever to Campaign on American Soil'? The Organization, Strength, Composition, and Losses of British Land Forces during the Plattsburgh Campaign, September, 1814," *Journal of the War of 1812* 7 (2003): 6–13.

20. Jacob Jennings Brown (1775–1828), one of the leading figures of 19th century American military history. See Morris, *Sword of the Border*.

14. Anonymous, *Fenton's Pennsylvania Volunteers**

The onset of the War of 1812 revealed an alarming deficiency within the structure and operations of United States armed forces. The problems were formulation of strategic goals, their tactical achievement, and the logistical administration necessary to support such endeavors. Yet in groping for a solution, the young republic became embroiled in a profound dilemma which transcended purely military considerations. Fear of professional armies was very real to the Jeffersonians, and it prevented them from raising large numbers of regular troops for the assault on Canada. Republican ideology required that the government employ a variety of military formations, not all of which were under federal control. Thus, the United States Army looked formidable on paper; its authorized strength stood at no less than fifty-four regiments of all kinds, the highest number of component organizations possessed until the First World War. But, in reality, the state militia comprised the most numerous and popular contingent of the national defense establishment. An estimated 719,449 men served in this capacity, while the regulars scarcely mustered one-fifth that total.¹ Given this numerical disparity, and the militia's a notorious reluctance to be deployed beyond closely prescribed state boundaries, a third category of formation was used. These were federal volunteers, small drafts of state militia temporarily enlisted under government jurisdiction. Once raised, they could be legally sent to augment the tiny pool of regular soldiers for operations in either Canada or other states. Because they are the least known of the three formations, this chapter will address the activities of one such federal volunteer unit.

Regardless of state or federal use, most War of 1812 levies were characterized by extreme ineptitude. The western militias are an important exception to this generalization, but on the whole, citizen soldiers were badly trained and poorly armed, and they compiled a wartime record appreciably less than satisfactory.² In comparison, the performance of the regulars improved dramatically with experience. By war's end they could, and did, successfully confront their professional European adversaries on the battlefield. Furthermore, between the treaties of Ghent and

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